BELLY DANCE AND GLOCALISATION: CONSTRUCTING GENDER IN EGYPT AND ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

Submitted by Caitlin McDonald to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arab and Islamic Studies, April 2010.

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Abstract

This thesis is an ethnography of the global belly dance community with particular reference to the transmission of dance paradigms from Cairo to the international dance community. Key words describing my topic include dance, gender, performance, group dynamics, social norms and resistance, public vs. private, tourism, and globalisation. I hypothesize that social dancing is used in many parts of the world as a space outside ordinary life in which to demonstrate compliance with or to challenge prevailing social paradigms. The examination of dance as a globalised unit of cultural capital is an emerging field. With this in mind I investigate the way this dance is employed in professional, semi-professional, and non-professional settings in Egypt and in other parts of the world, notably North America and Europe. Techniques included interviewing members of the international dance community who engage in dance tourism, travelling from their homes to Egypt or other destinations in order to take dance classes, get costumes, or in other ways seek to have an 'authentic' dance experience. I also explored connections dancers fostered with other members of the dance community both locally and in geographically distant locations by using online blogs, websites, listservs and social networking sites. I conducted the first part of my fieldwork in Cairo following this with fieldwork in belly dance communities in the United States and Britain.

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INTRODUCTION

It may be possible to do without dancing entirely…but when a beginning is made—when the felicities of rapid motion have once been, though slightly, felt—it must be a very heavy set that does not ask for more.

Jane Austen, *Emma*, 1815

My doctoral research is a study of how dancers throughout the world use Egypt as a reference point for situating themselves within the global belly dance community and how Egypt gets romanticised and fantasised in global narratives about belly dance. I address the purpose that dance serves as an expression of joy in Egyptian culture as well as its potentiality to be a site for defining appropriate gendered behaviour, a space for competition (friendly or unfriendly), and even a tool of resistance to precipitate shifting cultural norms. This discussion is now a starting point for a comparative analysis of how dancers in the international dance community utilise dance for similar purposes, particularly those related to using dance as a site for questioning existing social paradigms, as well as the ways in which dance serves different roles for global belly dancers than it does within Egyptian society. Having such a discussion within the context of an Area Studies framework raises new questions about how to define and to go about researching communities in a time of increasing globalisation when boundaries are no longer circumscribed by geography and groups are able to form around many different points of commonality. Thus far, transnationalism has focused primarily on migration networks and the physical movement of people. Such discourse has principally been based in political science. Examining groups that maintain connections internationally through the application of technology in addition to physical travel by looking at a cultural phenomenon rather than political discourse can provide new insights into how such networks grow.

These aims can also be framed as the following questions:

1. How can gender theory provide a framework for analysing the transmission and development of identity-forming cultural phenomena such as belly dancing? This question expands on gender theory's methodology of addressing theoretical questions about gender to include multiple identity-forming categories and sites of contestation.

2. How do dancers in the international belly dance community engage with social norms within Egypt? This question incorporates both dancers living and working in Cairo and members of the belly dance diaspora around the globe.

3. What is the significance of authenticity in framing debates about ephemeral cultural products like dance?
4. What is the relationship between new, globalising technologies such as the internet and the decreasing prominence of geographic boundaries in forming communities such as the international belly dance community?

On Beginnings and Endings

As I completed the writing of this thesis, I was reminded of two events that took place before my fieldwork began and just as it was coming to a close. In the context of my overall research they serve to illustrate how the nature of planned research can change dramatically in the course of carrying it out.

Before I officially started my fieldwork in Cairo in September 2008, I went there for the first time in April of that year to take a one-month course in the Egyptian dialect of Arabic. Many fortuitous things happened on that first initial foray into the field, including my introductory meeting with the person who became my principal research informant for the time I spent in Cairo, Scottish dancer and teacher Lorna Gow. Another auspicious event happened during a brief three-day trip to Luxor for the spring holiday Sham el-Nessim. Sham el-Nessim, which means "breathing the air," is believed to have roots in Pharaonic planting celebrations at the beginning of the growing season. It is a public holiday celebrated by all Egyptians on the first Monday after Coptic Easter every year.

I had never seen so many people outdoors in Egypt as I did that day, though my subsequent experiences with Ramadan crowds in Cairo made what I describe here look like a relatively small gathering. Every patch of available greenery and every stretch of sidewalk, apart from a narrow path for foot traffic, was completely enveloped by picnicking families. I couldn't tell where one party of celebrants left off and another began; an atmosphere of convivial hospitality and shared joy pervaded throughout. The main square in Luxor was not quite as jam-packed and there was enough space for children and teenagers to play football and kick-the-can. My travelling companion and I found a rooftop terrace restaurant which had a view of the main square and Luxor temple. As we watched, a group of young men in a mix of t-shirts, traditional galabeyas, and button-down shirts began to gather seemingly spontaneously from the smaller groups of people that were sitting in the courtyard. One of them had a drum. He began to play.

A circle of men formed, with some women and younger children standing outside the crowd around the edges. The men began to dance, taking it in turns to move into the centre of the circle. When not dancing in the centre, they clapped time with the drum while rocking back and forth in the crowd. As the drumming and dancing continued, the crowd multiplied until the circle was so close I could only see the dancers' upper bodies. Various members of the crowd jumped in at different times. Eventually the crowd began to drift away and the man with the drum left.

Figure 1: Men dancing and clapping in Luxor for Sham el-Nessim.

Nothing could have been more calculated to get me excited and motivated about the research I planned to start in September—looking at dance in Egyptian social contexts, focusing especially on spontaneous dancing at events like weddings, haflas and public celebrations. I came out of that preliminary trip feeling that even though I might face some difficulties, I could at least be sure I was on the right track and that based on what I had seen I would be able to gather enough data relevant to my chosen field.

A year and a half later, I found myself in a cubicle in the public restroom at Waterloo Station donning a costume I had bought the day before. Nearby were Lorna Gow, who I mentioned previously, and Eleanor Keen, another research participant. As I am sure you are wondering now, at the time I could only wonder at how on earth I had gotten myself there.

Unbeknownst to myself, Lorna, Eleanor and the other dancers planning to meet us, that turned out to be the day of the Mayor's Thames Festival on South Bank. We were there for what they were calling a "bellymob"—a flash mob of belly dancers. A flash mob is a group of people who suddenly gather in a public place and, against the expectations of spectators who are not involved, begin to somehow act in concert—be that pillow fighting, singing "Do Re Mi" from *The Sound of Music*, or having a lightsaber battle[1]. This kind of activity could be examined in the light of Augusto Boal's concept of invisible theatre, though flash mobs do not always, or even usually, revolve around issues of social disquiet and Boal's invisible theatre is precisely designed to bring issues "of burning importance, something known to be a matter of profound and genuine concern…" into the public consciousness (Boal, 2002: 277). I had arrived in London a couple of days before with the plan to participate in a workshop with Lorna, who was in town to teach and who I had not seen since leaving Egypt the previous November, and to attend the hafla that Eleanor and her colleague Nafeeseh Rahi-Young organise monthly in London, Saqarah. The bellymob was a serendipitous diversion.

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[1] All examples of previous flash mobs: pillow fights are a fairly common choice and there are news reports of pillow flash mobs in several United States cities for International Pillow Fight Day on 3 April 2010; 23 March 2009 saw the Do Re Mi flashmob in Antwerp's central train station (though the uninitiated crowd would have experienced this as a flash mob, since this event was choreographed as a publicity stunt it is arguable whether this really counts as a flash mob); and a lightsaber battle took place in Bristol's Cabot Circus shopping centre on 13 February 2010.

Figure 2: Eleanor Keen and Lorna Gow waiting for other dancers to arrive before the bellymob.

In the next section I will explain in detail why the research project that I intended to commence concerning dance as a signifier of social and political tropes within Egyptian society became a study about the international belly dance community in Cairo and the relationship that the global belly dance community has with Cairo. This development was as unexpected to me as finding myself becostumed and waiting for other dancers to arrive for the bellymob under the clock in Waterloo Station on that day in September 2009. However, I believe this modification was a positive one for many reasons. Principal among these is the shifting nature of ethnographic research: in a globalised world it is no longer possible to examine existing communities on a local level without looking at influences that are non-local, and my research now reflects this. Further, through the power of technology, communities are now able to form in ways that are not bounded by geography much more easily than at any time in the past. Beyond existing methodologies and theoretical frameworks for transnational groups that mainly examine migration, studying these types of communities requires engaging with them in multiple physical localities as well as understanding how these groups contact one another, how they negotiate group boundaries, and how they transmit knowledge about the identity-forming subject that brings them together, whether this be a hobby, profession, shared language, cultural or ethnic background, or a shared bodily experience like a disability. Given the largely female-oriented nature of the belly dance community, my research can also be seen in the light of a contribution to a feminist look at globalisation (Nagar, Lawson et al., 2002). Finally, while the initial research plan I developed was more squarely in line with the traditional Area Studies discipline of Arab and Islamic Studies and these were not directions I intended to explore, the shift in my own theoretical framework and methods can be seen as a foray into the newly emergent spaces that all Area Studies departments will encounter as the need to address these new transnational, extra-cultural, and glocalised groups and practices grows increasingly great (Bloom, 2003; Salih, 2003; Guyer, 2004; Meduri, 2004; Shih, 2005). Like Guyer, I am not suggesting that increasingly globalised discourse should represent an end to Area Studies, but rather that new types of localities which are non-geographical are emerging, and that it is incumbent upon Area Studies to address the networks that grow from these.

Critical Fieldwork and Theoretical Reflections[2]

When I first designed my fieldwork plan, I intended to spend at least nine months in Egypt examining dance in a social context within Cairene society. I was unable to carry out this plan for reasons I will outline below. However, despite the difficulties I encountered, I believe that my experiences there were lengthy enough and profound enough to provide insight on dance in Egypt, though no longer in a specifically social context. I would agree with critics who might claim that I did not spend an adequate amount of time in Egypt to conduct a complete ethnography there: instead I conducted an ethnography of the foreign dance community in Egypt and the Middle Eastern dance community in North America and Britain. This forced change brought the dimension of globalisation into my research, an emerging fertile area of study.

On paper, in methodology training courses and in the methodology sections of completed academic works, the process of fieldwork appears relatively straightforward: write the fieldwork plan, enact the fieldwork plan, come back and write up results of the fieldwork, all of which were anticipated in the fieldwork plan. Of course, every fieldwork plan must anticipate potential difficulties and every finished thesis must address unexpected problems and diversions experienced during fieldwork. However, the raw frustrations, jerry-rigged solutions and eureka moments experienced in the realities of enacting the research plan are often distilled or described dispassionately when it comes time for writing-up.

For the most part, this is done with good reason: the purpose of research, broadly, is to advance human knowledge, and those diversions have not contributed to the finished product. It would be too confusing and time-consuming to include them all; readers would never understand what the conclusions actually were if we devoted time to talking about those hours spent pursuing a task that ultimately proved fruitless. And there, really, is the heart of the current academic consensus: if an activity did not advance the purpose of the research, then it was a futile exercise and therefore there is no value to be had in discussing it. Analyses of fieldwork methodology have begun to call for more candid information about the difficulties, diversions and even dangers of field research and it must be said that, though I still think this body of literature is insufficiently referred to when preparing new researchers for the challenges of

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[2] Much of this section was originally presented in a paper titled "Help, a Ferry Crashed into my Houseboat: Transcending Unanticipated Fieldwork Obstacles" for Connections Eight: Speculative Futures, an interdisciplinary postgraduate conference at the University of Bristol.

fieldwork, descriptions of these types of fieldwork experiences continue to grow more common (Spindler and Spindler, 1969; Wintrob, 1969; Wax, 1971; Green, Barbour et al., 1993; Bibars, 1999; Markowitz and Ashkenazi, 1999; Simpson and Thomas, 2003; Macaulay, 2004).

Like the researchers I cite above, I believe that there is intrinsic value in the unexpected, even occasionally unfortunate, things that happen during research. First, these digressions are completely unavoidable. Inherent in the nature of PhD research is its novelty: every researcher is undertaking a new and unique challenge. Naturally this means that at the outset, just like any task undertaken for the very first time, no researcher has a truly clear idea of how to get to the finish or even where they might visit along the way. Of course researchers use established techniques to gather and to scrutinise data, whether those tools are microscopes, mathematical formulae or literary analysis. However, these techniques must be applied to an original area of research in order for the ensuing written conclusions to be considered valid, meaning that there is no certainty of what may emerge when known methodologies are implemented.

Consequently, discussions of the conflicts and unexpected mishaps that arise while executing the research plan contribute to general knowledge about what to expect when undertaking the mysterious and esoteric practice of research, particularly field research. While discussions of these events do exist, I believe it would be beneficial to provide a greater degree of frankness about the uncertainties and frustrations arising from these unanticipated situations. Scientific discourse in the public mind is absolutist in tone, implying certainty and clarity where the reality during research may have been messy and confusing. Focusing more on the process of research as well as the conclusions derived from it will add to public understanding of reasonable interpretations of researchers' conclusions. Also, such examinations would be especially beneficial to novice researchers, who may then approach chaotic situations arising from their own research better prepared. The particulars of difficulties that will arise during each researcher's investigations will be unique; nevertheless, adequate preparation for these intense and life-changing experiences would be fostered by a discussion of the tools, both tangible and cerebral, required to respond to such events when they occur.

A further reason to encourage such discussion is that in the process of research it may not always be clear what the next step along the path will be. Looking back, the solution to a given problem may seem obvious, and the researcher may feel that other attempts which did not result in the desired answer were pointless and detracted from

the attempt in some way. In actual fact, most of the time these so-called diversions really contributed some important element to the resolution of the problem, and therefore cannot really be considered diversions at all.

When I arrived in Cairo to commence what I planned to be nine months of fieldwork, everything that could possibly go wrong went wrong. I became ill, I had to move out of the housing I had arranged in advance because, in addition to its listing seriously to one side and developing a backed-up drain the day I moved in, I stopped feeling safe in my houseboat when one of my roommates told me the ferry had run into it a couple days before. This is not something I had ever anticipated having to explain to my supervisor in a fieldwork update. It took me a long time to find a new place to live because it was the middle of Ramadan, which meant working hours were at very unusual times, and because I was a single foreign woman trying to find a place to live alone[3]. I also discovered by going there that the AUC department with which I was supposed to have a fellowship had moved thirty miles out into the desert and wasn't yet functioning because it was still under construction, and to round everything off, my bank card got swallowed by an ATM.

Because of Ramadan many of my expatriate friends were out of the country, so for the first two weeks I really felt I was on my own[4]. Eventually I managed to resolve all of these issues, but I distinctly remember feeling very miserable that not only were all these events presenting themselves to me one after the other, but that it was very much my own choice to come to Cairo and I didn't have to be experiencing these things if I didn't want to. This left me with the very pressing question of what on earth I thought I was doing there, and how I was ever going to begin my fieldwork if I couldn't even manage to move out of my hotel. But as I said, I eventually dealt with all of those issues and began the exciting process of figuring how to begin actually gathering some data.

All of what I described was difficult, but none of it was my PhD-changing experience. About a month after I arrived, there was a pollution-based dust storm that brought a black cloud down over the city so thick it wasn't possible to see buildings a block away. This brought on an asthma attack. The symptoms didn't disappear and after a few days I wound up in the emergency room of the Anglo-American Hospital. Eventually, I was medically advised to stay indoors and avoid locations where people

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[3] This came as a surprise to me as my supervisor had not experienced such problems when she lived on her own in Cairo in the 1990s.
[4] Though in reality two female friends/mentors who had not left for the holiday were available to sympathize, advise and even on one occasion cook me dinner.

were smoking. This presented a formidable problem: I have yet to meet an Egyptian adult who does not smoke, and my research obviously required me to leave my house in order to make observations.

It became clear that I was physically incapable of carrying out the fieldwork I had planned, and would have to find another way to complete my PhD. For a brief period I feared the worst, believing wholeheartedly that I had come up against an intractable barrier. Fortunately, my supervisor was able to explain that it is quite normal to come up against obstacles which require adjusting the fieldwork plan. It wasn't that I had to abandon my whole PhD, I just had to work up an entirely new proposal.

This proposal involved me focusing on a population within Cairo where I already had significant contacts: expatriate dancers living and working there. Focusing on them meant I could commence gathering interviews immediately and that I could conduct them all in English instead of waiting for my Arabic to improve with time. I also planned to leave Egypt much earlier than I had originally intended in order to carry out fieldwork in Egyptian dance communities in the United States and Britain. In some ways this was a major shift: instead of examining Egyptian dance by situating it within Egyptian culture, I was now looking at the globalisation of this cultural signifier and how it changes when moving into new cultures. But in other ways, the changes were less drastic: I was still spending time in Egypt and still examining the cultural significance of dance.

It left me heavy-hearted to cut my ties to my first research plan. But this is where my point about diversions actually contributing to the overall body of research becomes relevant: without the experience of formulating a well-constructed research plan while in the composed atmosphere of my preliminary methodological preparation, I would never have been able to produce a new one while in a place of fear and doubt.

Most elements of the original plan were abandoned out of necessity, meaning that what became important suddenly was the competency to form a new workable plan. Additionally, what little fieldwork I had managed to complete up to that point also led to my understanding of what would be the best way to proceed: not every experience I had observed would become useful data in the end, but as a result of those events it became clear which would be fruitful avenues of exploration and which I could stop pursuing.

A key resource I depended on during that period of transition was the strong support network I had put in place before embarking on my fieldwork. My support came from my supervisor, Dr. Nadje Al-Ali, and from the research contacts and friends

I had made in Egypt before settling there for an extended period, principally Lorna Gow and Sara Farouk Ahmed, both of whom will be introduced as research participants later in this chapter. This is a vital factor in any researchers' success: having a system in place to go to for help when the unthinkable becomes the unavoidable.

Though at first I found the prospect of writing up a new research proposal and undertaking a new line of work daunting, in the end I found it liberating and invigorating. The new research plan suited my abilities and areas of expertise more fully, because I had a better understanding of what the possibilities and necessities of my situation were. I could complete this plan with more confidence than the one I had left behind, and my confidence increased from the fact that I felt I had faced a truly formidable problem and been able to overcome it. On returning from my fieldwork I was able to have a number of informal conversations with my colleagues and with more senior researchers about their own research experiences. These conversations about fieldwork, lab work, experiments and calculations confirmed that most researchers experience dead ends and might-have-beens. What looks like a clear path in the end may have appeared tenuous and meandering while working it out. I reiterate my conviction that it would be beneficial for future researchers to be aware through more thorough discussion of this topic that such daunting obstacles are a potential part of their research; possibly even the most unexpectedly rewarding part in the end.

Compared to the difficulties I experienced in Cairo, the fieldwork problems I encountered in the United States and Britain were relatively minor. Even so, not everything was straightforward. Upon arriving in the United States, I tried to plan some short research trips to different states and to Canada in order to have a diverse research sample. Unfortunately I discovered that the dance resources I had become familiar with in New York where I lived from 2003 to 2005 were no longer there: Belly Dance NY, a formidable web resource for dancers in the metropolitan area and beyond, had been shut down by its owner; Fazil's Studio where I once took classes was slated for demolition; and the famous Café Figaro on Bleecker Street which held belly dance shows with live music every Sunday night had shut its doors (Grey; Mooney, Aug 22 2008; Dunning, February 9 2008). While I know that New York remains full of resources for belly dancers of all styles, I was reluctant to try making contacts and conducting interviews over a short period. I decided to focus my efforts on attending belly dance conventions and workshops. My first effort, the International Belly Dance Conference of Canada

(IBCC), turned out to be a biennial event not scheduled to be held in 2009[5]. Eventually I was able to attend Rakkasah West, where I conducted interviews with two prominent male belly dancers, Zorba and Jim Boz. I also interviewed dancers at a new belly dance studio opening in Saint Petersburg, Florida, and dancers based in the Orlando metropolitan area. In Britain my contacts were principally facilitated through the Saqarah hafla organisers, Nafeeseh Rahi-Young and Eleanor Keen, who I had met in Cairo when they attended the Nile Group Festival in November 2008.

While the vast majority of people who I asked to participate in my research were happy to do so, I did have a few negative responses. When I started my fieldwork in Cairo every person I asked was interested in and excited about my research, thus leading to unrealistic expectations when I started working outside Egypt. In the main, people who were not interested simply did not respond to my requests for interviews when I asked, usually via email. There were also two or three people who, after corresponding with me, decided not to participate. I suspect this largely had to do with their doubts of what my ultimate goal is through this project, and whether this will contradict their personal experiences or the validity of their beliefs on topics like what belly dance should be called, whether it is traditionally performed by everyone or only by women, and how important it is to situate belly dance with reference to 'authentic' Egyptian (or to another Middle Eastern) culture. I put the term 'authenticity' in scare quotes for two reasons[6]: first because I am wary of the idea that any cultural product, particularly an ephemeral one like dance, can be reduced to a singular geographic location and time period, which is what is usually at the heart of definitions of authenticity. Secondly, a desire for 'authenticity' in a dancer's performance is not necessarily a desire even for what I described above: often what is described or experienced as 'authentic' is, rather, a fantasy predicated on cues that the viewer has come to associate with 'authenticity'. In exploring the idea of fantastical imagery in the world of belly dance, discussed at length in chapter six, I owe a great deal to Said's *Orientalism* (Said, 2003), though on many levels his analysis of dance within the framework of colonialist discourse in that work is incomplete (Garber, 1992: 341; Boone, 1995: 92-93; Karayanni, 2004: 45, 64).

Though it would have been beneficial to conduct personal interviews with people whose views differed radically from mine on topics like authenticity, nomenclature, and the gendered nature of belly dance for the purpose of balancing

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[5] I presented a paper about belly dancing in Second Life titled "Digitizing *Raqs Sharqi*" at the IBCC in April 2010, an issue that comes up in chapter five, "Transmission and Learning," under the section "Dancing in Constructed Utopias: in Virtual Worlds and in Theme Parks."
[6] Throughout this thesis single quotation marks are scare quotes, double quotation marks are direct quotes from a source.

perspective, I feel contrasting views are amply covered through the wide body of popular literature on belly dance. I include in this not only books such as Tina Hobin's *Belly Dance: the Dance of Mother Earth,* Rosina Fawzia Al-Rawi's *Grandmother's Secrets: the Ancient Rituals and Healing Power of Belly Dancing*, and Wendy Buonaventura's *Serpent of the Nile: Women and Dance in the Arab World*, (Buonaventura, 1998; Al-Rawi, 2003; Hobin, 2003) to name a few, but also the articles on dancers' personal websites, in trade publications like *Habibi* and *Yallah* magazines, and the many, many online forums for discussing belly dance and hashing out a consensus (or continuing to foment disagreement) on issues important within the belly dance community.

Methodology

The foundations of my methodological approach are informed by a combination of both post-structuralist and materialist feminist approaches. To conceptualise gender and subjectivity I rely on Judith Butler's model in the Foucauldian tradition of destabilising the subject through attempting to find and create meaning via discursive processes. Foucault's analyses of power relations have the potential to apply to a range of cultural practices and social products, though the most renowned aspects of his work address madness, sexuality, and discipline and punishment (Foucault, 1990; Foucault, 1991; Foucault, 2000; Foucault, 2001). Where Foucault focused principally on discourses of sexuality, Butler builds on Foucault to consider emergent layers of meaning in regards to gender as well as sexuality in a feminist post-structuralist context (Butler, 1990; Butler, 1997; Butler, 2004; Breen and Blumenfeld, 2005). I have, in turn, made use of concepts that Butler originally developed in considering the construction and categorisation of gender in order to provide a space for discursive development within the dance community where certain categories, like what dance should and should not be called, may have become so entrenched that they are no longer able to be used in a productive way. This is apparent especially in chapters five and six, "Dance and Theory: Research as Argument and Serendipity" and "Transmission and Learning: Building the Dance." Discursive categories, such as those dealing with normative gendered expectations, relate not only to dance but also to processes of power in society such as understandings of morality, and expectations of social normativity, for as Foucault has indicated, power and resistance operate in everyday interactions as well as on the metanarrative level of society as a whole (Foucault, 1991).

While I recognise the importance of specific discourses in influencing agency and subjectivity, I also utilise materialist feminist approaches. These acknowledge the significance of empirically and historically grounded social, economic and cultural factors. Scholars such as Leila Abu-Lughod, Deniz Kandiyoti, Nadje Al-Ali, Reina Lewis, Iman Bibars, and Sherifa Zuhur amongst others operating in the context of the Middle East have highlighted the importance of exploring factors related to political economies, state regulations and laws, and the labour market as social processes for understanding particular gender ideologies and relations (Kandiyoti, 1991; Zuhur, 1992; Al-Ali, 1994; Kandiyoti, 1996; Lewis, 1996; Abu-Lughod, 1998b; Kandiyoti, 1998; Shakry, 1998; Al-Ali and El-Kholy, 1999; Bibars, 1999; Al-Ali, 2000; Lewis and Mills, 2003; Zuhur, 2005). I also seek a synthesis between localised social paradigms described by these theorists and the emerging influences of globalisation. As I said earlier in this chapter, it is no longer possible to study local communities without examining how they are affected by cultural processes and products emerging and developing elsewhere in the world. My own research contributes to the discussion on how such influences are 'glocalised;' that is, how people engage with local paradigms in order to integrate these incoming global tropes (Featherstone, 1995a; Robertson, 1995; Karam, : 196; Kelly, 2008).

Dancers may never resolve the differences in their understandings of diverse terminologies relating to what I usually call 'belly dance,' and there are many excellent reasons for calling into question all the terms used to describe it. However problematic such understandings are, though, they still serve an important purpose not only describing the style of dance that is the subject of this study but also providing a place where questions about meaning and cultural interpretation may be carried out. The subject of Butler's original usage of the term 'contestable categories' was whether or not existing categories of gender (or at least, the terms that we use to refer to such categories) are still useful (Butler, 1990: 14-15), which becomes part of the discussion in chapter seven, "Gender Choreology".

Belly dance has a long association with the feminist movement in the United States (Shay and Sellers-Young, 2005: 12-15). As a space for allowing women in America and in Western Europe to question existing normative structures of femininity, sexuality, and power dynamics, belly dance has been very effective. Some theorists suggest that this has been at the expense of men in Oriental dance (Karayanni, 2004; Shay, 2005b). The question of whether it is possible to resignify the male dancing body without denying the feminist utilisation of dance more generally has also been raised

(Burt, 2007: 2-5). In keeping with my use of contestable categories discussed above, it is possible to utilise belly dance for a number of different, and perhaps paradoxical, aims. While it may seem that a feminist use of belly dance is predicated on creating a female-only space, I believe it is possible to approach belly dance with a feminist aim without excluding male dancers. Further, 'women's arts' and the idea of the female artist as a space for exploring feminist aims is not limited to 'the West' (Zuhur, 1992; Lengel, 2004; Zuhur, 2005). As Sugarman points out, dancers throughout the world are now able to use many different styles of dance available through the process of cultural globalisation in contrast to one another, situating themselves with reference to different cultural values that such dances are understood to mean (Sugarman, 2003). Such a project on many levels could be seen to contravene the aims of feminism in that it requires making use of 'other' categories of dancers, usually female, in order to situate oneself to notions of cultural propriety. But these categories can also be used to challenge predominant expectations of women's behaviour, which is exactly the purpose that belly dance served at the start of Second Wave feminism in the United States, and which is still one of the uses that dancers around the world make of it now.

Feminism also serves a more subtle purpose in my research: a major purpose of feminist theoretical frameworks remains to challenge the foundational beliefs of the humanities and social sciences, which feminist scholars questioned for portraying a subjective hegemonic masculine position as an authoritative, 'objective' one when Second Wave feminism arose during the 1960s and 70s (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004). Within the belly dance world, many normative expectations and values are accepted and promoted as 'the truth' without an examination of the historical or cultural evidence for such beliefs, as I discuss throughout this thesis and particularly in chapter five. The 'contestation of knowledge' that arises from feminism applies to such beliefs, though in keeping with my use of 'contestable categories' from gender theory, I do not believe that such questions have permanent fixed answers but rather should remain open questions that can hold many shifting layers of significance.

Field Methods

Through the course of my fieldwork in Egypt and the United States, which took place between September 2008 and September 2009, I carried out fourteen in-depth interviews with sixteen participants totalling just over twenty hours. Twelve of these were with women, six in Cairo and six in the United States, and three with men, all in the US. Nationally, my participants were four British women, one Hungarian woman, a

French woman, a woman from the Dominican Republic, six American women, and three American men. One participant I corresponded with through email only.

I attended approximately 27 hours of professional music and dance performances, including concerts and dance shows at cultural centres and hotels, and 31 hours of amateur performances, including free community festivals and student showcases at haflas. I also witnessed several hours of spontaneous dance performance at weddings, haflas, festivals, and by other audience members at professional performances. It is difficult to estimate the total time of these spontaneous performances, but spontaneous dancing took place on at least twelve separate occasions. This excludes the social dancing that I witnessed in Egypt other than that which could be quantified as *raqs sharqi*, though I frequently attended salsa dancing workshops and events held in various venues throughout Cairo, which were attended by Egyptians and expatriates alike, with friends who were also involved in the world of professional belly dancing, and there made observations about the paradigms of Egyptian social dancing.

If I were to estimate the number of hours of fieldwork completed with reference to all-day events like my overall time in Egypt, at dance festivals, and during my visit to Disney World, it would be a purely abstract notion. Though the actual performances were discrete parts of these overall events, in these situations I was constantly gathering information about the context in which dance is performed and what it means or how it is used within that context. On one occasion I spent the day, around ten hours, with a group of tourists visiting Cairo for the specific purpose of obtaining new costumes, props, music, and videos. Though the day itself did not include a performance, it was an occasion that revolved specifically and entirely around belly dancing. I also spent a great deal of social time with my friend and research participant Lorna Gow. Though I interviewed her formally only once, we have had a constant dialogue since April 2008 about belly dance, life in Egypt as a dancer, and her frequent trips home to work in Scotland. While I was in Egypt the thread of our conversation constantly turned to belly dance, her blog entries remain a source of information from Egypt, and I still e-mail her frequently for social reasons as well as to continue to ask questions about dance. Lorna also introduced me to several of the women I later interviewed in Cairo including Nafeeseh Rahi-Young and Eleanor Keen, who became major sources of information when I returned to Britain in April 2009. My other major dance contact in Egypt was Sara Farouk Ahmed, a British theatrical producer and filmmaker who has made her home in Egypt for the past ten years. Though Sara teaches belly dance when she is in Britain, in Egypt she does not dance or teach professionally. Still, she remains a

touchstone among the community of foreign visitors curious about dance in Egypt, principally through her continued connections with professional teachers in England. Both Sara and Lorna, close friends themselves, have acted as mentors for younger dancers looking for advice on how to establish themselves in the community of expatriate professional dancers in Cairo. I visited Sara's house several times and our conversation often revolved around the dance community in England as well as in Egypt. Like Lorna, though I only interviewed Sara officially on one occasion, my interactions with her were always instructive and through her I made several beneficial research contacts.

While in Egypt and Britain I principally gleaned participants through snowball modelling, my fieldwork in the United States was a little bit different. I was able to use the snowball technique with participants that I met through the Hip Expressions Belly Dance Studio in Saint Petersburg, Florida, which had its grand opening on 17 January 2009 shortly after I commenced fieldwork there. To broaden my sample while in America I also reached out to well-known figures in the dance community who I knew would be at events I was planning to attend. I additionally met Melanie LaJoie in this way, by specifically seeking dancers affiliated with the theme park industry in Orlando.

Also difficult to quantify are the hours I spent researching the global belly dance community's interaction with the internet. This includes examining websites of students, teachers or studios, looking at articles and informational pieces written by dancers, and message boards or listservs where dancers come together to engage in discourse about various aspects of dance. Due to information obtained during my interviews I began looking with greater interest at dancers' performances on YouTube, which has become an increasingly popular promotional tool as well as an additional forum for discussing dance through commenting on videos. Perhaps the most unusual aspect of my online fieldwork is my foray into the belly dance community in the online virtual world Second Life. Much like regular fieldwork, this involved a period of acclimating to the unfamiliar surroundings before being able to discover anything pertinent to my research. There are several different groups devoted to belly dance within Second Life, and I learned that it is possible to animate the virtual representation of one's character, one's avatar, to make it belly dance. This will be discussed in detail in chapter five's section "Dancing in Constructed Utopias: in Virtual Worlds and in Theme Parks".

Throughout my research I collected a variety of belly dance ephemera, most notably performance programs or monographs describing the goals of the performance

programme; advertisements for individual dancers, costume shops, dance studios and particular dance training methodologies; a new belly dance magazine titled *Belly Dance: a Raqs Sharqi Magazine*; and a variety of CDs and instructional DVDs. The latter are becoming less popular with the rise of free online video viewing through YouTube and Google Video. I also took over 350 photographs pertaining to my research and over 50 videos, available for public viewing at http://picasaweb.google.com/mcdonald.caitlin and www.youtube.com/caitietube respectively.

Clearly it would be impractical to include all of my more than 50 videos on the DVD accompanying this thesis, so I included fourteen   that directly demonstrate a point made in the text, the descriptions of which are arranged by the six events at which they took place. The list of these six descriptions, in order of their appearance in the text is: (1) Golden Pharaoh Wedding Party 1, (2) Zaar 1-6, (3) Soraya, (4) A Magi 4 and 5, (5) Cairo Jazz Fest 1, and (6) Black Theama 8, 11 and 12. Descriptions of each clip are included in the relevant chapter as well as repeated in an appendix for easy referral when viewing the DVD separately.

If I included more examples of the Zaar dance and the Black Theama performances than might be deemed necessary, it is because examples of these types of performance are rarer than clips of belly dancers in performance The videos were recorded using an ordinary digital camera[7] with no tripod or external microphone. As a result the quality of the recordings, particularly the sound, is not as robust as one might wish. However, the portability of the camera meant that I was able to have it with me at all times and was thus able to capture spontaneous dancing that I might not have been able to record had I been dealing with bulkier, more specialized equipment.

During my period of fieldwork I attended comparatively few belly dance classes. This is largely because I am already familiar with the way belly dance is taught in the United States and Britain, having taken classes intermittently in various parts of the United States and in Britain from the time I was seventeen. I felt it was more important to focus on observing other kinds of events and on conducting interviews. I have also taught dance classes to a student society at the University of Exeter. I did attend some classes at the Hip Expressions Studio in Saint Petersburg, Florida while I was conducting my fieldwork in February and March 2009 as well as the workshops in London I previously mentioned that Lorna taught in September of that year.

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[7] Casio Exilim 8.1 megapixel EX-S880.

Before my fieldwork began I underwent the process of an ethical review by the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Exeter, as must all researchers who deal with human subjects. Because the nature of my fieldwork changed so drastically, I had to get new approval whilst carrying out my research. One issue facing all researchers who deal with human subjects is that of informed consent. Initially, the ethics committee authorised my decision not to collect consent forms from informants. While such forms are such common practice in Europe and America that normally they would not warrant a mention, my supervisor indicated that they could provide a barrier to research in Egypt because of the widespread scepticism of all forms of a bureaucratic nature, related to suspicion of corruption in the Egyptian central government. Coupled with a general cynicism about motives behind American foreign aid granted to Egypt, which metonymically applies to much of American bureaucratic involvement in Egypt including academic research, because I am American, the presentation of consent forms could in fact put potential informants ill at ease and unlikely to want to participate. I did however provide all participants, whether in Egypt or elsewhere, with an information sheet about the nature of my research, my contact details if they wished to obtain transcripts of the interviews I conducted with them, and instructions on how to withdraw consent should they wish to do so. The main difference between this information sheet and a consent form is that my participants in Egypt did not sign a copy and return it to me.

The purpose of consent forms is to provide participants with information about the project as well as giving them a method for contacting the researcher should they wish to withdraw from the project. They also serve a more subtle function by providing a badge of legitimacy: participants can see that the researcher is sanctioned by an official institution with procedures for ensuring that research practices are followed ethically, which generally helps put them at ease about the nature of how data they provide will be used. With this in mind, I decided to use consent forms when I began my research in the United States and the United Kingdom, because, exactly the opposite of Egypt, I imagined that my research participants would be more suspicious of my motives if I failed to provide some sort of officiating documentation. The information sheet containing a method for contacting me should participants wish to withdraw from the study was exactly the same for those participants from whom I obtained signatures and from whom I obtained consent orally. I consider this to be the key factor in determining whether the inconsistency of such a policy was ethical: all participants received the same information and all had the ability to contact me for any questions or

concerns about my research, or to withdraw. The majority of the relationships I forged in the field were of a friendly nature and thus I heard from most of my participants, especially those whom I interviewed in Egypt, after my fieldwork ended. Such contacts gave my participants multiple opportunities to express concerns about the nature of my research or to withdraw consent for the use of their data.

I did have one research participant who wished to be known by the pseudonym "S". This was because of her fear that her family would discover the marriage she had entered into in Egypt without their knowledge. There were a few anecdotes that dancers, in the course of being interviewed, requested that I not share. In conducting my initial assessment of possible harm in my ethical review before conducting my fieldwork, these were both issues that I had anticipated were possible, and I acted accordingly.

Obtaining consent in the digital realm is a more complex issue.   Conventions about research methods generally and consent issues especially in digital realms, like chatrooms and online games, have yet to be fully formed. Whether speech in these spaces should be considered public or private, or should be governed by the research paradigms that apply to documents or those that apply to the spoken word, is still up for debate. For this reason that I have largely avoided quoting from, for example, comments on YouTube videos or conversations that take place in online belly dance forums. My research has been informed by these phenomena, but because obtaining written consent from all the participants in such discussions would be very difficult, I decided to refer only to online media from participants when I had already obtained their consent, as in the case of quoting from Lorna's blog.

A subtle but common issue for anthropologists is negotiating the boundary between 'observer' and 'participant', particularly in a community that one already 'belongs' to in some sense. Interacting socially with research participants naturally presents a number of potential problems to the researcher in terms of objectivity. While feminist research generally critically approaches the Platonic ideal of a truly objective viewpoint (Giddens, 1994; Al-Ali and El-Kholy, 1999; Bibars, 1999; Evans, 2003; Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004), it is still important to maintain an awareness of the differing subjectivities within which the researcher operates. Friendships with participants could easily lead to the impulse to accept uncritically the information they had to offer without seeking alternative opinions and interpretations. However, participants' opinions about various issues were not always parallel even amongst those who knew one another socially or who had taken classes from one another, which

provided some protection against groupthink. In the coming chapters, particularly five and six, "Dance and Theory" and "Transmission and Learning" I will be outlining the ways in which dancers around the world engage in discourse about dance and how they share information and ideas about dance. There is quite a wide body of discursive popular literature about dance which provides a multiplicity of opinions about topics important within the international belly dance community, some of which aligned with and some of which contradicted majority opinion amongst my participants. Making use of the diversity of opinion and understandings available in the popular literature also aided in maintaining a scholarly perspective.

Ethnographically speaking, it is the expected practice for the anthropologist to consider how she will reward participants in her study in exchange for the time and effort they offer. Historically this has often taken the shape of small gifts, though there have been many excellent challenges to this sort of commodity model and there may be a greater shift now to offering skills or different types of knowledge in exchange (Pratt, 1986: 44; Schenk-Sandbergen, 1998: 285-288; Waal, 1998; Al-Ali, 2000: 12-16). I delivered an informal talk about my research at the Hip Expressions Belly Dance Studio while I was conducting fieldwork in Florida which helped to repay this 'debt'. However, what my participants consistently asked was not only if, but *when* they would be able to read the book. The best remuneration I can offer is the most accurate portrayal I can present of current trends both normative and subversive in the dance communities in Egypt and throughout the globe.

Chapter Summary

The second chapter, "Belly Dance and Globalised Performing Arts: A Review of the Literature" provides an overview of key concepts in the theoretical framework I outlined above and how they will be used throughout this thesis. These key concepts are globalization and glocalization, transnationalism, authenticity and hybridity, community, and culture. Further, to contextualise my own empirical findings within the body of existing literature on gender and performing arts, I review ethnographies that contributed to my understanding of those concepts in a globalised context. This discussion provides a framework for understanding the ethnographic data I collected and my theoretical contributions to the disciplines of anthropology, area studies of the Middle East/North Africa region, gender studies, and performance studies in an international context.

The third chapter, "Development of Normative Dance Paradigms in Cairo" begins with a discussion of the historical context of public discourse on dance within Egypt, culminating in an analysis of current public opinion on dance. This includes both legal and social/moral restrictions placed on dancers working in Egypt historically and currently. I attempt to show the bridges between the local paradigms within Egypt and those that the international dance community are in a constant process of creating and renegotiating. The fourth chapter, "Sanctions: Authorise, Penalise, Globalise" carries on the discussion of social expectations and group norms, expanding it to include the international dance community. While these tropes are not entirely parallel, their existences require that dancers living and working in Egypt as well as members of the international dance community engage in complex processes to negotiate the expectations of both the public and of other members of the dance community. Specific strategies that dancers use in order to do so are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter five, "Dance and Theory: Research as Argument and Serendipity," is principally a literature review and comparison of the academic and the independent research that dancers have produced about their art. I begin with an overview of the debate around what the proper name for 'belly dance' is. Later in the chapter I make use of Judith Butler's concept of contestable categories (Butler, 2004) to put forth the idea that continuous, unresolved discussion can be considered a satisfactory result and that no clear 'winner' will necessarily emerge from the current field. Before introducing this model from gender theory, I discuss past and present practices of travelling, principally from Europe and the United States, to the Middle East in order to learn more about dance in its home countries. This leads to a discussion of tourism, cultural identity, and the ways in which the concept of authenticity gets employed by the global dance community and in scholarly research about Oriental dance. In addition to the concept of contestable categories, I make use of gender theory as a model for questioning all types of foundational beliefs or received wisdom in discussions of belly dance, discussions both in the academic and dance communities. This challenge to the 'natural order' also owes a great deal to Hobsbawm and Ranger's theory of the invention of tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992). Following this I discuss the transmission of cultural capital, which again returns to the idea of what 'authenticity' means in an increasingly globalised world. In the context of this I examine spaces that could be considered to take place outside culture, in video clips on YouTube that may bear little reference to where and when they were filmed, in virtual reality games like Second Life, and dance in the created utopian spaces of theme parks like Disney World.

Chapter six, "Transmission and Learning: Building the Dance," analyses the way that dancers on an individual level learn about their art in both its technical and its community-defining aspects, the second of which I call belly dance 'civics'. This frames a larger discussion of how cultural capital gets transmitted from one culture to another, or even to spaces that could be considered to be outside culture, and the changes that take place when these pieces of cultural capital are decontextualised. To facilitate this examination I investigate the way in which social and aesthetic tropes from Egypt and from Cairo in particular are used in the international dance community, drawing on the historical basis for such usage as outlined in the previous chapter. A study of the transmission of cultural capital requires theorising about what culture is. I rely on Swidler's metaphor of culture as a tool kit to describe how, on an individual level, people can carry 'tools' from many different cultures and no single complement of tools can ever truly be considered to constitute one complete culture (Swidler, 1986). In this chapter I also follow in the footsteps of Sellers-Young and Rasmussen to assess whether it is possible to engage with Orientalist aesthetic tropes in a manner that is constructive and which unlocks new imaginative possibilities, or whether such usages, which are common throughout the belly dance world, are always reductive and lead to consistently inaccurate perceptions of Middle Eastern cultures (Rasmussen, 2005; Sellers-Young, 2005). I further question the kinds of influence that the international dance community has had, both choreographically and in the sense of a developing dance tourism industry, in Egypt. Following this I examine, through reports from my research participants and through materials collected during fieldwork, a variety of methods by which knowledge about the normative expectations of the international dance community is transmitted both intentionally and as a side effect of other goals like event promotion. While a more extensive catalogue of the material culture that has grown up around belly dance might be a desirable area for future investigation, the sheer amount of available material meant that I needed to limit my investigation to a representative sample rather than a comprehensive analytical overview. Finally I conclude with a look at the changing paradigms for performance and for learning about dance in the international community in the past fifty years, focusing on how the internet has enabled much faster dissemination of emerging styles through video technology. I also look at the shifting models for performance in the dance community in the United States: where in the past audiences principally engaged with belly dance at Middle Eastern nightclubs and Middle Eastern or Greek restaurants, currently a much

more common venue is a hafla[8], or belly dance party and showcase, which is much more an internal community event for belly dancers than are performances for the general public in nightclubs.

Chapter seven, "Gender Choreology," is a more direct engagement with gender theory and the performing body. While up until this point I have made use of concepts in gender theory to question received knowledge and existing theoretical categories, at this point I directly examine issues related to masculinity and femininity in performance. Here I discuss the differences between performance and performativity. Distinguishing between performance in its theatrical sense, performance as an allegory for how we continually project gender and other aspects of our identity in our daily lives, and performativity has yet to be adequately theorised. The discipline of Performance Studies provides some insight into this still murky field; however, the distinction between types of performance that engage the audience directly and how these differ from performance in its everyday sense could use more discussion in the literature for clarity's sake. This chapter also examines the locus of where significance is found in both of these types of performance. The creation of meaning depends on the existing cultural understandings of the audience, the 'tool kit' that they bring to the performance, as well as the intentions of the performer. This is especially significant for female belly dancers who can make use of discourses of female empowerment to subvert predominant understandings of aesthetic performance tropes, particularly when used in comparison with other styles of dance. The use of different styles of dance that may not originate in the culture in which they are being deployed in order to negotiate or resignify standards of propriety is not limited to women alone, though what little work has been done on this topic has principally focused on women's engagement with a multiplicity of understandings of femininity. This process is facilitated by globalisation: when new styles of dance become available outside the cultures from which they originate, they can be utilised to signify different things across the societies which take them up. This play between fantasy and existing relational structures links back to Butler's theory of the politics of embodiment (Butler, 2004: 204-231). Butler claims, and I agree, that fantasy is not merely internal but also comes to affect the interactions of the individual with others. Examples of how this takes place in the belly dance community are included in this chapter. Following this, I discuss the experiences of those men I interviewed who are members of the dance community. The amount of

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[8] In Arabic, *hafla* just means "party." There may or may not be dancing at such an event. As the term has taken on a new and very specific meaning in English I have not italicized it, because I do not consider this meaning to be a use of the Arabic word.

literature on this is extremely small, and it is such a newly discussed phenomenon (if not actually a new phenomenon) that it still deserves its own dedicated section of analysis. Ideally as more academic literature examines belly dance, discussion of men and masculinities can be a more integrated part of the discourse rather than fenced off in its own area. For the present, it remains sensible to have a separate discussion of masculinity and femininity, as the community-based issues that male and female performers face are often very different. Enriching the discussion are my male research participants' thoughts on various aspects of being male in what is effectively a matriarchal community. While Jim and Zorba said a few things that contravened my expectations in our interviews, what surprised me much more were the attitudes of my female research participants to men in the field of belly dance. Through the popular literature on dance I was familiar with the attitude many dancers take, that male dancers are either a new development or an unwelcome one in belly dance. While none of my participants expressed this attitude specifically and the predominant attitude seemed to be a 'live and let live' approach, when questioned more deeply, the prevailing mind-set was a desire for very highly differentiated gender roles in choreographic performance. This desire for a lack of gender ambiguity during performance reflects, in my opinion, a surprisingly strong appeal for performances that reflect prevailing heterosexist discourse, rather than subvert them. This contrasts with the subversive discourses that female performers make use of in their choreographic presentations, as I discuss earlier in the chapter[9]. Rounding off the discussion I look at how this desire for a strong distinction between masculine and feminine modes of performance in the international dance community might be a reflection of current normative understandings of gender, including appropriate gendered performance of social dancing, in Egypt and the Middle East more generally. Finally, I give examples of how dancers in the international community attempt to negotiate their association in the public eye with other types of dance that are often perceived as demeaning or objectifying of women. The principal element of different, in my opinion, is not choreographic but rather rests on the fact that belly dance does have a social community that during dance events can produce an experience of shared audience understanding that overlaps with the intentions of the performer, and those 'other' types of dance do not.

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[9] While female performers make use of dance to challenge predominant social conventions surrounding ideas of feminine sexuality and there is some information on the connection between belly dance and the American feminist movement in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s (Shay and Sellers-Young, 2005: 14-15), the issue of a specifically non-heterosexualized belly dance coming from women has not been discussed in the literature as yet. Nor did this emerge as an issue in my interviews, unlike the challenge to heteronormative masculine ideals.

In my concluding chapter I attempt to show the areas in which this thesis has synthesised theoretical discussions in Area Studies and Performance Studies. I also discuss new methods of utilising gender theory: first, to jump-start discussions about semantic categories that may have become fossilized in specificity while the need for more fluid terminology became apparent, and second, to discuss performances of identity categories and from whence the meaning of such performances ultimately arises.

BELLY DANCE AND GLOBALISED PERFORMING ARTS

Dance, when you're broken open.
Dance, if you've torn the bandage off.
Dance in the middle of the fighting.
Dance in your blood.
Dance, when you're perfectly free.
    Jalaluddin Rumi, "Dance, When You're Broken Open" (Coleman Barks translation, 2004)

Throughout this thesis I will be referring to several concepts that require an examination into their theoretical development and current use in the field of anthropology. These include globalization and the newer concept 'glocalization', transnationalism, authenticity and hybridity, community, and culture and that which is cultural. In order to contextualise my empirical findings an overview of ethnographies of gender that take an approach through the performing arts will be included in the second half of this chapter.

Concepts

Globalisation, transnationalism and 'glocalisation'

In this thesis I make use of the globalisation and glocalisation theoretical frameworks developed by Arjun Appadurai (Appadurai, 1990; Appadurai, 2001; Appadurai, 2005) and Roland Robertson (Robertson, 1990; Robertson, 1992; Robertson, 1995). In the context of this thesis, both 'globalisation' and 'transnationalism' refer to the increasing traffic of people, products, and, most importantly in a discussion of global performing arts, ideas and aesthetics around the world. The principal difference between the two is that, while transnationalism principally (though not always; (Appadurai, 1990: 305)) focuses on these flows across national boundaries and whether such flows undermine the utility of the nation-state, globalisation refers to movements across boundaries that can include the traditional concepts of 'culture' as bounded entities (discussed below), to the nation-state, and to other ways of constructing the 'local' in opposition to the 'global'. In the course of this thesis, transnationalism refers to the formation of community across national boundaries, community that is defined by shared mutual interest in a recreational and professional activity rather than by geography, political affiliation, or shared mutual history. It can also refer to transnational markets in physical products related to belly dance such as costumes, props, dance music, and instructional DVDs, and in ephemeral

products like international dance festivals and international tours arranged for practicing and seeing dance. Where transnationalism does not specifically address this, globalisation also indicates the compression in time, the speed with which this is accomplished now more than ever, which is one of the major distinguishing factors between globalisation and previous processes of conceptualising global interaction like cultural imperialism and world system theory (Boyne, 1990; Wallerstein, 1990a; Wallerstein, 1990b; Friedman, 1994: 12; Crane, 2002: 2-4). Diana Crane provides a useful overview of the differences between cultural imperialism and Appadurai's development of the model of cultural flows, which I shall outline below.

> In contrast to cultural imperialism theory in which the source of cultural influence is Western civilization, with non-Western and less developed countries viewed as being on the periphery—as the receivers of cultural influences—the cultural flows or network model offers an alternative conception of the transmission process, as influences that do not necessarily originate in the same place or flow in the same direction. Receivers may also be originators. (Crane, 2002: 3)

Crane also points out that Appadurai's model of cultural flows moves beyond the centre-periphery models characteristic of world systems theory. Appadurai introduces several new conceptual dimensions to his model: ethnoscapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes (Appadurai, 1990: 296). Each of these terms describes the flows of people, technology, capital, information and ideas around the globe, and the spaces in which these are constructed and reproduced. He suggests that these terms might be used in opposition to former essentializing terms to describe localities and communities (Appadurai, 2005: 64).

However, it is important to note that Appadurai does not imply cultural exchanges are equal in each direction of flow, but rather theorizes that they operate under "relations of disjuncture" (Appadurai, 2001: 5). Building on examples of how flows of images and ideas that cross national and cultural boundaries, Appadurai says that "globalization—in this perspective a cover term for a world of disjunctive flows—produces problems that manifest themselves in intensely local forms but have contexts that are anything but local" (2001: 6). But the possibilities suggested by imaginative flow are not all sources of conflict; they can also open new, innovative worlds that provide that most important of human qualities: hope for the possibility of creating the world as we would like it to be, and an ever-increasing sense of what that might include (Appadurai, 1990: 296-297; Lewellen, 2002: 95; Appadurai, 2005: 52). Lila Abu-Lughod found that her research participants in an analysis of the politics of television in

Egypt made use of these possibilities of imagination to inform their lives in rich ways (Abu-Lughod, 2005: 50).

Abu-Lughod also emphasizes the particularity of her participants' experiences with relation to opened imaginative possibilities and their abilities to negotiate multiple layers of cultural meaning (2005: 50). In other words, not every person who receives the same internationally broadcast influences like television shows and branded products will perceive them in the same way; rather, they become localised within the context of the individual experience. This emphasis parallels Roland Robertson's emphasis on the effect of the local on the global in his development of a theory of glocalisation. Robertson's glocalisation does not contradict globalisation, but rather, emphasises a particular aspect of that process: the development by which the flows of ideas, products and aesthetics become localised. Robertson introduced the term glocalisation into social theory in 1995 on the grounds that much of globalisation theory up to that point appeared to suggest that it was a process that in some way invalidated ideas about location and locality (Robertson, 1995: 26). The term came into use as part of business jargon of multicultural companies in the 1980s to describe marketing strategies aimed towards "the tailoring and advertising of goods and services on a global or near-global basis to increasingly differentiated local and particular markets" (Robertson, 1995: 28; Iwabuchi, 2002). Glocalisation is not limited to describing the products of capitalist market flows, however, and the flow of ideas and aesthetics also comprise a part of glocalisation, though the method by which this occurs might be through, for example, a television advertisement for a consumer item. In chapter six I will discuss several examples from my empirical research in various locations that show a process of adopting aesthetic tropes from Egypt or from the Arab world and blending them with existing local aesthetics.

While the word 'glocalisation' was developed in the 1980s, well before the widespread use of the internet could begin to have its pervasive effect on global communications, new explorations into the realm of the possible and the spread of imagination have increased dramatically as theorists examine its influence. Timothy W. Luke examines how cyberspace has caused "the global and local flow [to] go far beyond the old realist divisions of space and time, sender and receiver, medium and message, expression and content as… complex webs of electronic networks generate new 'glocalized' hyperspaces with 'no sense of place' (Robertson, 1992)" (Luke, 1999: 30). Mike Featherstone introduces the idea of a 'psychological neighbourhood' to describe the ability of technologies like the internet to instantly unite us with others who may be

at a great distance, but who share interests, worldviews and even to some extent experiences such as pieces of information transmitted globally via news media (Featherstone, 1995b: 117). This parallels Appadurai's ideas of mediascapes and technoscapes as spaces where information may be exchanged over increasing distances and decreasing periods of time, informing bonds and communities that may once have been sustainable only in geographically bounded localities. Belly dancers' use of technology to stay informed about developing styles and communal understandings of what is and is not appropriate draws upon these concepts in chapter six.

Authenticity/hybridity

As will become clear in chapter five, I find authenticity a problematic concept. In the context of a discussion of an ephemeral cultural product that draws on the aesthetic traditions of several world regions (Shay and Sellers-Young, 2005), a definition of authenticity that draws upon a rigid notion of adhering to a perfect replication or re-creation of a past tradition (Daniel, 1996: 783) has only a tenuous applicability. Further, unlike physical objects which can be compared with what is known to have existed within a particular location and time period, the changes in time to ephemeral products like dance are more difficult to trace, at least before the advent of methods like Labanotation[1] and technologies like film recording. Even then, since much of the 'authenticity' debate within belly dance is framed around records of what travellers reported seeing dancers do in Egypt and Turkey in the 18th and 19th centuries as I will discuss in chapter five, these techniques and technologies only have bearing on a relatively small part of that debate.

However, 'authenticity' can be reformulated in ways that are less about a protectionist attempt to control influences on cultural development or how certain aspects of culture are perceived, and more about subverting the definition of 'authenticity' to highlight the imagined and constructed elements of creating a unifying vision of past histories (Crick, 1994; Nuryanti, 1996; Fife, 2004). Authenticity also does not necessarily need to refer to a vision of a 'pure', uninfluenced past, but instead can be formulated to incorporate the blending of multiple cultural influences into a unified, authentic, and yet ultimately new product. Virginia Danielson provides the example that Umm Kalthoum's music is widely considered to be the most fundamentally 'authentic' Egyptian and Arab music, the Platonic ideal of what Arab

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[1] Labanotation is a system for annotating systematic movement, analogous to musical notation. The system was first published by Rudolf von Laban in 1928.

music should be, even though it draws on a number of musical influences from various traditions around the world (Danielson, 1997: 158).

Wolfgang Welsch has said that "Authenticity has become folklore, it is ownness simulated for others—to whom the indigene himself or herself belongs" (Welsch, 1999: 198). He indicates that rather than being characterised by the deterministic ideas of authenticity I just outlined, contemporary cultures are characterised by hybridisation rather than by previous, internally bounded models of culture which will be discussed below. Welsch's definition of hybridisation is that "cultural conditions today are largely characterized by mixes and permeations" rather than being characterised by "homogeneity and separateness" (197).

In my own research I make use of two concepts from gender theory, Judith Butler's proposals of the open coalition and of the contestable category, to suggest a new approach to engaging with the idea of authenticity within the international belly dance community. In chapter five I suggest that keeping this concept as a constantly available site of contestation could be seen as a resolution in its own right. Butler uses the concept of questionable categories to refer to the way that social categories such as gender, age and race do not have a single set of prescribed significances, but that these change over time (Butler, 2004: 179). In earlier work Butler uses the term "open coalition" to describe the process by which different parties ascribe meaning to concepts without the expectation that a single, unified understanding will eventually achieve and sustain prominence, given that societies have shifting conceptual needs over time (Butler, 1990: 14-15). I believe that this approach of the open coalition can be used to conceptualise authenticity as a contestable category, which could allow it to be resignified in dynamic ways in contrast with the essentialising, reductive ways it has been previously utilised.

Hybridisation is imbued in the theories of globalisation and glocalisation as being one possible result of these processes, with the other, oppositional possibility being homogenisation (Crane, 2002: 3-4, 10). Homogenisation suggests a future in which cultural differentiation becomes increasingly similar, while hybridisation usually is meant to indicate that, without losing a sense of diversity and differentiation, some aspects of cultures will merge to create new forms of identity. Most proponents of globalisation theory adhere to a view of a hybridised rather than a homogenised future—and even present (Appadurai, 1990; Feld, 2001; Crane, 2002: 17; Iwabuchi, 2002; Appadurai, 2005). Ted C. Lewellen reminds us that "all cultures are *already* hybrid, so what we are witnessing today is one hybrid culture mixing with another"

(Lewellen, 2002: 102). For this reason Lewellen finds most useful a definition of hybridity that attempts to take into account the intermixture of traditionalism and modernism particularly in the Third World (2002: 101), but for my purposes, a definition that describes the ultimate product of the intermingling of aesthetic tropes from different regions to produce a new cultural product—a hybrid product—does not need to be restricted to the tradition/modernity dichotomy. Rather, it can be used to describe the outcome of the process of glocalisation.

Community

In conceptualising my research population, a group that had connections beyond the physically local region but was not an organised, hierarchical, or formalised structure, I turned to the word 'community.' In the context of existing debates within anthropology about how to define groups in an increasingly globalised world, with a focus on how to constitute the 'local' as ever speedier information technology changes the face of mass communications (Smith, 1990: 175; Featherstone and Burrows, 1995: 89; Luke, 1999: 29; Lewellen, 2002: 151; Appadurai, 2005: 189), it is important to note that I do not mean to suggest the traditional, bounded view of community with a discrete edge, but rather a more fluid entity that has a varying degree of prominence to its individual members at different times.

Two other theorists have approached this problem by making use of the word 'neighbourhood' rather than 'community'. Appadurai defines 'neighbourhoods' as "life-worlds constituted by relatively stable associations, by relatively known and shared histories, and by collectively traversed and legible spaces and places" (Appadurai, 2005: 191). Appadurai to some degree divorces 'neighbourhood' from Cartesian space in his conception of 'virtual neighbourhoods', which he describes as a space where "Information and opinion flow concurrently…clearly they are communities of some sort, trading information and building links that affect many areas of life, from philanthropy to marriage" (Appadurai, 2005: 195). However, the term 'virtual' has become so enmeshed with the idea of the internet, the term 'virtual neighbourhoods' cannot be usefully applied to fully conceptualise the ways that imagined communities interact both offline and online. Mike Featherstone's idea of the 'psychological neighbourhood', mentioned earlier (Featherstone, 1995b: 117), might be useful to extend this idea beyond the realm of the world wide web to include other media such as the telephone, television, and even possibly group events like conferences and festivals arranged around a particular theme.

While I find Appadurai's and Featherstone's conceptions of virtual and psychological neighbourhoods useful for informing my idea of community, I prefer the term 'community' because 'neighbourhood' is so intensely bound to a particular region of physical space, while 'community' can be focused around a group or the association of several groups of people. Even so, my usage requires reframing from its past associations with the idea of a singular, bounded group defined by territory, language or the fixed, stable identities of its constituent members, a reframing that is already being conceptualised by anthropologists as a whole in response to shifting paradigms within a globalised world.

Culture

Culture is one of the most complex terms in the English language. Ethnographer Jane K. Cowan describes defining it as "one of the most vexed questions within anthropology" (Cowan, 1990: 11). Specifically within the discipline of anthropology, the dominant paradigm from the turn of the 20th century has been to conceptualise culture as divorced from demography; "as some kind of text that had its own life and could be studied in itself without reference to the people who practiced it" (Friedman, 1994: 67). Friedman further indicates that "the notion of culture as an abstractable packet of signs, symbols, tools and beliefs" continued to gain ground through the 20th century (1994: 68). This rejects the previous model of cultures as bound wholes, though even in 1995 Mike Featherstone outlined the prevailing model of 'culture' as "being a particularity which is the opposite of the global. It is often taken to refer to the culture of a relatively small, bounded space in which the individuals who live there engage in daily, face-to-face relationships" (Featherstone, 1995b: 92). Though referring to this as the way culture is "usually" perceived, Featherstone was in fact arguing for the arbitrary, situational nature of this conception of culture, which needs to be reformulated in a world where the 'local' is no longer limited by geography. This detachment of the 'local', the resignification of those forces which provide individuals' lives with meaning, away from bounded physical localities is very important for my own research. This is not to say that immediate spatial surroundings have ceased to be relevant, but that people are now more than ever able to form and sustain important relationships, whether those be economic, social, or ideological, that transcend distance or geography.

As I mentioned above in my discussion of 'authenticity', Welsch also rejects the traditional view of single cultures in favour of an approach that accounts for the

heterogeneity and mixing characteristic of globalisation (Welsch, 1999: 197-199). Welsch introduces the term 'transculturality' to explain his new formulation of how cultures interact, on the grounds that "Cultures *de facto* no longer have the insinuated form of homogeneity and separateness. They have instead assumed a new form, which is to be called *transcultural* in so far as it *passes through* classical cultural boundaries" (1999: 197). However, the paradigm of globalisation has been expanding the concept of culture to include new meanings not bounded by locality or homogeneity in a way that doesn't require abandoning the term itself. Lewellen sums up the influence of globalisation on anthropologists' conceptualisations of culture:

> Whereas traditional anthropology looked at bounded cultures and communities, globalization theorists are more likely to be interested in transnationals, diasporas, nations that are scattered in many countries, and deterritorialized ethnicities. There is an increasing self-consciousness of the degree to which the community and the local were artifacts of the participant observation method (Lewellen, 2002: 30)

This is reflected in Seyla Benhabib's view that traditional anthropological attempts to characterise cultures as bounded whole entities were largely driven by reductive desires to categorise and easily control the knowledge that cultures produce. "From within, a culture need not appear as a whole; rather, it forms a horizon that recedes each time one approaches it" (Benhabib, 2002: 5). The concept of 'culture' thus becomes a way of describing symbolic systems of defining and interpreting meaning, and social power or status derived from utilising such systems. Further, such systems are not closed, but rather can incorporate an ever-widening array of meanings.

Within my own research, this concept that culture can contain an array of meanings is related to Ann Swidler's paradigm of culture as a 'tool kit' (Swidler, 1986). While globalisation was in its early theoretical stages when Swidler described the tool kit metaphor, the metaphor has become a useful way of conceptualising culture in a world where the confluence between locality, group identity and geography is no longer fixed. As I will discuss in chapter six, Swidler's kit can potentially contain an infinite variation of tools. This can be conceptualised on the individual level of each person's interaction with the tools of culture, or on the level of increasingly mobile groups of people coming into contact with new ideologies that then become newly collective understandings. Individual dancers might become aware and begin to make use of new choreographic styles or new developments in costume aesthetics, for example, or a fashion that has become popular in Cairo may suddenly find a new audience among a community of dancers in Texas, Japan or New Zealand. Further, the 'tools' of culture can be acquired (though not on an egalitarian basis), rejected, or abandoned for a while

and then taken up again. They can act in concert or in conflict. As the flow of information, products, ideas and imagination continues to speed up and spread out, this concept of culture recognises the increasing interaction of multiplicities in signifying meaning. From it we can take into account the flows of power that result from having access to a tool kit comprised of multiple systems of meaning, or the disjuncture of having access to fewer methods for making sense of the multiple imaginative possibilities suddenly available through the increasing traffic of products, images and ideas.

Ethnographies of Gender and the Performing Arts

Throughout my thesis I will be referring to the work of several dance researchers whose work also focuses on gender and the performing arts throughout the MENA region. I have already made clear the principal influence of Karin van Nieuwkerk's studies of performing arts, gender and social expectations in Egypt and in the Egyptian diaspora on my thinking, to which I will be referring extensively throughout this thesis (Nieuwkerk, 1990; Nieuwkerk, 1995; Nieuwkerk, 1998a; Nieuwkerk, 1998b; Nieuwkerk, 2003; Nieuwkerk, 2007). Also very significant to my research is Jane C. Sugarman's work on constructing femininity in the Prespa community in Albania, Laura Lengel's work on female musicians in Tunisia, Sherifa Zuhur's study of Arab women singers, and L. L. Wynn's ethnography of the tourist industry in Egypt, including the search for 'authentic' performance of dance and other arts (Lengel, 2000; Sugarman, 2003; Lengel, 2004; Zuhur, 2005; Wynn, 2007).

Sugarman studied women's dancing in Prespa communities found in Albania and Macedonia as well as in the diasporic communities in North America, particularly Toronto. Her work addresses the construction of gender normative behaviour, expressed in dance, in an increasingly globalised world. Specifically, she concludes that it is no longer possible to examine genres of dance in isolation, as though individuals are not party to many different styles of dance that hold different meanings to them and to the societies in which they live (Sugarman, 2003: 111). Further, the increasing transmission of not only varying aesthetic forms but also ideologies, imaginative possibilities and values around the globe creates what Appadurai terms a 'relation of disjuncture': women must either construct their performances in such a way that it distinguishes them from "women whose performances have occupied a space outside the societal codes that have governed the familial realm" (2003: 112). However, the increasing imaginative possibilities of globalisation can also open a space where women

are able to choose to reconstruct these oppositional dance forms. These new dances can then be used to expand the possibilities of what femininity might mean. Anthony Shay suggests that it is just this process which caused North American feminists to adopt belly dance in the 1970s and 80s as a dance form that could resignify the female body (Shay and Sellers-Young, 2005: 14-19). Sugarman, though excited by the new resources women are finding to reconstruct rigidly patriarchal societies, also advocates caution that these resignified aesthetic forms "may unwittingly pull women into a new set of patriarchal structures: those characterizing the hypersexualized feminine identities that have developed within "advanced capitalist" societies" (Sugarman, 2003: 112). What Sugarman only alludes to briefly is how men might also make use of new choreographic forms to challenge traditional conceptions of masculinity, something I discuss in chapter seven.

Both Laura Lengel and Sherifa Zuhur are concerned with the public/private dichotomy that influences public perception of women's performance. Lengel's work focuses on Tunisia, though she draws some examples from Egypt (Lengel, 2000: 346-351), while Zuhur examines the Egyptian music industry to make conclusions about what she calls "female Muslim entertainers" or "Arab women singers" (Zuhur, 2005). Lengel focuses her discussion of the public/private divide around class differences that affect the physical and imagined boundaries that define the public sphere, which women in Tunisia were traditionally expected to eschew (Lengel, 2000: 341-342). She expands this into a discussion of how the female public performing body of both singers and dancers provides a challenge to this dichotomy, a challenge which has historically been rebuked by associating the public performing body of women with prostitution (2000: 352). This is echoed in Zuhur's analysis when she says that both historically and in the present, "Women entertainers…are poised to become a new symbol in the fight against Islamist extremism" (Zuhur, 2005: 56).

While Lengel's analysis is more historical in nature, Zuhur focuses on the strategies that female singers and performers have used to combat their negative moral associations, including appealing to a more traditional image by highlighting their familial roles, appealing to the distinguished image of respected female performers of the past like Umm Kalthoum, refusing to engage in what could be seen as even more disreputable professions like films, and appealing to folkloric musical and costume styles (2005: 40-47). Lengel also introduces the idea of the all-female performance space as a strategy that operates within the traditional public/private dynamic (Lengel, 2004) though this can be resignified as, for example, an all-female orchestra performing

for a mixed public. This provides a space where women can both participate in the performing public body while retaining the 'protective' element of an all-female space, especially in conjunction with musical styles, costumes and stage presence that enhance their public image of "respectable comportment" (Lengel, 2000: 355). Lengel also puts forward a call for greater attention to be paid to Muslim women performers from the discipline of performance studies, indicating that this might help bridge the divide that has arisen between a strand of performance studies that occasionally cannot see how Western-specific its focus is, and the particularities of performance in many world regions. "Examining how MENA women performers make changes in their lives, resist restrictive legislation of Islam, and create a new tradition of women's musical communities might be taken to reflect a location of many women in the region, from similar subject positions" (Lengel, 2004: 228).

In her ethnography of travel and tourism in Egypt at the turn of the 21st century, L. L. Wynn discusses the complex interactions of foreign and local influence that have affected the development of how belly dance is perceived in Egypt today (Wynn, 2007: 215). In contemporary Egypt, it is not only tourists from Europe and North America who are interested in seeking belly dance performance, but also tourists from Gulf Arab countries. As with every local, 'authentic' product sought by tourists, the imagined desire of the consumers affects the ultimate production. Wynn describes a vicious cycle in which the idea of authenticity must be continually reinscribed for the tourist; where as soon as an 'authentic' product is found or ritual performed, it is instantly rendered inauthentic by the very fact that it is the product of a tourist experience. "This modern yearning for an experience that embodies authenticity, tradition, and culture produces a paradoxical situation in which authenticity can never be achieved, because once it is marked off as such, it is no longer authentic" (Wynn, 2007: 16). However, Wynn points out that meaning in cultural productions for tourism is not inscribed in only one direction, or even just from 'the tourists' onto 'the locals' and vice versa, but rather involves a complex process of meaning creation for self and other on both sides. This parallels my discussion of the creation of gendered meaning between audience and performer in chapter seven. Wynn's discussion (2007: 217-218) of how some dancers in the international community become affiliated with Cairo as tourists and then sustain relationships with dancers and teachers there over many years is corroborated by my participant interviews in chapter six.

A comparable analysis to Wynn's discussion of the development of 'authentic' paradigms of Oriental dance in Egypt in the present day is Joaquina Labajo's work on

the emergence of professional traditions within Spanish flamenco (Labajo, 2003). Similar to the way that tourism, Hollywood films, and travel writings of the 19th century all contributed to perceptions of what belly dance is today both within Egypt and internationally, flamenco "cannot be explained without acknowledging this active and influential foreign presence, which was the most imputable factor in the flowering of an exotic gendered language of gestures and attitudes" (2003: 67). The foreign presence, Labajo explains, is that of 19th century non-Spanish writers and male artists. She describes the mythical quality that has arisen through the creation and reproduction of images of flamenco in cultural productions ranging from literature to advertising, a legacy that she finds to be in contrast to flamenco as it is practiced in everyday life. It is this myth, this image of romance, that in the 20th century came to be seen as a commodity of value to tourists, while undermining the emergent Spanish national identity of industrious workers who avoid the frivolity of social entertainment which flamenco represents. "Thus, the flamenco and wine were considered good if offered to foreigners but unsuitable for the domestic customs of Spanish citizens" (Labajo, 2003: 82). This ambivalence can also be seen in Egypt, where foreign dancers living and working in Cairo are not subject to the same degree of moral question as their Egyptian counterparts, as I discuss in chapters three and four.

Marie Virolle's discussion of a shift that has occurred in the Algerian musical genre of raï since the 1980s, while not explicitly concerned with the public/private dynamic I described while discussing Lengel and Zuhur's work, describes the liminal space outside that structure that raï once provided (Virolle, 2003). In the past two decades raï has become an internationally recognised genre. In that process, in contrast with most of its century-long development, female singers became marginalised.

> Despite their driving role throughout the history of raï, in the present phase of incorporation of the genre into the international show business scene, women are at best mere epigones….Raï is only known outside the Algerian frontiers through the work of three male artists: Mami, Khaled, and Faudel. (Virolle, 2003: 229).

Before becoming an internationally marketed commodity, Virolle describes raï's function as an outlet activity where both women and men could explore alternatives to gender normative significance in everyday life (2003: 226), which Virolle describes as a "blurring of genders." This can be compared to my description of dance as a space outside ordinary life to explore what gender means and what it might mean in chapters six and seven. In contrast, women in the new, internationally marketed raï have been consigned to the sidelines of chorus backing vocals or visual dressing in the music

videos (229). Fraught as this relationship with the new international influence of a global market is, Virolle also indicates that as it became mainstreamed raï has also worked for the benefit of Algerian women, providing "A real modification of the male-female relationship and of the social representation of the female body…" (2003: 228), providing examples such as the ability of young women now to dance publicly with young men.

Approaching the study of gender through fieldwork ethnographies of performance arts from a slightly different angle, Carol M. Babiracki introduces some very pertinent questions about the gendered process of conducting and writing up research in a discussion of her fieldwork in village India (Babiracki, 2008). She acknowledges that this question is not new, that Edward Ives had indicated in the original 1974 edition of his manual on field methods that gender will make a difference to the outcome of field research but "I can't tell you what kind of difference" (Ives, 1995: 29). Babiracki believes that even in hindsight it is not always possible to tell what influence gender identity has had on conducted research. Babiracki is able to describe a shifting paradigm within ethnographic research between a study she originally conducted in the early 1980s and another in the early 1990s. She writes about an academic culture in the 1980s that stressed gender-neutral scholarship, something she describes as influenced by the institutional paradigms of graduate school as well as "official discourse in ethnomusicology" (Babiracki, 2008: 169). Though she notes that in coursework, the influence of the researcher's gender on access, rapport and role expectations was sometimes discussed, gender was assumed to have no influence on the interpretation and writing-up process.

In contrast, the current paradigm for both conducting fieldwork and providing the written interpretations of that lived experience is to acknowledge the researcher's subjectivity in terms of gender, race, class, age, education, and other identity-forming categories. However, Babiracki questions how this strategy serves the interests of the research subjects. "The intersubjective and self-reflexive approaches tend to place the researcher herself in the center of the story, potentially marginalizing the subject and subordinating her story to the method itself" (Babiracki, 2008: 180). She further states that these dialogic interview strategies have the potential to create a 'delusion of alliance' premised on false assumptions about the universality of the female experience. In terms of my own research, I approached my research participants (both male and female) with the premise that I am very much one of them; a participant in the international dance community from long before I assumed my identity as a scholar and

researcher. They, in turn, responded to me as one who would already be familiar, and possibly even in agreement with them, about community debates surrounding, for example, assumptions about historical developments, what cultural 'respect' means in the context of developing new styles and sartorial paradigms, and the gendered dancing body. However, my audience is not that of the international belly dance community alone, and my position as a dancer does not invalidate my position as a scholar. Babiracki leaves us with the question "Can one…produce intersubjective *and* paradigmatic social scientific works based on the same field research?" (2008: 181). This is a question of access while conducting research and interpretation while considering the aims and audiences for which one is writing. I am not yet sure whether Babiracki's aim is achievable, but I believe a paradigm of ethnographic writings where such an objective is at least striven for is emerging.

Jane K. Cowan, in her study of dance and gender in Greece, also raises pertinent methodological questions about the ethnography of gender (Cowan, 1990). She points out that the study of 'gender' largely remains conflated with the study of 'women'. However, she indicates the problem is not merely one of abandoning the study of men and masculinities in favour of women and femininities, but rather that attempts to study genders in isolation from one another undermine the discursive, dialectical nature of the study of gender. "It is only when gender is examined as a relational reality, when "being/becoming a woman" and "being/becoming a man" are recognized as mutually constitutive processes, that a feminist perspective generates its most powerful critical insights" (Cowan, 1990: 8). I have attempted to frame my own study in the language of gender rather than women's studies alone, though in a self-selecting population that is dominated by female participants, devoting equal writing space to the issues that male dancers and community members face was not practical. However, being concerned with the relationship that men and women both have with the practice of belly dance, I sought out the theoretical writings of male dancers and dance researchers to augment the dialectical discussion, as well as the interviews with male dancers I discuss in chapter seven. In terms of how individuals constitute gender Cowan recognises that it is often *experienced* as a natural rather than a social fact, even if what people enact as gender is largely constructed.

Describing how children become 'engendered,' Cowan indicates that the process of presenting gender involves far more than biological sex difference. "What are being embodied are the socially encrusted ways of being male or female in the world, ways encountered and learned through the child's practical engagement in the quotidian social

activities within a particular society" (Cowan, 1990: 130). Cowan relies largely on Bourdieu's conception of habitus and its entailing theory of embodiment in her analysis of gender as a social construct of which the individual can never become fully aware (1990: 23-24). My conceptualisation of gender relies much more on Judith Butler, who traces the philosophical basis of her theories to Foucault's discourses on power, characterising Bourdieu's theory of practise as having a conservative bent that limits the possibilities for resignification and new imaginative possibilities (Butler, 1997). Cowan modifies Bourdieu's concept of social unconsciousness:

> I would agree that individuals cannot become fully aware of the social and historical contingencies of their bodies and selves; but I would also argue that there are certain contexts in which individuals may become more reflexively conscious than usual of their bodies" (Cowan, 1990: 24)

She takes dance as a prime example of a space where, even more than in everyday life, the individual can exaggerate and explore conscious meanings held about the body. This parallels my own view of dance as an extraordinary space to explore complex aspects of identity, as discussed in chapters six and seven.

In the coming chapters, I will discuss my findings about the concepts raised in the first half of this chapter. My own findings are supported by the empirical data of the ethnographies discussed above. The concepts outlined in the first half of this chapter, globalization, glocalization, transnationalism, authenticity and hybridity, community, and culture, are the framework from which my empirical findings draw meaning. My ethnography of the international belly dance diaspora adds new theoretical territory to the existing body of literature on studies of gender and performance by making use of concepts developed in gender studies to approach some existing questions in new ways. I also expand the methods by which studies of gender and performing arts have thus far been predominantly conducted to incorporate a global, culturally interactive perspective that destabilises traditional conceptualisations of community and culture. The findings discussed in the following chapters can now be examined in the context of what this study contributes to previous theoretical developments and observational data, which gives rise to a rich discussion of the meaning of my own empirical research and advancements to theory.

Development of Normative Dance Paradigms in Egypt

Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.
                                        T. S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton", 1936

In order to contextualise the situation of belly dance in globalised spaces today, it is necessary to examine the historical development of public discourse on dance within Cairo, which ultimately bears upon normative expectations about dance in Egyptian society generally. Egyptian public opinion on dance can be examined both through changing legal regulations and changing expectations of dancers' moral significance in public discourse. To contextualise current sanctions—both in its restrictive and permissive senses—on dance in Egypt, this chapter begins with an examination of the earliest recorded ban on public dancers in Cairo in 1834. I will then discuss the 2003 ban on foreign dancers in Egypt and the wider significance this has in terms of contemporary nationalistic rhetoric. I will also examine the interaction between religious discourse and the development of popular opinion on and moral approaches to dance.

Legal restrictions on dance in Egypt are not based on the activity of dancing itself, but rather apply and have always applied solely to professional performers (Nieuwkerk, 1995; Flaubert, 1996; Buonaventura, 1998; Fahmy, 1998). This is not the case, for example, in Iran, where dancing was considered so morally circumspect that for a time it was nominally banned for all, though in 1999 the Iranian Minister of Culture opined that "dance is neither futile nor frivolous" (Shay, 2005a: 106). This is not to say that legal injunctions bear no relation to dance in a private social context. Many of the restrictions in Egypt are based on moral ideas about dancers and dancing that are applicable just as much to private persons as to professional dancers in the public eye. Although the rationale behind the adoption of legislation pertaining to dance may on one level be influenced by economic factors, national and cultural identity also come into play.

Muhammad 'Ali to '*Mawas* Pasha': 19th Century Ban

In June 1834, the governor of Egypt, Muhammad 'Ali, issued a command that all public dancers and prostitutes must cease their professional activities in and around Cairo. This is reported in a footnote in Edward Lane's 1836 *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* from his chapter on public dancers[1] (Lane, 2003: 566). Elsewhere, such as in popular dance literature like Wendy Buonaventura's *Serpent of the Nile*, (1998); accounts state that these women were allowed to relocate to remote destinations up the Nile, but it is not stated by Lane whether those places would be considered an official sanctuary. Sophia Poole's account of ten years later, discussed below, does explicitly state that some dancers relocated to Esna[2]. Several scholars and dance enthusiasts have considered the reasoning behind the ban but these remain mainly speculative propositions and are discussed later in this section.

Nearly all the information about belly dancers in Egypt, prior to the late 20th century, comes to us from the writings of pre-20th century travellers such as Gustave Flaubert, Edward Lane, and Lady Lucie Duff Gordon. Scholars and dance enthusiasts seeking to learn about the history of dance turn to these sources. Descriptions of dance contained therein have also become a benchmark in the much-debated idea of 'authenticity'. Generally, in testing whether any cultural practice is authentic, researchers will compare the way in which the practice is performed now with records of how such a practice was performed in the past with a view to figuring out when and how outside influences began to take effect. In this case, because the records we have about Oriental dance are provided by foreign observers untrained in modern ethnographic, anthropological, or dance scholarly techniques, the records are unreliable as a basis for such a comparison. This is not to say that they are useless: among other things that can be learned from them is practical information about, for example, how dancers were taxed. The records are also useful for pointing up what travellers found to be foreign and what they found familiar. Moreover, as discussed at length in chapter five, the idea of authenticity itself, though valuable for classifying types of antique chairs, is certainly questionable where it begins to spill over into an essentialist vision of who 'owns' a particular set of motions.

Speculation arises among dance scholars about the effect the ban had on the number of male dancers in Cairo, many claiming that there was an increase in male

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[1] "Women detected infringing this new law are to be punished with fifty stripes for the first offence, and for repeated offences are to be also condemned to hard labour for one or more years…"
[2] Her information most likely comes from her brother Edward Lane's unpublished travel notes, suggesting that perhaps Esna was in fact an official 'safe zone'.

dancers[3]. Some infer that the male dancers were pretending to be women or at the very least wore women's clothing (Nieuwkerk, 1995; Flaubert, 1996; Buonaventura, 1998; Fahmy, 1998; Zuhur, 2005: 40). This claim has been challenged, with scholars like Anthony Shay pointing out that performance clothes in most cultures differ from everyday clothing, and the travellers' descriptions could be depicting male costumes (Karayanni, 2004; Shay, 2005b: 70). The fact that the travellers themselves characterised them as female garb is unreliable; they could easily be misinterpreting the intentions of the wearers.

An undoubted effect of the ban is that foreigners began to go to great lengths to find that rare and exotic creature the female belly dancer[4]. Travellers went up the Nile to Esna, Qena and Aswan seeking the refugees from Cairo. Both Lane and Flaubert devoted many pages to describing dancer Kutchuk Hanem of Esna. It seems that like many forbidden things, the idea of the dancer became more seductive because of her inaccessibility.

It is unclear when, if at all, the ban was formally lifted. Muhammad 'Ali's eventual successor and grandson, Ismail Pasha, levied heavy taxes on performers including dancing girls in the early 1860s, but there is no evidence that they were allowed back in Cairo at this point. Lady Duff Gordon, who moved to Egypt for her health in 1862 and remained there until her death in 1869, wrote from Luxor in 1866:

> I saw one of the poor dancing girls the other day, (there are three in Luxor) and she told me how cruel the new tax on them is. It is left to the discretion of the official who farms it to make each woman pay according to her presumed gains, i.e. her good looks, and thus the women are exposed to all the caprices and extortions of the police. (Duff Gordon, 1902: 322).

Duff Gordon went on to report that this tax more than any other excited the disgust and frustration of the populace, reporting that Ismail Pasha had earned the nickname '*Mawas* Pasha', a phrase she refused to translate owing to its vulgarity but which elsewhere has been reported as 'Pimp Pasha' (Dunn, 2005: 185) In 1867 she again mentions the oppressive taxes, saying "the taxation makes life almost impossible—100 piastres per feddan, a tax on every crop…on every man, on charcoal, on butter, on salt,

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[3] The commonly cited source for this is Edward Lane's description in *Manners and Customs*, but dance scholar Stavrous Stavrou Karayanni points out that in fact no passage describing such an increase exists, discussing at length the problematic historical construction and myth creation resulting from this fallacy (Karayanni, 2004: 70, 94-95).

[4] Though writers like Flaubert did encounter male dancers, it is clear from their descriptions that when hunting for dancers, they were seeking female performers. Flaubert does say that he believes the male dancer he saw, Hassan el Belbeissi, is a better performer than the female Kutchuk Hanem, but when initially seeking a dancer it is clear he was expecting to see a woman (Flaubert, 1996: 111).

on the dancing girls" (Duff Gordon, 1902: 335). In early 1866, she conveyed the following anecdote on taxes:

> Everything is cheaper than last year, but there is no money to buy with, and the taxes have grown beyond bearing, as a fellah said, "a man can't (we will express it 'blow his nose,' if you please; the real phrase was less parliamentary, and expressive of something at once *ventose* and valueless) without a cawass behind him to levy a tax on it. (Duff Gordon, 1902: 315)

This reflects the overall tone of desperation and antipathy felt by the heavily taxed population, who were again burdened by a virulent cholera epidemic. In the bitter humour conveyed in the above anecdotes there are foreshadows of the current mistrust of the newfound piety of female entertainers, and the possible economic motives behind that[5].

Nieuwkerk also recorded that Ismail Pasha instituted a program of heavy taxation in order to finance the Suez canal (Nieuwkerk, 1995: 197 n31). Other sources ambitiously suggest that the great debt Egypt found itself in near the end of Muhammad 'Ali's reign resulted from the revenue loss when highly taxed Cairene dancers moved upriver (Berger, 1961; Buonaventura, 1998; Hobin, 2003). While it is possible that the tax revenue loss from the disappearing dancers was significant, it is unlikely that any government would eliminate a revenue stream upon which it depends. It seems more likely that the new tax was a response to an increase in expenditures rather than an attempt to recoup the years of lost revenue.

As for why the dancers were banned, many suggest it was a combination of factors including religious pressure, a sort of cultural self-consciousness about the perceptions of outsiders, and a cholera epidemic. If it were a religious decision, why suddenly ban them in 1834 and not previously? There is no indication from sources that there was a public debate or written records from religious figures urging 'Ali to ban public dancers. It may have been there, inaccessible or unnoticed by the travel writers, but it is equally likely that public dancers and prostitutes, who were essentially outcasts on the fringes of society, went generally unnoticed by the higher echelons of society. Dancers were hired for public and private celebrations, but their daily lives would have been no concern of the employers. Any woman who by necessity or particularly by choice earned her own living was and remains in some discourses regarded with suspicion, particularly if the method for such earning involved entertainment. When is

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[5] Contemporary jokes about this situation, reflecting public consciousness of and aversion to attempts by powerful figures to manipulate public discourse on piety, are discussed in the coming section "Belly Dance as a Forum for Creating and Representing Nationalised, Gendered and Religious Discourse."

suspicion most likely to boil over into intolerance? In times of strife when a scapegoat becomes necessary.

In the first half of the 19th century, repeated epidemics of cholera and bubonic plague ravaged Egypt. As a consequence of inconsistent Nile plain flooding, famine also contributed to the staggering loss of life. In one of the most devastating epidemics, "in 1834-5, it was estimated that half-a-million people perished, that is, nearly one fifth of the total population" (Lutfi al-Sayyid, 1984: 119). Whole villages dwindled or perished entirely. Dancers and prostitutes were blamed for facilitating the spread of disease. This echoes Napoleon's earlier blaming of the dancing girls for sowing unrest among his troops stationed in Cairo and his generals' severe punishment of those who loitered about the barracks (Nieuwkerk, 1995: 30; Buonaventura, 1998: 60). By the 1840s, professional dancers were inescapably associated with prostitution. While there were dancers of a certain economic status who were able to perform without adding sexual services to their repertoire, the majority of women claiming to be dancers at this time practiced some form of sex work. Nieuwkerk is careful to note that prostitutes were actually registered as having a different profession (Nieuwkerk, 1998a: 23). Though 19th century Egyptians did recognise a stratification in the respectability of public dancers, one strand of public dialogue classed it, and as discussed above still does so, as a dirty and dishonourable profession. Along with this notion came ideas about cleanliness that, in an atmosphere beset by dangerous communicable diseases, would make any dancer seem like a threat to the respectable community. Muhammad 'Ali and his cabinet would need no more reason to ban dancing girls and prostitutes than the notion that doing so would protect the urban population, or at least placate the populace by making them feel protected. In a similar fashion, the harsh punishments meted out to dancers or prostitutes fraternising with the French troops were likely to be prompted as much by the perception of their effect on the troops rather than any real threat on French lives made by the girls themselves: this would certainly have been equalled by other, more conventionally martial threats to the French.

Khaled Fahmy suggests that in addition to plague and famine, military action by Egypt against Syria also contributed to social unrest and ultimately to the demonization of dancing girls. He attributes the rise of prostitution in Eygpt in the early 1830s to heavy conscription. Fahmy argues that without the support of traditional family providers, Egyptian women were forced into poverty and prostitution (Fahmy, 1998: 42). An example of the conflation of dancers and prostitutes, both of whom were tarred

with the same moralistic brush, can be seen in the following statement about controlling syphilis by Dr. Antoine-Barthélemy Clot.

Dr. Clot assisted Muhammad 'Ali in organising the Egyptian medical system by, among other works, establishing a medical school including a School of Midwives between 1827 and 1832. In 1847 Clot published a treatise urging that prostitutes be regularly examined for syphilis. Allowing female prostitutes, according to Dr. Clot, "is far better than [allowing the men] to replace them with a much greater vice that is against human nature, by which we mean those young boys who, with the pretext of [public] dancing, commit what is improper even to be uttered" (Fahmy, 1998: 45) The bracketed clarifications are Fahmy's; I assume he means to indicate that at this time public dancing was considered a mask for prostitution. This is a generally accepted position in belly dance scholarship, though the statement above does not clarify that it applies both to female and male public dancers. Associating public dancing with prostitution and by extension moral and physical filth, especially with the word 'public' emphasised by its later insertion for clarifying purposes, leaves unanswered the question of contemporaneous 19th century public perceptions of dancing in the home or at private gatherings.

As for the influence of the foreign gaze or religious conservatism, though these may have been factors that appealed to 'Ali and his advisors, it seems most likely that the principal reason for the ban was an attempt to pacify public concerns about cholera and the Bubonic plague. Lane gives no indication in his very brief footnote about why the ban was executed. His description of public attitudes toward dancers indicates that they were popular though morally ambiguous, and that some people felt male dancers were less morally circumspect than female dancers. Dancers of all walks of life were generally thought of as 'unclean' physically as well as morally, though Lane distinguishes between several economic, and by extension social and moral, classes of dancer or performing woman. One possibility is that he believed dancers' clearly tenuous social and moral standing obviously explained such a ban, for if there were another reason, why did he not note it? Conversely, Lane's statements in Poole about the dancers' refusals to "profess repentance of their dissolute lives" (Poole, 2003: 213) and subsequent banishment suggest that there was a religious tone to the edict: if a dancer renounced her former career and ceased dancing, she would be allowed to stay. However, an explicit motivation for the ban is still lacking, as the sanctimonious tone may come from Lane rather than the edict itself. It is a very different thing to declare that a group of people must stop their profession than to require that they also repudiate

their former method for securing a livelihood, a matter also considered in the section "Belly Dance as a Forum for Creating and Representing Nationalised, Gendered and Religious Discourse" below. The first suggests, in this case, an interest in the very practical matter of stopping the spread of disease, or possibly the desire to satisfy public opinion on the basis of such, while the other implies a more cerebral stance on Egyptian morality in the public sphere.

Now that I have considered historical constructions of dance and dancers as a field of demarcation for social propriety within Egypt, I will examine these issues by exploring more contemporary Egyptian strictures relating to dance.

Dance as a Signifier of National and Ethnic Pride

In August 2003, Ahmed El Amawi, Minister of Manpower and Immigration, announced a plan to prohibit all foreigners from working as belly dancers in Egypt starting in January of the following year. (Wynn, 2007: 222). In November 2003, following the announcement of the ban, Nawal al-Naggar of the Ministry of Labour said, "Belly dance is an Egyptian thing and is not a hard job…" claiming additionally that there had been a "public outcry" against non-Egyptian dancers[6] (Garwood, 10 November 2003b). The implications of this statement are far-reaching. By asserting that it is an Egyptian thing, rather than an Arab or Middle Eastern thing, al-Naggar is declaring an Egyptian entitlement to an activity known to be performed and practiced in other nations. Whether or not it in fact originated there, Egypt is regarded by a majority of participants in the global dance community and by dance researchers as the cultural centre of the belly dance world. This is also true for the music industry in the Middle East, though the Gulf is becoming more prominent in this regard (Zuhur, 2005). The question is whether this Egypt-centricity should be an official government-sanctioned stance. Deniz Kandiyoti has pointed out that cultural structures, especially those perceived as referents to an undesirable past, can be "redefined as ethnic markers or as symbols of 'national' identity, especially if they are forcibly obliterated by an authoritarian statist project" (Kandiyoti, 1991: 433). In this light, the 2003 ban on foreign dancers and Naggar's statements in its defence can be seen as an attempt by the Egyptian state to appropriate belly dance as a symbol of a shared past in order to define Egyptian identity.

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[6] When pressed for details, as this statement appears unsubstantiated by other evidence, she cited two Egyptian lawmakers who complained in Parliament.

Alternatively, one could speculate that the ban on foreign dancers was a preliminary step toward prohibiting all public performances of Oriental dance precipitated by an increasingly powerful Islamic dialogue within Eygptian politics. This too correlates to contemporary constructions of Egyptian identity: "A complicated choreography around the terms Muslim, Arab and Egyptian as bearers of 'authentic identity' and national belonging has marked Egypt's history"(Al-Ali, 2000: 41). The increasing trend toward Islamism within Egypt and how this affects dancers will be discussed further in the section "Belly Dance as a Forum for Creating and Representing Nationalised, Gendered and Religious Discourse." Whatever the intentions behind the ban, either to promote public piety or to protect a segment of the Egyptian labour market, it was overturned only a year later in 2004.

Naggar's statement above contains a contradiction: to claim that it is not a hard job suggests that professional dancers are overvalued for the service they provide. This is interesting given that speculation about the reasoning behind the ban of foreign dancers is that they were undercutting prices of local dancers, an assertion backed up by price comparisons presented in many contemporaneous news articles, though the estimated difference in wages for Egyptian and foreign dancers varied wildly. See "Recent Ban and Overturning" in the next chapter for these estimates. Susan Hack's 2000 article on Salon.com quotes one talent manager saying that he hires foreign dancers in part because of their smaller fees. This suggests that while the estimates of difference are unreliable and may have been manipulated by sources in favour of the ban, there was an influential difference prior to the 2003 ban.

Essam Mounir, an Egyptian agent, described foreign dancers in a New York Times article as reliable, educated workers with a passion for dancing, "but as for feeling our music, not one of them really gets it" (MacFarquhar, 20 January 2004: 4). Another display of nationalist pride can be seen in teacher Madame Rakia Hassan's assertion that "Oriental Dancing is something inside every Egyptian" (note, not every Egyptian woman, but every Egyptian.) She is later quoted as saying that "If this dance was from any other country, you might find better dancers than there are in Egypt. You don't. It's impossible" (MacFarquhar, 20 January 2004). However, she disagreed with the government's ban on foreign dancers, seeing it as adverse to Egypt's history of cosmopolitanism. Her claim for the supremacy of Egyptian dancers over foreigners also reflects her belief that foreigners may add diversity to the dance scene, but they do not bring undue competition, an assertion reflected by Nagwa Fouad below. Another contributor to the same article, a cabaret manager, claimed that foreign dancers were

creative innovators, while "Egyptians…think they just know how to dance and because they are Egyptian everyone will love them automatically." This suggests that the competition between foreigners and native dancers was not only about undercut prices.

Others contributing to the January 2004 article reflected the ambivalence always found in discussions about dance in Egypt. One young veiled woman claimed that Oriental dance is "something you should only do at home, not in front of strangers," though some of her companions also said that "there was nothing quite like watching an accomplished dancer to make them feel happy" (MacFarquhar, 20 January 2004). None of these women claimed dance itself was shameful or forbidden within the home. This contrasts with Karin van Nieuwkerk's continuing assessments of moral codes surrounding music and dancing in the Muslim world in general and in Egypt in particular. In a 1998 article on Egyptian female public performance including both dancing and singing, Nieuwkerk used as one example of increasing conservatism a *shaykh* who "claimed that even listening to the voice of a woman on the telephone is unlawful" (Nieuwkerk, 1998a: 28). In 2003, Nieuwkerk referred to a lecture made in a Dutch mosque that condemned even clapping hands as immoral. The woman delivering the lecture cited her Egyptian husband as a source, along with the Quran and Hadith, of her moral proclamations on music and dancing (Nieuwkerk, 2003: 270). Of course, the moral discourse of a diaspora community and that of its place of origin is not always synonymous. One strategy for responding to cultural differences when emigrating is isolation through adopting a greater degree of conservatism than that found in the original community. Where such a strategy is adopted, it serves to promote a sense of belonging and identity within the diaspora community by emphasising difference from the wider community (Moghissi, 2003; Werbner, 2004). Moreover, this particular speech was made to a group of Dutch female converts. Religious conversion, like emigration, also necessitates effort in order to integrate; in this case, the desire to be accepted within the new community results in a strategy of stricter adherence to religious doctrine than non-converts (Billette, 1967; Albrecht and Bahr, 1983).

In the writings of scholars who focus on female entertainment in Egypt, it is possible to see a pattern emerging: the assertion that Egypt and the Egyptian diaspora are becoming more conservative on the matter of dance as entertainment, even within the private sphere. Nieuwkerk, Zuhur, Abu-Lughod are careful to note that religious conservatism is but one dialogue operating among many in Egyptian and Muslim societies, and that no attitude concerning dance can be attributed solely to a single factor. Moreover, it is entirely possible to hold conflicting views on whether dance is

'good' or 'bad' based on several concurrent though mutually incompatible social dialogues (Abu-Lughod, 1995; Nieuwkerk, 2003; Zuhur, 2005; Nieuwkerk, 2007).

Retired dancer Fouad issued statements in November 2003 urging the government to reconsider the ban, citing the fact that foreigners have 'always' danced in Egypt (Garwood, 10 November 2003a). Not all observers agree that foreign influence is positive; Ahmed Dia el-Dine, a Cairene costume designer said in 2000 that "the style is no longer truly Oriental," citing as one point of difference the costume (Hack, 19 July 2000). Thirty years before, it took 35 meters of cloth just for the skirt, today a costume can be designed out of merely two meters. However, el-Dine also believed that "the situation has started to improve. I know this because Egyptian brides have been coming to me. They order belly-dancing costumes for their trousseaus." (Hack, 19 July 2000). I mentioned above that according to some interviews, even moderate to conservative Muslim women do not find dancing in the home shameful, only public displays of dancing. A bride buying a dance costume does not suggest the costume will be worn in public, but rather that as with other items typically found in a trousseau, it will be used in the home.

Coming full-circle on the governmental perspective of belly dance, President Anwar Sadat in the 1970s praised former dancer Souhair Zaki, calling her "the Oum Kalthoum of dance" and saying, "As she sings with her voice, you sing with your body" (Lababidi, 1 August 2004: 54). These accolades by a head of state, comparing a dancer to a national icon, also make belly dance a positive symbol of national identity. This contrasts with Nawal al-Naggar's 2003 statement above, which, while it identifies belly dance as "an Egyptian thing" and thus a practice that defines the boundaries of the nation through culture, also portrays it as "an easy job"; not something to be lauded but something to be tolerated.

Belly Dance as a Forum for Creating and Representing Nationalised, Gendered and Religious Discourse

Karin van Nieuwkerk, widely recognised as the leading authority on the female performing body in Egypt, writes extensively on cultural valuations of different types of performance. She outlines time and again in her writings one of the strongest schools of thought in Egypt concerning female performers and especially dancers: religious discourses on gender and the body. According to the strictest interpretations, a woman singing is bad (or even forbidden) and a woman dancing is worse. The female body is automatically sexually enticing, and performing any action that will augment this

quality is considered shameful. Moreover, this discourse assumes that men are incapable of controlling their sexual urges, and that whenever a man sees a woman he is likely to find himself, at the very least, thinking irreligious thoughts. This set of premises concludes that it is the good Muslim woman's responsibility, since she is the bastion of sexual power, to save men from themselves by avoiding any intemperate activity or clothing that might excite him (Nieuwkerk, 1995; Nieuwkerk, 1998a: 28-9; Nieuwkerk, 1998b; Nieuwkerk, 2003: 268). Nieuwkerk has related Middle Eastern and Egyptian constructions of gender boundaries and bodily discourse specifically to Oriental dance, engaging with widely accepted theories on these matters (Kandiyoti, 1991; Morsy, 1993; AbuKhalil, 1997; Murray and Roscoe, 1997; Al-Ali, 2000; Booth, 2001; Lengel, 2004).

In this discourse, obviously, belly dancers are not 'good women'. They are taking advantage of men by using their sexual bodies to overpower men's civilising impulses. In one article, Nieuwkerk outlines how some religious figures even strive to cast the act of belly dance as so incompatible with Islam that dancers cannot be Muslims (Nieuwkerk, 2003). This discourse focuses so intensely on the sexual aspect of a woman's identity that it appears to conflate femininity and sexuality. There appear to be no social roles for women that are not implicitly connected to her status as a sexual or reproductive being, as opposed to religious rhetoric that concerns men. Examined in further detail below are some of the strategies that women, particularly performing women, use to cope with or resist this dialogue.

In addition to the questionable status of the female body and especially the dancing female body, some Egyptians are suspicious of the artistic merit of belly dance. William C. Young discussed dancing with Cairene friends in the 1970s, attempting to defend its artistry. A woman present laughingly repudiated his suggestion: "'But everyone knows how to do it! It doesn't take any special training; we learn from our mothers!'" (Young, 1998: 37). Young contends that a commonly accepted distinction in Egyptian artistry is that between tangible material products like textiles or clothing, sculpture, and books of poetry, and ephemeral products like songs, dances and drama. This distinction manifests itself in the socially accepted moral status of the producer: those whose efforts result in tangible goods are 'real' artists and respected as such; those who produce only ephemeral works do "little more than display themselves" and are considered morally ambiguous (Young, 1998: 38). Tellingly, it is not the act of dance itself with which Young's Egyptian friend found fault: "everyone knows how to do it" and it is a form of knowledge passed maternally, which can hardly be supposed to incur

moral suspicion. Rather, it is only an attempt to take the dance out of its appropriate context that is viewed in an unfavourable light.

Young and Nieuwkerk disagree on one point: while Young focuses on the eventual physical or non-physical product as the defining moral factor in discussions of artistic merit, Nieuwkerk posits that gender is the defining moral factor for producers of ephemeral culture: "…Female entertainers [are viewed as] shameful and bad, while…their male colleagues are not condemned for similar activities" (Nieuwkerk, 1998a: 29). Young provides examples of types of male performers that would be viewed with a degree of moral turpitude, though their female colleagues will suffer more. Nieuwkerk suggests that it is not a matter of degree but of kind; female performers are immoral because religious rhetoric defines them as always and only sexual beings, while men's status as multidimensional creatures protects their honour from judgement based solely on bodily conduct (Nieuwkerk, 1995: 132; Nieuwkerk, 1998a: 29). In either of these constructions, it is not only the general public who are aware of and even make use of the question of women's public performance. "Female performers were well aware of the social stigma associated with musical performance…the social stigma was carried by entertainers who performed in public, not those who restricted themselves to home performances" (Zuhur, 2005: 39-40). This holds for dance as well as musical performance.

Both Young and Nieuwkerk address methods that women use to negotiate the tension between traditional gender roles and shifting economic necessities. Zuhur discusses similar strategies employed by female singers. While female vocal performance is not viewed with the same degree of moral turpitude, all types of public female performance in Egypt require a complex set of negotiations in order to justify their social acceptability (Zuhur, 2005). While female performers struggle to negotiate their position within public space, their very existence provides a site of resistance to societal norms.

> The Arab-Islamic woman performer's body is the site of struggle in the "in-betweenedness of identity. Her body is a political entity rebelling against interlocking hegemonic power structures of religion, family and State in the MENA. (Lengel, 2004)

Nieuwkerk focuses on female performers while Young discusses women in Egyptian public spheres more generally. Nieuwkerk, who built an extensive relationship in the Cairo entertainment community starting in the late 1980s (Nieuwkerk, 1995: 14), observed dancing women employing several strategies to protect their honour whilst engaging in a disreputable profession.

First, performing women can deflect accusations or suspicions of dishonour by emphasising their role as wives and mothers, thus accentuating their identities as traditional, home-based women who are not working outside the home as some sort of feminist bid for independence but out of economic necessity. Although these women contribute to the commercial labour market, they nevertheless identify as traditional homemakers (Nieuwkerk, 1998a: 30; Zuhur, 2005: 40). A second strategy is criticising the costumes and public attire of others: singers claim dancers wear more revealing clothing, old dancers claim that new dancers degrade the profession with skimpy outfits, and so forth. This strategy distinguishes between 'respectable' dancers and 'dishonourable' dancers, challenging the prevailing discourse categorising all dancers as shameful[7]. Finally, the most powerful and frequently employed strategy appears to be utilising associations with the category of *bint al-balad* (daughter of the country).

Nieuwkerk notes the difference between cultural ideals of gendered conduct and the norms that are realistically employed and enacted. "Among the *awlad al-balad,* lower-class urban Egyptians, there is more freedom in association and conversation between women and men, in the neighbourhood as well as at work. Women are not secluded from men" (Nieuwkerk, 1998b: 31). Despite the fact that many working-class Egyptian women are employed outside the home, the cultural fear of dishonourable conduct perpetuated by a women in public remains an obstacle to be negotiated by *banat al-balad* (daughters of the country). An extensive survey of both *banat al-balad* and *awlad al balad* (sons of the country) that examines at length their social roles in Egypt has been conducted by Sawsan Messiri (Messiri, 1978a; Messiri, 1978b); further sources include Evelyn Early and Walter Armbrust (Early, 1993; Armbrust, 1996: 25-26) The ultimate result is that these women have developed a reputation for strength, fearlessness, shrewdness in dealing with various kinds of people, and ferocity in defending their reputations. *Banat al-balad* are principally identified by others by their quality of 'masculinity,' which does not identify masculinity in appearance but rather in behaviour, attitude and habits (smoking, for example, is generally considered a masculine trait) (Nieuwkerk, 1995: 176). Performers employ this identity to their advantage, protecting their reputations by relying on the forthright and clever image of the *banat al-balad*.

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[7]This distinction is not a new one: in the 19th century female entertainers were popularly differentiated into two categories: the learned women (*almehs*) who performed only for other women or behind screens if singing for men, and the street dancers (*ghawazee*) (Nieuwkerk, 1995; Buonaventura, 1998; Said, 2000; Said, 2001).

An extension of the *bint al-balad*'s and female performer's association with masculinity is simply to declare oneself, during working hours, 'a man among men.' Nieuwkerk quotes a female musician saying "I am a man among men. Not a woman whom they [male colleagues] have to treat in a different way…[With men my behaviour is] man to man. It is not indecent…I am serious and straight like a man" (Nieuwkerk, 1995: 177). The female performer's claim to masculinity is not solely based on her conduct among male peers. The act of engaging in labour, earning a living, is a masculine characteristic in Islamic discourse and the Egyptian popular imagination. In traditional Islamic discourse, the public sphere is reserved for men, and the private sphere for women (Kandiyoti, 1991; Kandiyoti, 1994; AbuKhalil, 1997; Shakry, 1998; Mernissi, 2001). Therefore, women engaging in the public sphere are contradicting Islamic principles, so in order to fit into the system, they can declare themselves male for such purposes (Nieuwkerk, 1998a: 33). Female entertainers, incapable of reconciling the categories of respectability and the working woman, employ the strategy of denouncing their femininity. Nieuwkerk reads the statement "I am a man" as code for "I am a respectable working woman" (Nieuwkerk, 1998a: 33). Ultimately, this appears to be the goal of working women who employ this statement: creating a viable space for themselves in the working world. However, the statement also affects the concept of masculinity and manhood.

Verbally identifying oneself as a man differs from the first two strategies in one key respect: instead of identifying and negotiating an identity with respect to feminine characteristics (motherhood, public attire), female performers in Egypt completely repudiate their femaleness in their public interactions. Here, they actually employ a strategy which alters the fundamental quality that defines manhood: a male body is no longer necessary. Rather, to be a man among men, one simply needs to be a productive labourer. Women employ this strategy not only negotiate around existing gender categories, but in this statement, they actively change them. It is worth noting that this discourse operates principally for female Egyptian performers within Egypt and it is not generally a paradigm that women in the international dance community need to negotiate, though to some extent expatriate dancers living in Egypt also need to mediate expectations of femininity, as I discuss in the coming chapter.

Anthropologist William C. Young uses a different method to outline strategies for negotiating the tension between traditional gender roles and shifting social demands. He addresses the importance of women's dance at ritual occasions in Egypt. Positing that women's dance at social milestones like weddings and births is not only an

expression of joy but also an act with ritual significance, he questions whether such dancing is truly spontaneous (Young, 1998). Prior to the 1930s unpaid dance at Cairene weddings, principally by female family members, "helped to recategorise the bride as a member of the groom's mother's community and drew attention to the new relationship of affinity between the groom's mother and the bride's mother" (Young, 1998 :39). In contrast to dancers hired to entertain the guests, these unpaid dancers marked the shifts in social position that result from milestone events; for example, in the case of a wedding this would signify the bride's transition from unmarried girl to wife and homemaker and the groom's new role as familial provider. Young surmises that where women's dancing "aids in the reproduction of the social order and contributes to the work accomplished by ritual" it is highly valued, and where it is perceived as an entertainment commodity, it is not (Young, 1998: 51).

From this, Young concludes that public debate about women's dancing is not only about women, or only about dancing. He suggests that economic and political factors contributing to the loss or commercialisation of ritual social life underpin this debate (Young, 1998:52). Ultimately, Young takes the conservative stance that paid dance performance in Egypt has indeed become demeaning. Unlike religious discourse which historically renounced dance, Young believes this effect is due to increasing social inequity in the current Egyptian labour market. However, Sherifa Zuhur suggests dancers as well as female singers might provide a new element in the Egyptian social struggle to come to a consensus about Islamic propriety: "Women entertainers…are poised to become a new symbol in the fight against Islamist extremism" (2005: 56). Struggling to support female entertainment's appropriateness within the public as well as the private sphere can be seen as an attempt by female entertainers to provide an alternative dialogue to the increasingly restrictive Islamic mores within Egypt discussed below.

Where Nieuwkerk observed and catalogued the strategies working women, especially female performers, use to navigate between cultural ideas of femininity and the economic necessity of working outside the home, Young outlined three options aimed at social and moral reformers for resolving such tensions. The extreme, though by no means uncommon, goal of some conservative Islamic groups is to ban wholesale female dancers and possibly female entertainers of all sorts. Young does not perceive this as a viable option for, in his words "Women's dancing is still strongly associated with joy, vitality and fertility in Egypt; most Egyptians do not want to do away with it completely" (Young, 1998: 52).

The second option for Islamic reformers, rather than banning all women's dance, is to prevent dancing of any kind at weddings of the members of the reform movement. Young dismisses this option as well, claiming that in addition to "result[ing] in an impoverished ritual life for the reformers themselves, which they might find depressing…" it would actually serve to further cheapen the remaining performances by reiterating the commercialisation process that degrades dance not associated with ceremonial processes like weddings (Young, 1998: 52) Young does not address the fact that this process is in fact already happening: instances of religious conservatives threatening or attempting to stop weddings with female entertainers are not unknown in Egypt and Palestine (Shay, 2005a: 85; Zuhur, 2005:55). Karin van Nieuwkerk reports one instance of this while visiting a dancer named Ibtisam in 1997, whom she originally came to know through her fieldwork in the late 1980s. While watching the video of Ibtisam's daughter's wedding "they told me that Ahmad [Ibtisam's son, a religious leader] forbad singers and dancers to perform at his sister's wedding because it was *haram*, a forbidden thing in Islam" (Nieuwkerk, 1998a). Egypt's conservative forces are in fact pushing to ban dance at weddings. The ultimate result of this can only be that women's dance ceases to perform ritual, customary functions at milestone events, without which it will only exist in a commercial context. By ignoring its ritual function, the sanctifying association of dance with ritual ceases.

Young's final suggestion to Islamic reformers is to retain dance at milestone events but to reframe these instances of dance to focus on their ritual importance once again (Young, 1998: 52). With the shifting social realities of the modern world, traditional customs must also shift: traditions that remain in stasis risk not only obsolescence, but also taking on completely new meanings that negate their former significance (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992). Young indicates that though returning to gender-segregated weddings where women dance only for women might appear to solve the problem, this would not reflect current social realities where the sexes are no longer segregated outside the home. A gender-segregated wedding party would no longer have a real-world referent, and it becomes a pretence that no longer aligns with the prevailing social order. Religious conservatives may perceive such a segregation as a symbol of former greatness, but Young suggests that despite a visible increase in public consciousness of religion in Egypt in the last three decades, returning to that traditional way of life is not ultimately appealing for women. "Women do not wear 'Islamic dress' because they want to confine themselves to the home. Rather, they adopt more modest clothing styles because this allows them to penetrate domains and spaces that were

traditionally dominated by men" (Young, 1998: 53). Reflections on the veil as a symbol of power and public engagement have been discussed elsewhere; most notably in Guindi, Abu-Lughod, and Zuhur (Guindi, 1981; Zuhur, 1992; Abu-Lughod, 1998b). If belly dance is to retain its respectable side, the traditional, socially acceptable, ritually significant aspect of women's dance in Egypt needs to find a new form of expression.

One way this renewal of respectability might be accomplished is through recasting social dance as an act of traditional folklore, which would not necessarily conflict with conservative religious values (Young, 1998: 53). Nieuwkerk, in relating her story about Ibtisam's daughter's wedding, indicates that despite pressure from her son not to hire dancers, Ibtisam "admitted that as 'the mother of the bride' she had danced" (Nieuwkerk, 1998b). Notwithstanding religious categorisation of dancing as a forbidden act, there remains a cultural sense of ceremonial importance in women's dancing, particularly the couple's mothers, at weddings. Nieuwkerk also notes that "although religious ideology affects peoples' ideas about the entertainment profession it usually does not affect their behaviour" (Nieuwkerk, 1998b). It is obvious from her example about Ibtisam that though conservative Islamic discourse did have an affect on the matrimonial proceedings, it did not override Ibtisam's 'right' to dance as the mother of the bride. Space for dance, particularly women's dance, in Egyptian society has always been contentious. However, there has always been an appropriate, even commended, social arena for it. While increasing social and religious conservatism may not have been a major influence on the Egyptian government's 2003 decision to ban foreigners from performing, it is a dialogue that currently affects, and has always affected, both public and private ideas about dance. Nieuwkerk states in one article that famous dancers have been refused the necessary papers to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca unless they stop performing, a stance which implies that it is impossible to receive forgiveness for the 'sin' of dancing until one stops the practice (Nieuwkerk, 2003: 276). According to Sherifa Zuhur, Islamist thought has also contributed to increasing media censorship, including the elimination of live dancing from Egyptian televison (Zuhur, 2005: 55). The Egyptian populace has responded to the public dialogue of piety and what constitutes such with ambivalence, particularly with respect to female performers. On the extremely conservative end of the spectrum, there is the Dutch mosque lecturer mentioned above who condemned even hand clapping as violating religious strictures regarding musical entertainment. Nieuwkerk in her 2003 article also relates a common Egyptian joke predicated on the repentance artists:

Who are the second-best paid women in Egypt? Belly dancers, of course, because Saudi tourists throw hundred-dollar banknotes on their feet while they are dancing. Who are the best-paid women in Egypt? The converted belly dancers, of course, because Saudi sheikhs transfer thousand-dollar banknotes to their accounts if they stop dancing. (Nieuwkerk, 2003: 277).

The joke may reflect a distrust of the dancing women's motives in 'converting,' but it could equally be read to display a suspicion of the perceived hypocritical stance of anyone giving economic incentives for acts of piety (in this case attributed to the Saudis). Nieuwkerk made an extensive analysis of the symbolic nature of convincing major dance and television stars to 'convert,' positing that the stars who do not dance out of economic necessity are perceived with a greater degree of moral suspicion than their working-class counterparts who dance to support their families, hence their statements of repentance are all the more valuable. Moreover, they are widely known figures to the Egyptian public, generating more recognition than an average dancer would. Nieuwkerk also points out that the social conservatives ultimately benefit from the dancers' 'sins,' for, like the prodigal son's tale of redemption, without their public perception of shamefulness, taking up a more pious lifestyle would be unremarkable. Nieuwkerk's analysis reflects the often overlooked fact that public discourse on piety or morality is intertwined with economic factors, not independent of it. This is encapsulated in her judgement that though religious discourse does affect public opinion about entertainment, it does not solely control people's behaviour, which is subject also to economic and extra-religious concerns (Nieuwkerk, 1998b).

Conclusions

The moral ambiguity faced by dancers in Egypt from the 19th century through to the present day has been embodied in formal sanctions imposed upon their public behaviour. In both the 1834 expulsion of all dancers from Cairo and the 2003-2004 ban on foreign dancers working in Egypt the reasoning behind such restrictions is obscure, even when, as in the 2003 ban, a government representative was interviewed about the ban's purpose (Garwood, 10 November 2003a; Garwood, 10 November 2003b; Wynn, 2007). Though I discussed the effects of the 1834 ban initiated by Muhammad 'Ali in the first section of this chapter, the rationale behind its adoption at that time is far from certain. While there is evidence that the increase of prostitution in the 1830s gave rise to a conflation in the public consciousness between prostitution and public entertainment such as dancing, eroding any respectability that may have been previously enjoyed by entertainers (Fahmy, 1998: 42, 45; Nieuwkerk, 1998a: 22-24), Edward

Lane's original report of the ban does not explicitly confirm that concerns about public health and decency were the impetus behind its adoption(Lane, 2003: 566). Paralleling this obscurity, as discussed in the section "Dance as a Signifier of National and Ethnic Pride" the rationale behind restricting foreign dancers from engaging in their profession in the 2003-2004 ban was imbued with nationalistic discourse, even if the motivating factors underlying the ban and its subsequent overturning were prompted at least equally by economic causes as well as a sense of cultural protectionism. This reflects my assertion that legal discourse about dance can be utilized as a medium through which to reflect public opinion about other topics of national importance, particularly the intricate interaction between national identity, ethnicity, cultural heritage and religion that has had such a profound influence on the development of Egyptian identity.

Though formal sanctions reflect a part of the public discourse on dance in Egypt, they are only one facet of that discourse. Contrasting social needs, such as the desire to have dancers at occasions to facilitate the celebration of joy or to serve a ritual function highlighting a change in life development such as that experienced during a marriage, also contribute to this complex and often contradictory ongoing discussion. Informal social expectations do not always act in dancers' favour, however, and just like formal sanctions public perception can highlight dancers' dishonourable connotations. The section "Belly Dance as a Forum for Creating and Representing Nationalised, Gendered and Religious Discourse" discusses the impetus this provides for Egyptian dancers to adopt strategies to minimise the negative moral associations of their profession as public entertainers. While both Young and Nieuwkerk acknowledge that female public entertainers in Egypt face greater censure than their male counterparts, they disagree on whether the higher degree of negative connotations associated with them are exacerbated by or result from femaleness. In either case, female public entertainers, and in fact many women working in the public sphere, take the example of the *banat al-balad*. Strategies ranging from emphasising their identities as homemakers to declaring themselves to be men when in the working sphere aid these women in transcending existing rigid gendered classifications. Even if these ideological categories do not ultimately restrict female public entertainers' actual behaviours, they might certainly negatively affect public perceptions of such behaviour along with the performers' own sense of what it means to be a woman who works.

This concept, that ideology and social expectations can have a strong influence on individuals' beliefs without necessarily causing behaviour that would correspond with those beliefs, recurs in the coming chapter's discussions of expatriate dancers in

Cairo and of normative expectations in the growing international belly dance community. Strategies that dancers in the 'belly dance diaspora' use to negotiate the complex interactions between belief and behaviour is another theme that follows on to contribute to the coming chapter.

SANCTIONS: AUTHORISE, PENALISE, GLOBALISE

Every child has known God,
Not the God of names,
Not the God of don'ts,
Not the God who ever does Anything weird,
But the God who knows only 4 words.
And keeps repeating them, saying:
"Come Dance with Me, come dance."
       Hafiz, "Every Child has Known God" (Ladinsky translation, 1999)

This chapter will expand on the framework of current dance paradigms in the expatriate dance community within Cairo, including the 2003 ban and subsequent retraction of the ban on foreign dancers. I will also analyse prohibitions within Egypt that restrict both foreign and local dancers' behaviour and costumes. Continuing the analysis from the previous chapter of contemporary moral discourses surrounding dance in Egyptian society, the discussion includes social injunctions on and perceptions of dancers outside their professional context. Non-Egyptian dancers working in Egypt engage in complicated strategies to negotiate around and cope with the various sanctions they must engage with as a result of being employed in public entertainment. Foreign dancers have limited resources to combat legal restrictions that regulate their employment terms. The attempt to ban them in 2003 was overturned the following year possibly in part due to the influence of the legal fight some dancers put up when the ban was introduced, but those lawsuits were in fact unsuccessful and the ban was initially upheld. In dealing with figures of authority such as managers, agents and the morality police, my research participants engaged with varying strategies to creatively combat problems ranging from expectations of *baksheesh* to attempts to force them to wear either less or more revealing costumes. In terms of social expectations, foreign dancers do not experience the same degree of stigma that local Egyptian dancers might, but they still felt the need to tactically approach their social lives in order to cultivate an image of respectability.

Following my examination of dance norms in Egypt, I will discuss normative expectations within the belly dance community globally. The global Oriental dance community can be approached as a culture in its own right, obviously a subculture to national and international discourses and identities, but still encompassing its own debates on governing norms of behaviour, philosophies, and historical traditions. However, it is not a homogenous community and though there is widespread consensus on some issues, there is divergence of opinion on others both locally and

internationally. There are sometimes fierce debates within the dance community concerning topics such as which historical tradition can be accepted as the most 'authentic', what costumes and movements can be considered appropriate and what are inappropriate, dance and 'femininity' or 'masculinity', and where the continuing development of various styles under the umbrella term of 'belly dance' will eventually lead. Dancers engage in these debates through a variety of channels such as internet message forums, keeping blogs, popular literature on belly dance which they both write and read, during dance classes, and at local, national, and international dance festivals. Though some standard conventions have begun to arise in Egypt and throughout the international dance community, debates about all these issues continue to thrive.

Norms Within the Expatriate Belly Dance Community in Cairo

Recent Ban and Overturning

In a decision formalised in August 2003, the Egyptian Ministry of Labour and Immigration (alternately reported as the Ministry of Manpower), prohibited foreign workers from taking employment in three fields: a) as tour guides, b) in *al-raqs al-sharqi* (Oriental dance) and c) as customs collectors, with the exception of Palestinians in the third case. The ruling, determined by Minister Ahmed al-Amawi, was part of a larger decision outlining work permit regulations for all foreigners (al-Waqai al-Misriyah [Egypt], 2 August 2003). Reports were made on this decision in newspapers and online, focusing primarily on foreign dancers and tour guides with nary a mention of customs collectors[1].

Several foreign dancers working in Cairo at the time took steps to oppose the ban: in September 2003 the first lawsuit protesting the Egyptian government's decision was reported, taken by Russian belly dancer Noora who claimed rules about dance should fall under the rubric of the Ministry of Culture rather than that of Labour (Reporters, 24 September 2003)[2]. Ethnographer L. L. Wynn reports that it was actually

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[1] There is a degree of semantic slippage in the wording of the ban. The root word *HaZara* according to the Hans Wehr dictionary incorporates the meanings of 'forbid' or 'prohibit.' However, native speakers inform me the word is more commonly understood to mean that the speaker warns against a certain condition or action, while the word *mana'a* is used exclusively to indicate "prohibited" or "forbidden" in a non-religious sense. When I pointed out that foreign dancers were effectually banned and not granted permission to work even though the word used was not *mana'a*, they suggested that the Labour Ministry may have wanted some leeway on paper that it was indisposed to grant in practice.
[2] The article claims that a new law gave foreign dancers permission to work as long as they paid the fees for work permits, requiring that they get permission from the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of the Interior to ensure no "illegal acts of prostitution or the sort" take place (Reporters, 24 September 2003). This somewhat cryptic report followed in several newspapers over the course of the news cycle relating to

Noora's[3] husband, Yasser Allam, who filed suit (Wynn, 2007: 222). In November 2003 a French dancer who goes by the nickname "Kitty"[4] wrote to the French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin asking him to intervene. Her letter was later released to the press, revealing her complaint of the "intolerable discrimination" faced by foreign dancers ("French Belly Dancer Confronts Egypt: Appeals to French Government for Help," 10 November 2003). In the same month came reports of a new lawsuit fighting the ban taken by Australian dancer Caroline Evanoff ("Aussie Belly Ban," 22 January 2004).

Caroline and Noora made several economic and ideological arguments to counter the ban. As discussed in the previous chapter, in the conservative climate of Egypt, working as a professional dancer carries with it a social stigma which means the number of Egyptian women willing to work as dancers is fairly small. Foreign dancers are needed to make up the shortfall. Even if enough local women could be found who were willing to dance, it would have taken some time to train and outfit them for work, leaving a gap of at least several months where there weren't enough dancers to meet demand (Wynn, 2007: 222). Further, foreign dancers stimulate the market in expensive Egyptian-made costumes, and dance lessons from renowned Egyptian teachers. Not only do foreign dancers purchase these services directly, but they also stimulate the dance tourism market for these services. Dancers also pay wages to band members, backup dancers, agents and managers. Like foreign workers everywhere, they also contribute to the local economy in the form of living expenses and taxes. Finally, Nour and Caroline argued that Oriental dance is not purely an "Egyptian thing" as argued by Nawal al-Naggar in the previous chapter (Garwood, 10 November 2003b). Rather, they presented evidence not only of the long history of foreign dancers in Egypt but also of "the long history of transnational artistic exchanges that have shaped the contemporary form of Oriental dance as practiced in Egypt today" (Wynn, 2007: 222). In addition to managers of cabaret shows throughout Egypt whose businesses would suffer as a result of the ban, foreign dancers protesting its implementation were supported publicly by dancers like Nagwa Fouad and Rakia Hassan (Garwood, 10 November 2003a; MacFarquhar, 20 January 2004), who argued for Egypt's history of cosmopolitanism.

In January 2004 this ban was upheld, with the administrative court at the Council of State (reported elsewhere as the Cairo administrative court) ruling that the

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the ban, making it unclear when and under whose authority the new law pertaining to foreign dancers took effect (or even exactly what the law actually was).

[3] Wynn transliterates her name as 'Nour' rather than 'Noora'; I will use 'Noora' for consistency's sake.

[4] I interviewed Kitty, short for Catarina, in November 2008; her name was reported in the press as Katy or as Ketty.

Labour Ministry did have the right to dictate whether foreigners were allowed to work in certain fields ("Belly Dancing for Egyptians Only," 24 January 2004). Later that year, in September 2004, Egypt completely reversed the ban ("Egypt Allows Foreigners to Belly Dance," 5 September 2004). The Labour Ministry made no comment on the reversal. At this point the Ministry also indicated foreigners could obtain visas to work as "folkloric performers" and must employ Egyptian musicians and back-up dancers. They must also provide letters from willing employers and from the Performers Union vouching for their skill (Garwood, 16 November 2003). Foreign dancers believe this decision was influenced both by popular demand and lack of a sufficient supply of local dancers.

All the articles recounting the ban indicate a discrepancy in the way dancers are classified when making estimates about how many foreign dancers there are in Egypt: the dancers they interviewed estimated there were only up to 30 foreign dancers working in Cairo. However, the dancers discounted some Eastern European girls who they said are not 'real' dancers but instead do an act closer to a striptease for which they charge significantly less than a 'real' belly dancer would. The newspaper articles also reflected the difference in the price a native dancer commands to that demanded by the foreign workers. Some estimates say foreigners charge between $250 and $500 while Egyptians can ask up to $1,600, while others estimated that foreigners ask around $3000 to Egyptians' $5-10,000 ("Foreign Dancers Banned," 5 March 2004; Garwood, 16 November 2003; Cook, 26 January 2004). Wynn indicates that according to foreign dancers she interviewed who had worked in several different countries in the MENA region, wages for dancers in Cairo were about half of what they could expect in Lebanon or Dubai, which she attributes to the large presence of foreign dancers lacking an understanding of local markets in Cairo compared to other cities (2007: 220). This may be one reason local dancers pushed for a ban: cheap foreign labourers were undercutting their prices. Alternatively one foreign dancer suggested that "powerful people in Egyptian belly dancing circles may have influenced the decision" though who those people are and why they would want to ban foreigners was left unclear (Garwood, 16 November 2003).

As discussed in the previous chapter there is no consistent reason for the instigation of the ban in the first place, nor for its reversal, particularly after it was upheld in court. Further, there were some suggestions that the ban was motivated by increasing religious conservatism, though this reasoning has some flaws. Why ban foreign dancers, who are less likely to be Muslims than Egyptian dancers? If the aim of

religious conservatives is to make 'Egypt' synonymous with 'Islamic,' al-Naggar's assertion quoted above that Oriental dance is "an Egyptian thing", which sees dance as a symbol of Egyptian national identity, would form a conflicting dialogue. Why postulate this if religious pressure led to the ban? The primary motivating factor for the ban's overturning appears to be economic: the government was unable to justify a continued ban on foreign dancers where necessity compels entertainment managers and agents to hire foreigners due to a lack of availability of local dance professionals. Belly dancing is an important part of the tourism industry, which itself is far too central to the Egyptian economy to restrict in the way that the ban on foreign dancers did for a time.

In the coming section "Negotiating Formal and Informal Sanctions" I will discuss in further detail foreign dancers' methods for coping with the various official and unofficial pressures in their professional lives. Presently I will describe some of the other legislative and social pressures on all dancers working in Egypt. I have placed this coming subsection in the rubric of the discussion about expatriate dancers because the literature I reviewed before my fieldwork as well as my participant interviews suggested that these restrictions were inconsistently applied to local and to foreign dancers.

Costumes, Behaviour, and Licensing

A January 2004 New York Times article claimed "regulations require that a dancer's midriff be covered with fine netting at a minimum, and that her dress cover her legs when not in motion," though it did not clarify whether these were government regulations, when they were passed, and under which branch they were enforced (MacFarquhar, 20 January 2004). An earlier article outlined other regulations, attributing them to the Egyptian government, but not citing a particular branch. Hack's article claims "belly dancers may not appear on television, speak during live performances or join customers after a show" (Hack, 19 July 2000). Other newspaper articles that report conflicting information on these issues contribute to the widespread lack of clarity about where regulations come from and who enforces them. Based on this it appears that many foreign as well as local dancers may not have been aware of legal sanctions applying to them prior to the 2003 ban (Hack, 19 July 2000; MacFarquhar, 20 January 2004). Nieuwkerk also provides a historical overview of the increasingly conservative regulations applied to Egyptian dancers between 1900 and 1973: in 1951, dancers were forbidden to sit or drink with customers, but the practice was widespread until 1973 when the government brought in a new system of

registration and licenses, requiring a performer to pass an examination proving herself to be an actual singer or dancer (Nieuwkerk, 1998a: 26). Additionally, dancers were subject to police registration and new taxes.

Despite the lack of clarity on what the regulations are exactly, they are undoubtedly enforced. My informant Lorna Gow, a Scottish dancer who has lived and worked in Cairo since 2006, told me one of the advantages of working on a boat instead of in a hotel is that she is always able to get notice in advance when the morality police are going to show up. Based on this she is able to ensure she is wearing her body stocking, which she describes as something that "makes a mockery of everything" not to mention being uncomfortable and hot to perform in. She is supposed to wear it at all times when performing, or to wear a costume cut so that it covers her navel, but she avoids the body stocking when she believes she will be able to get away with it. When I interviewed Lorna in November 2008 she also indicated that the rules are applied inconsistently, saying "Now they get stricter because it's coming up to New Year, so the people that look for the baksheesh are looking for more, so they tend to be stricter" (Gow, 3 November 2008).

Figure 3: Lorna Gow with her band and one of her *funuun*—folk dancers—on the Golden Pharaoh boat, 20 November 2008.

Lorna is not alone in her dissatisfaction about the navel-covering rules: Kitty recounted a story for me about one occasion when the police came to inspect her show. At the time she was working with a small troupe of female backup dancers, and after they

passed the inspection she called them into her dressing room and presented them all with a small belt, just wide enough to cover the navel. She goes on:

> And to all of my dancers I say, "Okay, girls, now you're going to wear that."
> And they look at me, "With what?"
> I say, "With nothing." And they look like, "What?" I said, "Yes, you don't need anything… you wear it here, and then you're not going to show your [belly] button. So here, they just don't want you to show the button. So if you're naked, just with the belt, it's going to be okay" (Kitty, 14 November 2008).

Kitty's ironic reaction to the absurdity of the morality police's level of concern with how much the costume shows the navel compared to other parts of the body is echoed in Lorna's more recent skirmish with the authorities.

On 7 June 2009 Lorna posted a blog entry about another encounter with the *mosanifat*, the morality police (Gow, 2009: Normality). Although her work papers are all in order, they were at her manager's house. As he was out of town, someone had to be sent to get them, resulting in Lorna's being detained at the boat until the wee hours of the morning. Though she wore the required body stocking, the *mosanifat* still did not find her performance completely satisfactory.

> They also complained that my saaidi galabeya skirt was split too high, that I was showing too much cleavage and that i stood too close to the guests when I got my photo taken with them!
>
> ok- fair enough re the galabeya (but I did have shorts on underneath!) [...][5]re the photos... how bizarre..... you have to stand next to someone to be in the same photo, and if someone is likely to get the wrong idea- do you really think I'd be standing too close to them? I think they were just splitting hairs!! (Gow, 2009)

As you can see, the morality police did not prevent Lorna from continuing to work despite their complaints about certain aspects of her performance. Lorna clearly dealt with this situation through a considerable application of patience and good humour. She and all my participants approach many of the confusing and contradictory aspects of dealing with Egyptian bureaucratic systems with such strategy.

The next section will continue to examine the various methods my research participants employ to negotiate the various formal and informal expectations made of them while living in Cairo.

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[5] Lorna frequently uses ellipses in her blog stylistically; the others in this quote are her own but the bracketed ellipsis indicates where I omitted a part of the text.

Negotiating Formal and Informal Sanctions

How do expatriate dancers deal with the many confusing and often conflicting expectations, both official and unofficial, they encounter in their professional lives in Egypt? During my fieldwork in Cairo in April and from September through November 2008, I was able to spend time with three professional belly dancers working in Cairo as well as one expatriate who works as a theatrical producer and choreographer in Egypt but teaches dance when she visits her home country, Britain. In the course of ordinary conversation as well as formal interviews, these issues came up frequently. As I mentioned above, one of my research participants, Lorna Gow, also keeps a blog about her experiences in Cairo. There she often reports on workplace issues, ranging from fires on her cruise boat to the difficulties of dealing with Egyptian bureaucracy. From these sources I was able to gain information on how dancers dealt with legislative and cultural expectations in Egypt as well as how they formed their own community standards.

All foreigners who decide to reside in Egypt for even a brief period come into contact with the many levels of Egyptian officialdom and red tape. For an in-depth discussion of the contradictions and frustrations of Egyptian bureaucracy and especially negotiating access to the country, see Nadje Al-Ali's analysis of navigating the Cairo airport (Al-Ali, 2000: 34-36). Above I outlined the legal restrictions on foreign performers in Egypt: in order to obtain a permit, they must already be hired by a full-time employer, they must not work regularly at other venues (though they can work at singular special events, such as a wedding not at their ordinary workplace), they must have a letter from the Performers Union certifying their skill, and they must hire Egyptian musicians and singers to work in their bands. Further, every time a dancer leaves the country she must have an HIV test when she returns in order to acquire a new work permit. Foreign dancers' passports are held by the Performers' Union until all the paperwork is finalised, making it difficult for dancers to travel around in Egypt as travelling any distance usually involves security checks that examine identity documents[6].

These legal restrictions obviously affect foreign dancers' ability to compete in the job market in Cairo. Dancers who are Egyptian or married to an Egyptian are able

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[6] For example on one occasion my friend and research participant Lorna Gow and I were trying to arrange a trip to Luxor together. In the end Lorna wasn't able to go because her work permit hadn't yet been granted from the time she most recently re-entered the country and she didn't have access to her passport. On at least one other occasion she was forced to delay a flight back to Britain because she wasn't able to get her passport back from the Union in time.

to work in more than one venue at a time, meaning that they are able to accept shifts at another venue without worrying that they will lose their primary source of income. In contrast, a foreign dancer would risk not only displeasing her employers, but getting arrested. This also means Egyptians are in a stronger position in terms of negotiating new contract terms, or walking away from an unfavourable contract. A foreign dancer who wants to accept a new position must first leave her old job, leaving her in a very tenuous position for negotiation.

> But all of these issues are only relevant once a dancer has actually managed to get a contract in the first place. One of my participants, who preferred to retain her anonymity and be referred to solely as S had not yet found permanent work when I interviewed her in November 2008, although she has since obtained a contract on the dinner cruise boat that operates next to Lorna's. Our interview at the time focused mainly on the difficulties of dealing with managers and other potential employers, something I had spoken with Lorna about as well but not as extensively. S, originally from Hungary, had come to live in Cairo in August of 2008 after encouragement from some of the Egyptian dance community that she met at the Nile Group festival, which is held three times a year at the Pyramiza Hotel in Doqqi. S recounted for me some of the circumstances that encouraged her to come to Cairo:: I had some Egyptian friends and … I'm married now. I'm married to an Egyptian guy, Ahmed, and [laughs] we met in this festival, Nile Group… I met Ahmed, and I had some friends and they said, yeah, yeah, sure, they will help me. Of course no one helped after all, only Ahmed (S, 11 November 2008).

S's marriage had some major professional advantages: because she is married to an Egyptian, she is not subject to some of the permits and other restrictions other foreign dancers must have. She, however, actually felt this particular advantage to be a double-edged sword: on the one hand, potential employers kept indicating what an advantage it was that she already had a residence visa; on the other hand, it was a long time before she was able to get any work. She surmised that employers might actually prefer the contract negotiation power that they have when faced with a dancer restricted to working in their establishment only, rather than one who is able to walk away from her job without also losing her residence permit (S, 11 November 2008).

Another benefit S discussed was how she felt her marriage helped her gain respect from potential employers, both in terms of having a local person who can speak the language and ensure she really understands the contract terms she is being offered, and from the respectability that marriage normally conveys within Egyptian society. S was well aware of these advantages, saying that Ahmed's offer of marriage had been "basically about the papers, to get a residence permit because they said it's a lot easier." (By "they" S is referring to her Egyptian friends met at Nile Group festivals and to her husband, Ahmed.) As I said, S indicated that her marriage was a solution to the

difficulty of obtaining a work visa as an Oriental dancer in Egypt, a solution that Ahmed and others suggested as the most practical option when she first began to encounter the difficulties that foreign dancers commonly have. Ahmed and S do not live together and her family is unaware of the marriage.

S's marriage must be contextualised within the complex field of marriage for foreign women living in Egypt. One of the most often-discussed marriage concerns amongst my research subjects, as well as on a listserv open to all scholars living in Cairo, (Cairo Scholars, managed by the University of Texas, (Ali)), was 'urfi marriage. Extremely little academic literature is available on the legal and theological arguments surrounding this issue, particularly as they pertain to relationships between expatriates living in Egypt and Egyptians. However, as it materially affected some of my research subjects, it would be remiss to pass it over entirely. An 'urfi marriage is a union permitted in Egypt that is used to allow people who do not wish to perform a more traditional marriage ceremony to engage in all the behaviours that a legal marriage permits, including sharing a hotel room, going on holiday together, and buying a flat together. My understanding is that it is also easier to dissolve an 'urfi marriage than a traditional one. Although any Egyptian couple can create an 'urfi marriage, among the expatriate community it is widely used as an expedient to prevent difficulties in the issues mentioned above when partners do not want to 'really' get married. I mentioned the dearth of scholarly literature available on this topic, but Sherifa Zuhur does address 'urfi marriage.

> In Egypt the concept of a "civil" or non-*shari'ah* religious marriage has also recently been debated prior to the acceptance of the *'urfi* (meaning customary, referring to customary or tribal law) marriage as a licit form of marital union. *'Urfi*, which does not require the expensive wedding party and outlay for a residence, furniture, gifts or the high bride price required for the "normal" religious ceremony of marriage (*nikah*), has been acknowledged by the state as an acceptable form of Islamic marriage. (Zuhur, 2002: 194-195)

Zuhur goes on to note that though the state recognises this form of marital union, conservative religious figures remain sceptical of its legitimacy. Zuhur's discussion focuses on impoverished Egyptian youth who choose to marry in this way in order to avoid the long wait to build up a dowry and she does not discuss marriages between Egyptian nationals and expatriates. I am still perplexed on the differences between this kind of marriage and the 'other kind,' but I am not alone: there is no end of discussion on internet message boards on this topic because there is so much conflicting anecdotal information on the issue and relatively little legal commentary in English on the difference. This leaves foreigners who wish to enter into such arrangements vulnerable

to confusion on their legal status. The mere fact that there is so much discussion about marriages between Egyptians and foreigners in so many different forums, including on official government media such as the US Embassy Cairo Consular Affairs website, means that there is a high level of interest in this issue.

Returning to my participant S and the advantages she felt her marriage afforded her, S also indicated that she preferred having Ahmed help her with the business arrangements rather than hiring a professional manager (Ahmed designs costumes).

> I didn't want to make a contract with a manager first and then do whatever he wants to do. So I was like, "Okay, I have you, Ahmed, I have this marriage, I have the residence permit so I don't have to worry about it." I can just stay, but I really have to be careful who to choose to be my agent or manager, or who to sign a contract with, because we talked to a lot of people, agents, teachers who organise dancers to boats or hotels. And there's a lot of people here who want to help, but actually, you know, they have big ideas, big promises, big words, big: "Oh, it's great that you are here, we are looking exactly the kind of girl you are and you are so beautiful and you dance so beautiful, and—" you know, this is bullshit, and then nothing happens. I mean, or it happens if you pay first, a lot of money (S, 11 November 2008).

S was not the only participant to mention the expectations of favours or monetary reward in exchange for assistance finding a professional position. In fact, this issue came up in every single interview I conducted in Egypt. Understandably, some of my participants were more open or specific about this than others. S told me that she felt her marriage helped stave off some unpleasant situations with potential managers and agents who wanted a great deal of money for their services, "or, yeah, something else". She also said that she'd heard "awful stories," following up by describing her pursuit of a dance job as "very risky, very dangerous, very hard" (S, 11 November 2008).

Lorna, while we did not speak specifically about this issue in the formal interview, had in the past remarked that she was grateful to have an agent who did not expect sexual favours though in return she paid a high percentage for his management. She posited this as an either/or situation: either you resign yourself to the constant expectation of sexual advances, or you pay a higher percentage to your agent or manager. She also suggested during our interview that perhaps some Egyptian dancers are discouraged by the fact that the scene is "so dirty," referring not only to the moral ambiguity of actually being a professional dancer but rather to efforts to become employed at all. Some women who may want to dance, in addition to cultural and familial constraints, "don't get past that first dodgy guy" (Gow, 3 November 2008).

Kitty, who is originally from France, decided to leave a job because the manager tried to tell her what to wear. "I understood that the country is changing. The manager just reflect[ed] what's happening. Now we want to have girls that are showing the body…they want to have nice boobs and a nice ass and this is what they are looking for…They are calling it *lahm abyiad*, white meat" (Kitty, 14 November 2008). Kitty no longer dances professionally in Egypt and currently designs costumes for sale in Egypt and for export.

While Kitty was the only one of my participants to leave the industry because of her experiences, it is something that every working dancer in Egypt must find a way to deal with. As I discussed previously, S felt her marriage and Ahmed's influence shielded her from too much prurient interest. Lorna constantly spoke about her efforts to be seen by the other employees at her dinner cruise boat as behaving in a professional, respectable manner. This is something that requires constant performance of all the behaviours that would signal respectability by Egyptian standards: wearing loose-fitting, long-sleeved clothing, keeping conversation with her male work colleagues polite but strictly business and knowing when to rebuke anyone who oversteps the boundaries, and not dancing at work except during her actual performances. I get the impression that for all the work she does forming the image of herself as a respectable person, if she were to let down her guard at any time, the battle would start again from the very beginning.

This last point is illustrated by one of the videos I have included on the DVD accompanying this thesis, "Golden Pharaoh Wedding Party 1". On 20 November 2008 I attended a performance on the Golden Pharaoh dinner cruise boat where my research participant Lorna Gow works. At approximately 9:15 we heard a lot of noise coming from the direction of the steps from the dock up to the street. We discovered it was a wedding party arriving, with women giving spirited *zhigureet* and the entire party getting filmed by a camera crew. A group of bagpipers dressed in Pharonic gear played for them as they came down the steps, then the party were required to stand still while they were videoed, and then the bagpipers advanced before them into the temple. They played for a few minutes following which somebody put a CD on the sound system. It was a smallish party, and finally Lorna finally suggested that they were here because somebody in the wedding party either worked on the boat or was a relative of someone who worked on the boat. (When the boat later embarked, they were not amongst the audience.) In the film various men and women from the boat staff and the families of the bride and groom dance in front of them in a circle. Lorna, who had refused to dance

until they informed her it was in fact for one of the workers from the boat, got up and danced as well. Lorna's hair is in a plait and she can be seen dancing with a member of the wedding party who wears a brown dress. Research participants Eleanor Keen and Nafeeseh Rahi Young were also with us and Lorna encouraged them to dance as well, though they are not in this video.During our many discussions of professional dancing in Cairo, Lorna and I also discussed the social difficulties a professional dancer in Egypt encounters. For example, she tries to hide her profession from her landlord for fear he will want to break her apartment contract. Further, she often tells people with whom she is not well acquainted that she teaches English rather than revealing her true profession. At least once she has been deliberately not invited to a social gathering because her profession could be seen in a spurious light. All of these things Lorna is resigned to as part and parcel of being a belly dancer in Egypt. When I asked her about why she puts up with the hassle, she told me that she had initially planned on coming to Egypt for only about six months, and she never intended to stay as long as she has. "If it was a choice of not coming or coming here to live, I wouldn't have come, because I'm not that brave. If you said, yeah, you've got to go and do at least three years, I'm, ooh, too much, I'd need to give everything up" (Gow, 3 November 2008). But over time she's come to appreciate life in Cairo. Her main inducement to stay is the ability to dance to live music every night.

> I mean, that really is ultimately the reason I'm here.   If I had that Egyptian orchestra in Britain, life would be just very different. I'd be in Britain, I would be. But having Egyptian musicians, an Egyptian orchestra, an Egyptian audience, certainly does help the atmosphere. No, I have to be here just now, can't imagine wanting to be anywhere else. (Gow, 3 November 2008)

In fact, the chance to perform with live music was the main reason that many of my participants were driven to either attend festivals or to travel to a country where belly dance is practiced. Even those who were able to find live music at festivals, where they might not have access to it at all in their hometowns, often felt even more inspired to travel somewhere that they could perform with more Egyptian or Turkish musicians and singers. I will speak more about the concept of dance tourism in chapters five and six.

As I discussed, all my participants were aware of the potential for sexual and financial exploitation as part of their professional lives. Another common theme that they all reflected upon was their cognisance of a gulf between the way dancers were treated and considered in the public eye depending on their country of origin. Their analysis of the political economy of this situation was thorough and prescient, though they did not bother with specialised terminology in their descriptions.

While dancing is not generally considered an honourable profession by Egyptian standards, women from Western countries who choose to travel all the way to Egypt to dance are somewhat immune from this classification. Some of my participants indicated that the majority of their Egyptian friends just seemed to think they were a little eccentric, saying things like "Why?" and looking at them quizzically when they tried to explain what drew them to seek employment as professional dancers in Cairo. There is a very different attitude towards dancers from Eastern European countries, who are often referred to as 'the Russians' regardless of their countries of origin. Unlike Lorna from Scotland and Kitty from France, the salaries and working conditions for such women are competitive with those they could expect at home. I was unable to interview any dancers in this situation, although S felt that she was being discriminated against while seeking work because of her national origin.

Most of my interview participants described a distinction, perceived both by themselves and by the Egyptian public, between dancers in Egypt working for the love of dance and furthering their proficiency, and those there solely for economic reasons. There was ambivalence in the point of view expressed by my research participants: on the one hand, frustration with the perceived lowering of standards and quality and an increasing association of belly dance with prostitution. Some even suggested that the 2003 ban on foreign dancers was mainly due to the increasingly poor reputation of 'the Russians.' However, there was also sympathy. Some of the dancers I spoke to, principally Kitty and S, recognised that many of these women, who they essentially describe as claiming to be belly dancers without having any actual skill but rather using it as a guise for prostitution, would have no better economic opportunities in their home countries. Kitty said, "In a way, whatever they do, when they say, "I'm Russian, I'm Rumanian, I'm" well, they [managers] think, okay, she's a prostitute. So…it's very hard for these girls" (Kitty, 14 November 2008). She also felt that even those women who migrate to Egypt for the purpose of prostitution still have better economic opportunities there than they did at home, which would not be true for sex workers from a stronger economy. As an example she told me about a conversation she'd had in the past with a young woman in which she'd asked why this girl chose to prostitute herself in Egypt instead of her home country.

> And she said, "Listen... I'm used to it, because in my country, this is what I'm doing."
> And I said, "so why have you come here?"
> She said, "Because at least here, I'm choosing with who." I didn't know what to say, I thought, really, I'm lucky to be European (Kitty, 14 November 2008).

This seems to be the main reason for the origin of the bad reputation of 'Russian' dancers. My participants also acknowledged that because of their bad reputation as a group, skilled dancers from Russia and Eastern Europe may get passed over for high-paying or 'respectable' jobs.

On the whole I did not get the impression that any of my participants felt that their jobs were individually threatened by any of the Eastern European dancers. Rather, my participants classed them in an entirely different category of dancers who would not have the skill, the connections, or even the artistic determination to get a job in a four-star establishment like those that my dancers worked for. But they did sincerely feel the necessity for preserving or enhancing the dignity of their profession in national discourse as a whole. They expressed a need for this both so that they could as individuals feel proud of what they do and not feel like they are constantly defending themselves from charges of impropriety, and to encourage more Egyptian dancers to feel like they can take it up as a profession. My participants did not feel that the reputation of Russian and Eastern European dancers did anything to aid their efforts on this front, and while there was no personal ill-will towards any individual dancer, there seemed to be a general wish that anybody adding to the dancer/prostitute stereotype would either shape up or ship home.

Like all foreigners living in Cairo, my participants and I spent a great deal of time discussing as well as actually experiencing the byzantine, bewildering heights of Egyptian bureaucracy, both governmental and commercial. As I conducted my fieldwork I came to realise that though it seems especially evident in Egypt, the condition of dwelling in confusion amongst conflicting expectations that need to be negotiated in a variety of ways is common to life everywhere. With this in mind the next section will concern normative expectations within the global dance community.

Dance Norms within the Belly Dance Diaspora

As I mentioned in the introduction, the global dance community is a subculture that has its own normative requirements and negotiations as well as its own internal factions and subdivisions. To help estimate the extent of this international community, anthropologist L. L. Wynn reports that in 2000 Australian dancer Caroline Evanoff found the websites of 450 Oriental dance schools located in nations all over the world whilst working to promote Rakia Hassan's International Oriental Dance Festival

(Wynn, 2007: 218)[7]. It seems likely that in the ensuing ten years, increasing internet penetration all over the globe would cause a rise in the number of belly dance schools with an internet presence. At the Rakkasah West festival in Vallejo, California in 2009 and at the International Belly Dance Conference of Canada in Toronto in 2010 I observed dancers and instructors from as far afield as Japan, New Zealand, Argentina, Mexico, Germany, France, Portugal, Egypt, Palestine and Turkey. There is quite a large body of literature developed by professional dancers and dance teachers concerning theories on the origins of dance, its relationship with health, spirituality, appropriate dress codes and taboo movements or attitudes, and most especially whether it is a space for women only.

Conventions and Resistance

In the following chapter I will analyse discursive theory produced by academic and independent scholars of belly dance, mainly focusing on how dancers and theorists engage with concepts like gender, authenticity, and cultural appropriation. In this section I will discuss the practical conventions my participants spoke about in personal interviews and my observations from the field.

The global community of belly dancers, including my participants in Cairo, are obviously a self-selecting population. While each dancer's journey was unique, an oft-repeated pattern was a dancer starting to take classes for fun or to get in shape, then becoming engrossed by dance in an almost vocational fashion that ultimately leads to teaching and performing professionally. Most of the dancers I interviewed are full-time teachers and performers, although this model does not work out financially for everyone in the belly dance world. Many people teach or perform part-time, depending on more stable sources of income to balance budgets[8].

My research participants had very different feelings about their degree of connection to the belly dance community, or even whether such a thing exists. As world-renowned teacher and performer Jim Boz said when I asked him whether any family or friends joined the dance community with him, "Join the dance community? I didn't fill out a membership form - do I get a toaster?" (Boz, 14 March 2009). Predictably, there were widely differing opinions on how dancers felt the belly dance community had changed from the time they started dancing: some said they felt a

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[7] Hassan now organises the prestigious Ahlan wa Sahlan festival; http://www.raqiahassan.net/ahlan.html.
[8] In an interesting coincidence, three of my participants worked in software, technical electronics, and telecommunications, with one of them still employed in one of these fields. Two have gone on to pursue performing and teaching full-time, one moving to India from Britain in the process.

greater sense of cohesion and less pettiness or undercutting from other dancers. Others felt that these attributes had increased since they first started and that the dance population was now more fractured. When I interviewed her in February 2009, Melanie LaJoie, teacher, performer and talent representative in Orlando Florida, spoke about her early experiences learning dance in Massachusetts and the contrast with her experiences in the professional dance world today. "I was a kid and teenager when I really started performing a lot… doing all of this as a kid, it was just great to be inducted in this career, as a kid, with these amazing people who just adopted me – well, not, you know, legally – but just took me right in and I became a part of their family" (LaJoie, 6 February 2009). Here she refers to her mentors Vina (Frances Haddad) and her brother George Abdo, a well-known singer who recorded with the Flames of Araby Orchestra and whose music has been preserved for the Smithsonian Folkways collection[9]. In contrast to these positive early experiences, she said that now, "Belly dancers are a dime a dozen, so are the instructors now. They don't know what the hell they're teaching but they're doing it, so we're in competition with a lot more people" (LaJoie, 6 February 2009).

Melanie also feels the standard of what is getting taught in Oriental dance classes has declined generally, though, like many of my participants, she makes a concerted effort to teach her students about Arab culture. This was one of Melanie's main disagreements with other dance studios in her area: a new burlesque belly dance school had recently opened and Melanie vociferously objects to that development, saying "The reason why I don't like the term belly dancing is because it connotes strip-tease kind of, or something like that, and burlesque…I have an issue with that and that's why I don't like the bleeding of those things into this dance because this dance is sacred, okay" (LaJoie, 6 February 2009). Melanie, along with most of my participants, was eager to draw a very broadly-defined line between anything she was performing and the world of burlesque or erotic dancing, which included a very firm linguistic distinction, something I will speak more about in chapter seven. Zorba, one of the most well-known male belly dancers who makes his home in the San Francisco Bay area, had this to say about burlesque when I interviewed him at the Rakkasah West dance festival in March 2009:

> Well, you know, I haven't got a problem with burlesque dancers. Burlesque can be just cute as hell. I just think you shouldn't be doing burlesque and call it belly dance. If you're doing a burlesque-belly fusion, label it that so that… because there's so much misconception about our dance form in the first place in the

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[9]http://www.folkways.si.edu/albumdetails.aspx?itemid=2957

general public. They don't need to be further confused… (Zorba, 15 March 2009).

The most oft-cited reasons behind the scepticism of connecting belly dance and burlesque when I questioned my participants were cultural correctness or respect to the culture (meaning Arab culture), and 'authenticity.' Eleanor Keen and Nafeeseh Rahi-Young, two British semi-professional dancers (Nafeeseh designs jewellery and Eleanor at the time worked for British Telecom), run a monthly hafla together in London and visited Cairo for the Nile Group Festival in November 2008. When I interviewed them, Nafeeseh outlined her feelings as follows.

> …There are so many dancers, especially in London ...that, [when] they teach it, they take the dance completely out of context. They make it erotic, rather than what it is, and they don't understand the culture and they don't want to understand the culture ... The way they dance it and the way they put things together, they cross certain lines and that for me, is wrong. That's what I didn't want to do. I wanted to always be respectful and always try and understand where it's coming from a little bit more before I teach it to someone else. (Keen and Rahi-Young, 20 November 2008)

Like Nafeeseh and Eleanor, my dance contacts in Saint Petersburg at the Hip Expressions studio were also committed to trying to improve their students' cultural understanding. Karen Sun Ray Coletti, part owner of Hip Expressions with her colleague Johanna Xenobia Krynytzky spoke about their studio's commitment to representing another culture.

> …Here in our studio we try to make a big point of pointing out that we are representing the culture. And you have to be clear and respectful about how you do that. You can't just... if there is music with words in it, know what you're dancing to, please… Just be aware… We do our best to make sure, to educate our students to make sure they know that they need to be responsible and not just go out [without thinking]. And don't belly dance in an inappropriate way or dress in an inappropriate way or perform it in a place that is not appropriate [laughs]. So I think that's very important. (Coletti, 19 January 2009).

Lyssa Poole, a non-professional dancer based in Florida, discussed learning about cultural respect from her first teacher.

> …She started to go into the history a little bit, so cultural things like you don't want to have your legs spread too far apart and you don't want to have this finger down and you don't want to necessarily have your back to the audience for too long, because you are doing a dance from a different culture and you have to respect that, otherwise you're insulting people. And I have heard some horror stories of people who came from more of the adult entertainment dancing profession who decide they want to be belly dancers and they come out and they do these things that are like so ridiculously out of the scope of polite dancing, it's not even funny. (Poole, 28 January 2009).

Responsibility toward faithfully representing a culture other than one's own was a concept that came out in several of my interviews. This generally includes ideals of

respectability and endeavouring to provide categorical distinction from types of dance that are not considered respectable. To my participants this is important not only on a personal level but also as a community-wide issue. When one dancer behaves badly, it reflects badly on the entire belly dance community, which means increasing effort to distinguish themselves from negative stereotypes. This can be easily compared to the attitude among foreign professional dancers working in Cairo: it is important for all community members to behave appropriately in order to be considered respectable by Egyptian standards, and one person's mistakes or poor choices reflect on everyone. For the teachers I interviewed it was especially important not only to behave in a positive model, but also to explicitly draw their students' attention to what is and is not respectful, acceptable behaviour. In this way my participants engaged in creating and upholding standards of propriety within the dance community.

One thing that came out most especially in my American interviews was the shifting possibilities of cultural inspiration for belly dance. The rise of American Tribal Style has opened the door for other novel styles and techniques to develop in the United States, leaving a few of the people I interviewed feeling as if there was no obligation to become familiar with the cultural context in which belly dance exists in the Middle East, because there are so many different cultures that can be drawn from in order to present something new. This contrasts with the idea of cultural respect that so many of my research participants discussed in their interviews. However, where it exists, the American and British dance community's commitment to furthering their understanding of the wider culture in the Arab world has led to some unusual conventions or understandings being adopted globally that may not be significant in Egypt[10].

Another example of shifting cultural emphasis is the differing performance styles of Egyptians and North American dancers. Many dancers who have had the opportunity to travel to or live in both places felt there was a different emphasis in a typical dance performance: in Egypt, the focus is more on engaging with the audience and on performing a few moves really well. In America, most people said the convention is to show off as many different types of skills within a given performance as possible. It is also much more common in America and Europe for a dancer to emphasise her skill as a performer by playing the zills, whereas an Egyptian dancer, even one who is capable of playing them well, would not consider this part of her

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[10] For example after a talk I gave one dancer asked me why, in a film of my friend Lorna dancing on the Golden Pharaoh boat, Lorna wasn't wearing shoes. This dancer's understanding had been that shoes were a status symbol for Egyptian dancers and that it was a culturally significant, symbolic choice not to wear them. I think it really has more to do with how well the dancer knows the venue, and how dirty the floor might be.

repertoire and would more likely have one of her band members do this for her. Finally, the changes that technical dance terminology undergoes when moving from Arabic (or Turkish) into English is another example of this phenomenon, for example the terms *zills*, *hafla*, and *baladi* as they are used in the global belly dance community as opposed to their countries of origin[11]. *Zills* would be correctly referred to in the plural form in the original Turkish as *zillya* (the Arabic word for finger cymbals is *sagat*, but the Turkish term is more common in the international dance community.) As I discussed in the introduction, *hafla* in Arabic refers to any sort of party or congenial gathering but within the global belly dance community it specifically means a dance party and showcase. Finally, *baladi* can be translated as "country" or "state", though it also carries the meaning of "country" in the pastoral sense analogous to "country dancing" or "country music." It is this latter sense that applies to the style of dancing described as *baladi* within the international dance community. The difference is that where sometimes within the international dance community *baladi* is sometimes presented as a particular musical rhythm signature, it does not carry this meaning in Arabic.

All my participants agreed that the internet had affected the global dance community greatly, though not in the way I expected. I thought people would say that online message boards, mailing lists and personal blogs had been a source of information and increased knowledge of dance discourse, including debates about propriety discussed above. Instead, while most of my participants acknowledged using such tools early in their dance days and a few continue to make uses of them, the biggest impact my subjects all agreed on was the affect of YouTube on dancers' ability to see what new trends and techniques were developing around the world. Most stressed the capacity of the internet for promotional purposes rather than research—in other words, putting out information about themselves was more important to them than taking in information set forth by others.

Still, there was a concerted effort by most of the people I interviewed to encourage greater networking between belly dancers on both a local and an international level. Lorna, as I already mentioned, corresponds with several people who initially contacted her after stumbling upon her blog, and she is generally very interested in and open about helping less experienced dancers (and at least one researcher) learn about dance in Egypt. The professional teachers that I spoke to in the United States and

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[11] Dancers also often learn a few basic Arabic words through their dance classes, such as *habibi* (beloved), *yallah* (let's go/hurry up) and *aywa* (Egyptian dialect for "yes!"). However, this doesn't necessarily mean they will learn anything about pronunciation, and a number of times I have heard non-Egyptian dancers, North Americans especially, enthusiastically encouraging their colleagues with loud shouts of "Iowa!"

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Britain had taken steps to unite the members of their local communities and to reach out to belly dancers in the local area. In particular they organised haflas, special events or even occasionally union-style meetings to discuss professional issues in the local community. Many mentioned feeling anxiety about the etiquette of attending various events or conferences hosted by other dancers, in order to make those organisers feel motivated to reciprocate when it came time for my participants to host events. It is possible that my observation of all of this community spirit is a natural consequence of my sampling model: since I garnered participants through what is technically known as a snowball model (mainly by networking with people I already knew at the start of my fieldwork) it might be the case that those who already had a penchant for cooperation and forming partnerships would be more motivated to respond.

Professionally, dancers had a great deal to say about elements that had helped them personally and elements they found hindering. Obviously this differed much depending on where my participant was located: the experiences of professional dancers in Egypt are very different from those performing in Florida, London and California. There are certain elements common to all, however.

One of these is the working hours that full-time dancers must keep, in common with many kinds of entertainment professionals, which can be a limiting factor in forming friendships outside the dance scene. However, my participants in Cairo pointed out that while this had been an encumbrance in their home communities, the hours kept in Egypt differ greatly. Lorna indicated that it was perfectly possible to go out for dinner with friends after she finished a night's work and not only were there actually places serving food at that hour, but none of her friends thought anything odd of spontaneously going out to eat at 11 or 12 at night (Gow, 3 November 2008).

Another theme that did not vary regionally concerned the difficulties dancers faced in obtaining a venue and negotiating for a fair salary. I have already discussed the hardships encountered by expatriate dancers in Cairo, and though my British and North American dancers were less concerned about sexual harassment and financial difficulties with managers, commonalities also emerged. Some dancers were concerned with heavy competition in the local community, other dancers had a difficult time finding places in which they felt comfortable dancing with regards to their own standards of decency or even safety. In terms of salary, most of my participants were keenly aware of the necessity of trying to maintain contacts with the other local dancers. They wished to do this in order to create informal unions that could at least promote

dialogues about salary, standards of decency, and other issues. Johanna Krynytzky of

Hip Expressions organised a meeting of local dancers in order to discuss those issues.

> We had a meeting of all the professional belly dancers in the area, the ones who were dancing at the restaurants…and we said, hey, let's all get together and talk about these things…So here we were trying to cultivate the fact that we're not here to steal each other's gig, there's plenty of work for everyone, let's work together, and not undercut each other, and then we can actually make a living at doing this. (Krynytzky, 20 January 2009)

Others felt that their area suffered a loss from the lack of such a local community, but

were pessimistic about the possibility of trying to set one up. In particular Melanie felt

that her comments were falling on deaf ears:

> Whenever there is a community thing going on… I always add my two cents in. There was one thing where there was [a session on], "This is what the professional dancer needs to do, these are tips for the professional dancer." So my comment was, "Yeah, make sure you're getting professional rates too." [laughs] Because it's just going to hurt the profession if you're not making a professional amount of money and I don't think a lot of people know that. A lot of young dancers, I don't think they get that. They just want to get out there and be there, but you're going to hurt yourself in the long run, not just the rest of us but yourself too. (LaJoie, 6 February 2009)

Whatever the specific location they operated in, there was a general cognisance among

all dancers of moving within a wider structure either personally or professionally. Even

though Jim Boz teased me about my construction of the concept of "The Dance

Community," he still acknowledged the affect of the support or of the discouragement

of others as he began to dance more full-time (Boz, 14 March 2009). Another theme

which relates to this consciousness of community consensus is the creation and

perpetuation of gendered standards in belly dance.

Normative Expectations of Gendered and Sexualised Behaviour

One of the typical questions I get asked when I tell people about my research is

"Belly dance? But isn't that just about men objectifying women?" The short answer is:

no. In fact the majority of my participants, male and female alike, stressed a very heavy

emphasis within the dance community on a discourse of female empowerment and

celebrating the feminine (divine or otherwise). This dialogue is reflected in the

academic and even more heavily in the non-academic writings on belly dance, and it is

safe to say that this is a normative dialogue within the global dance community. In

chapter seven I will discuss ideas of gender performance and performativity in formal

and informal entertainment settings, drawing on developments in gender theory to

conceptualise dancers' behaviour. The discussion of gender and sexuality in this

chapter focuses on strategies I observed dancers engage in to manage both internal and external discourse; that is, the techniques they used to influence the expectations of other members of the dance community as well as the general public, concerning what belly dance is and what it means.

There are different subcategories of the feminine-empowerment discourse within the belly dance community. One of these, which I discuss at length in the coming chapter, is a thread that seeks to emphasise, or according to some sources to create, a historical connection between belly dance and a spiritual practice of honouring the sacred feminine in ancient Arabian cultures. This particular subcategory appears to be the most objectionable one to some belly dance scholars. While I would never attempt to dispute an individual's personal connection with spirituality and femininity (or masculinity, as the case may be) through belly dance, I think that the sceptical position taken by scholars like Stavrous Stavrou Karayanni and Anthony Shay, the idea that there is simply no historical evidence to substantiate such a position[12] and that attempting to create it says more about the motivations of those writing about it than anything else, is probably the safest academic position to take on the matter. Theirs is also the most potentially inclusive stance on this issue: conversely, those who attempt to define belly dance as a women's activity only are those most likely to try to substantiate their position through historical as well as biological arguments.

The dancers that I spoke to, on the whole, were aware of these arguments. Some people accepted them at face value while others were more sceptical. But all of them were aware that, whatever their personal feelings on the issue, the global belly dance community includes men as well as women. As I discuss in chapter seven, all my participants to a person took a very politically correct stance, indicating that they feel nobody should be restricted from dancing on the basis of their gender and that on the whole they were happy to have members of the opposite sex in their classes, so long as the rest of their students were not made uncomfortable. However, there was much less of a consensus when it came to my participants' describing their relative enjoyment of watching men dance and why.

Interestingly, my participants and I spent a lot more time discussing gendered aspects of the dance community—how comfortable they were with men in classes, at haflas, and as teachers—rather than the gendered aspect of the audience-performer

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[12] There is historical evidence that male belly dancers did exist, which could be viewed as evidence specifically against the use of Oriental dance as the nexus between spirituality and femininity. However, the fact that male dancers existed does not necessarily preclude the possibility that female dancers historically have used dance for this purpose.

dynamic. In part this is because my research grew out of a desire to explore dance within its social context and my questions were more designed to draw out people's thoughts on those issues. But there are some other factors, as I will discuss in the following paragraphs: first, my participants were all heavily invested in the idea of a dance community.

I have described belly dance as a vocation, and I mean this in the fullest sense of the word: my participants are not engaging with it simply on the level of a job or a hobby, but as something that adds in a complex way to their social and intellectual lives. Even if I had not come along to interview them all, my participants' conversations are imbued with belly dance, both on the straightforward level of events, people, and costumes and on the more abstract plane of morality, identity, empowerment, agency, and cultural representations. Although there are some hobbies that engender this kind of internal community discourse, belly dance seems more likely than other forms of hobbyist social dance (e.g. flamenco, salsa, swing, jive) to encourage a sort of personal evangelicalism about how it is perceived in the public eye. I imagine this is largely because rarely are those other hobbies are perceived to reflect on their practitioners' morality.

This comes back to my initial point about those who ask me whether dance is not simply a way for men to objectify women: often the subtext of this question is, aren't these women just using this as an excuse to explore all of their forbidden, licentious desires and to show off their sexuality in front of men? I think these are actually two different questions, though they are often conflated: is belly dance a space for women to explore feeling sexual? Is it a place to show off sexuality for the gaze of others? As I already discussed in the above section's paragraphs on burlesque, belly dancers are generally keen to avoid being classed in that genre, which they perceive as explicitly focused on the display of public sexuality. There is an emphasis within the belly dance community on being appropriate, professional, and respectful, though guidance on what this means is not always clear since there is no official authority to guide these standards. Basically, belly dancers are concerned with how they and the entire community of dancers are perceived by the general public, and being perceived in a positive light precludes what they perceive the burlesque dancers as doing: showing off in a sexually provocative manner. Earlier in this chapter I described strategies professional female entertainers in Egypt use to negotiate public perceptions of propriety. Dancers in the belly dance diaspora also strategise methods to make the dance community acceptable to the world at large, though in the United States and

Britain they need not contend with the Islamic discourse of the private/female and the public/male spheres. As for the first question, I think it is safe to say that none of the dancers I interviewed would want to censure another dancer's individual experience of dance (for example, if a woman feels sexier or more confident while dancing) unless that dancer's behaviour reflects badly on the community.

The second reason that the audience-performer dynamic came up infrequently is that, contrary to the stereotype that belly dance is something women do before a male audience, I found that belly dance events are attended by a vastly female majority. Yes, men are often present, and at individual events the ratio of men to women may vary greatly, but men attending belly dance events are often tangentially connected with the belly dance community (boyfriends, husbands, brothers) if not actually belly dancers themselves. Clearly there is a very different audience dynamic to events like a dinner and dance show in a Cairo hotel, a large multi-day dance festival with performances throughout the day, and a periodic local community hafla. However, throughout the course of my research, and in fact throughout my personal dance history starting in about 2002, I never observed an all-male group arriving to take in a show. Even when there were several males in a particular party or sat at a particular table, there was always at least one female with them also.

In contrast, Lorna has written a few blog entries about large tourist groups coming to her boat that mainly consist of a males, providing a male-majority audience (Gow, 2009: Circus Act). Clearly this means a very different kind of performance: she told me once that if there are too many men in the audience, she will not go around and take photographs with them before the end of the show, to avoid any misconceptions. In London Eleanor Keen, co-producer of the Saqarah monthly hafla, also told me that unlike the venue where Saqarah takes place now, the social club of the St. Aloysius Catholic church in Camden, they used to meet in a room over a sports pub. On the Saqarah website, there is a clause under the "terms and conditions" page indicating that the Saqarah organisers (Eleanor and Nafeeseh) "reserve the right to refuse entry to large groups of men or those that appear to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs even if they have paid for entry" (Keen and Rahi-Young, 2009). This seemed unnecessary given the crowd mix I observed in the St. Aloysius hall. However, Eleanor told me that what used to happen occasionally at the end of the night was some men would come upstairs from the pub to peek through the window in the double doors and see what was going on. Suddenly, their faces would light up, they would beckon their friends, pointing, making animated gestures, and generally looking like all their Christmases had

come at once. She laughed while relating this anecdote, leading me to believe that there were not too many truly intimidating moments, but she did indicate that it had been a very different atmosphere (Keen, 30 May 2009).

Figure 4: Nafeeseh dancing on the Saqarah stage, 8 August 2009.

All the dancers were very aware of practical measures they took to prevent themselves from getting into situations that might result in confused expectations. Many dancers, not just my own participants, put disclaimers on their websites indicating that they would not perform for groups of men only, and specifically not for stag nights. Often they specify that belly dance performances do not involve any kind of striptease and that it is inappropriate to touch a dancer in any way while she is performing. Nafeeseh said that she always takes her husband or a friend along when she performs as a defence against any miscommunications (Keen and Rahi-Young, 20 November 2008).

I still maintain that dancers' interest in the gendered issues within the dance community is of much greater import to them than the concept of the audience-performer dynamic on an abstract, analytical level. It was not an issue that my participants felt the need to scrutinise in the same way that academic scholars, particularly Karin van Nieuwkerk, Edward Said and Stavros Stavrou Karayanni, discuss it. What seemed to be of greater importance to them was the potential for this issue to be used as a reason to compel them to stop dancing in the interest of protecting them from its damaging effects. My participants are not going to stop dancing just because of the potential for being objectified by some sort of abstract masculine cultural gaze,

though as I discussed above, they do take material steps to control how they are perceived by audiences during individual performances.

Conclusions

Egyptians take great pride in their dancers, claiming the daughters of their country to be the most talented dancers, that they have it in their blood, that it is an instinct that foreigners will never be able to learn. For some Egyptians, this means that the dance can and should be promoted both in Egypt and globally as a point of national pride, and that fears the dance is becoming diluted or losing its true character are groundless: Egypt is the home of the dance; how can any non-Egyptian ever really be a good dancer? Soheir Zaki's 2000 statement: "Arab dance must be spread…The whole world should appreciate it" (Goudsouzian, 6-12 July 2000), centres dance as a point of ethnic identity. Rakia Hassan's statements mentioned earlier also reflect this attitude (MacFarquhar, 20 January 2004). Nawal al-Nagger called it "an Egyptian thing", though also she also stated that it is an easy job, which is rarely something in which people take pride. Others hold that belly dance is a perfectly acceptable and fun activity in the home, but something that should not be displayed in front of strangers.

Public opinion within Egypt on the dancers themselves also varies. Much of the difference derives from perceived degree of economic necessity: if a dancer supports a family with her earnings or contributes to the family income out of need, she is seen in a less shameful light than if she just likes dancing. The simple enjoyment of dancing, while condemned by some conservative lines of thinking, is not generally considered shameful by itself; the monetary aspect as well as its public nature add new layers of moral uncertainty to professional dancing. This is not to say that dance and entertainment in the private sphere are free from debate, both in religious and other cultural contexts, but that professional dancing has additional elements that affect the discourse around it. Discussion is generated in newspapers and other public media channels by legal rulings on professional dance more frequently than by this cultural phenomena when it occurs in private homes. It might be speculated additionally that as Oriental dance in the private sphere is in no way a novel phenomenon, it has remained unremarkable in these arenas for public discussion.

Ambivalent attitudes about belly dance are not confined to Egypt alone. Within the globalised belly dance community there are a number of paradoxical conventions. The most notable of these is the attitude towards male dancers, something I analyse further in chapter seven: while most dancers say they basically have no opinion about it

as a practice and everyone should be free to explore whatever mode of self-expression suits them, there was a much more restrictive attitude when it came to watching male performances. Let them do it, but we don't want to watch it, many people seemed to be saying.

Another unresolved issue within the global community is belly dance and its connection to sexuality. I call this an unresolved issue because there are conflicting social dialogues about feminine empowerment and feminine appropriateness within American and British cultures. While my participants vociferously worked to define and to position themselves within the definition of appropriateness, respectfulness, and so forth, there is a firm silence on questions of what is sexual about belly dance. Within Egypt, there is a public dialogue that attempts to control the female body through establishing standards of decency, especially with reference to costumes. While the global dancers recognise that certain behaviours and costumes were inappropriate, they were reluctant to define, as the Egyptian state does, exactly where the boundaries of propriety lie and the reasoning behind such a boundary.

Clearly this discourse, as well as those related to all aspects of belly dance at a global level, is still developing. Dancers outside Egypt are becoming increasingly aware of the cultural inspiration for their unique style, which may or may not be Egyptian, and seem to increasingly feel a responsibility to be culturally aware and, as they so often said, respectful. While there are varying ideas of what this means, and some are happier than others to develop an entirely new style rather than adhering to ideas of authenticity, nearly every one of my participants reported a sense of change over time with reference to increased cultural awareness of and access to cultural capital from the Arab world.

This increased cultural awareness appears to have developed a growing sense of the belly dance community as a global entity rather than as an isolated, local experience. Generally dancers perceived this as a positive thing and there was a great deal of excitement about the increasing ability to travel to places like Cairo and Istanbul to obtain 'authentic' costumes and to speak to people who are living there about their experiences with dance. Dancers are also excited about the idea of belly dance becoming perceived by the general public in a more positive sense. There was some ambivalence, however, about belly dance becoming a more mainstream hobby. While most dancers were happy to welcome potential newcomers to Oriental dancing, participants also expressed a fear that people with a less fervent commitment to dance as

a way of life as well as a hobby could dilute the strong community sense that most dancers experience.

Dance and Theory: Research as Argument and Serendipity

> For, truth to tell, dancing in all its forms cannot be excluded from the curriculum of all noble education: dancing with the feet, with ideas, with words, and need I add that one must be able to dance with the pen—that one must learn how to write?
>
> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 1889 (Antony M. Ludovici translation, 2007)

While researching my Master's dissertation, I became increasingly astonished at the tension in the Middle Eastern dance community concerning what the style should be called. The animosity expressed over this issue within both the dance community and the academic community studying Oriental dance did not decrease as my studies continued into my PhD (McDonald, 2007). This rancour is an example of the way in which language and nomenclature are not neutral, objective tools for communication. Rather, language is a creative as well as a descriptive tool. Words change over time and terms become connected to one another in senses different from those originally intended. With this in mind it is easy to see how dancers and dance researchers become so fixated on what are acceptable and unacceptable terms for Oriental dance. In academic and amateur research alike, a great deal of pagination is spent hashing out the various dimensions of meaning for the many terms referring to the same dance tradition, the history of the terms, their sometimes exploitative use, and at times inventing new words for it (Buonaventura, 1998; Stewart, 2000; Karayanni, 2004; Dinicu, 2005; Shay and Sellers-Young, 2005). All of this analysis and brainstorming is very revealing, particularly in areas of disagreement and sites of contestation. What follows is a much abbreviated version of the nomenclature debate in the field of Oriental dance studies.

Middle Eastern dance refers to any type of dance done in the Middle East, which is itself a problematic and vague term. This is sometimes used as a gloss for a particular type of solo-performance improvisational dance, especially by those trying to avoid the term *belly dance* for various reasons. *Belly dance*, a popular term in Europe and America, is an extremely contentious expression within the academic and non-academic bodies of dance literature alike. Generally this is believed to arise from the French descriptive term *danse du ventre* (Nieuwkerk, 1995; Buonaventura, 1998; Hobin, 2003; Karayanni, 2004; Dinicu, 2005; Shay and Sellers-Young, 2005). Most researchers agree that the term *danse du ventre* became popular following the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, where it was applied by Algerian coffee house manager Sol Bloom to pique public interest, believing it would sell more tickets. This worked; the dancers he

employed got more customers than the giant telescope. (Carlton, 1994; Nieuwkerk, 1995: 41; Buonaventura, 1998: 102). Despite many attempts to discredit the term, it remains popular: the existing scholarly and other writings on this dance are overwhelmingly in the English language, where it is most commonly referred to as belly dance. Moreover, as Anthony Shay and Barbara Sellers-Young explain in their introduction to *Belly Dance: Orientalism, Transnationalism and Harem Fantasy*, "…the term 'belly dance' was adopted by natives and non-natives to denote all solo dance forms from Morocco to Uzbekistan that engage the hips, torso, arms and hands in undulations, shimmies, circles and spirals" (Shay and Sellers-Young, 2005: 1). The correct term according to some is *Oriental dance*, derived from the Arabic *raqs sharqi*. Given the discomfort that surrounds the word "Oriental" after Edward Sa'id's *Orientalism* (2003), as well as its imprecision[1], it is no surprise that this term is less popular. The nomenclature problem is further complicated by the fact that *raqs sharqi* refers to one type of dance while the term *baladi,* roughly translatable as "of the country," which is a completely different dance style, might equally be glossed in English as "belly dance". Other terms used for this dance include *raqs 'Arabi* and *raqs Masri*, meaning "Arabic dance" and "Egyptian dance" respectively. Moreover, as mentioned above, solo improvisational dance is common outside the Arabic-speaking world and referring to it solely by an Arabic term ignores this history[2]. I have not included American Tribal Style (ATS) in this overview because it is not a generic term some would consider interchangable for 'belly dance' but is rather a specific subgenre distinct from cabaret-style dance. Development of this style is discussed further in the next chapter, "Transmission and Learning."

The problem of conceptual fixity is not unique to the field of Oriental dance. At a talk by my colleague James Harvey on state legitimacy in May 2008, the lecturer devoted a substantial amount of time discussing the various alternatives to the term '*de facto* state'. He used this discussion to analyse wider problems with attachments that people have to their own concepts or favourite terms, to the point where bodies of literature about general concepts suffer because researchers are so fixated on the slight differences between their concepts that no one will concede to speak about the same topics in slightly different terms. As I discuss in the next section in this chapter, this is

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[1] In America particularly, "Oriental" tends to refer to the far East; dancer Morocco suggests the term *Mideastern Oriental* as the most geographically and linguistically accurate term.
[2] On a flight from Cairo to London in May 2008 I overheard one woman explaining to another that in fact belly dance isn't Egyptian at all, rather, it is the legacy of centuries of Ottoman rule! She failed to explain why, if this is the case, Arabic words are dissimilar to Turkish and Greek terms for the same type of dance.

an equally problematic issue in belly dance scholarship. However, I am not trying to suggest that complete uniformity is preferable to debate and disagreement. In the central section, I examine how concepts taken from gender theory, particularly with reference to contested terms and categories of meaning, can be applied to dance theory in productive ways. In the final section of this chapter I consider the difficulties of situating dances in their own cultures. Obviously it is counterproductive to examine dance as an abstract entity without reference to other cultural artefacts. Cultures do not exist in vacuums, though possible exceptions such as dance communities in virtual worlds and dance performances in Disney World will be considered later in this chapter. Dance can be used as a tool to examine not only the cultures in which they originate, but also the 'foreign' societies in which they are widely performed.

Oriental Dance, Authenticity and Ownership

Traveller's Tales of Intrigue and Mystique

Travellers to Egypt and Turkey from Europe and America described in detail the act of Egyptian and Turkish dancing witnessed on expeditions undertaken primarily in the 19th century. Travellers through Egypt included French author Gustave Flaubert in 1849, American author George W. Curtis in 1850, Lady Lucie Duff Gordon who moved to Luxor in 1862 as a treatment for tuberculosis until her death in Cairo in 1869, Orientalist scholar Edward Lane who first journeyed there in 1825 and his sister Sophia Poole who published her own memoirs of living in Egypt from 1842-49, and writer Isabella Frances Romer who spent 1845-6 travelling in Egypt, Nubia and Palestine. The earliest English description of Oriental dance is believed to be that by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, recounting in a personal letter in 1717 a description of a dance she witnessed in a harem in Adrianople in what is today Turkey. This description is quoted widely in the works of dance enthusiasts (Nieuwkerk, 1995: 22; Buonaventura, 1998: 84; Hobin, 2003: 148; Karayanni, 2004: 73), and of course can be found in her own collected letters (Wortley Montagu, 1940: 179).

Not only were traveller's descriptions of dance popular literature, but ordinary people who were unable to make the trip themselves could visit one of the many world exhibitions that included dancers from the Arab world throughout the 19th century. These took place in London in 1851, New York in 1853, Paris in 1855, 1867 and 1889, and finally in Chicago in 1893 (Buonaventura, 1998: 101). These exhibitions expressed the success of the colonialist project: here could be found raw materials and 'primitive'

peoples from around the globe juxtaposed next to the finished goods produced in Western countries and exported to the ready colonial markets. Western fascination with Oriental dance increased, opening a market for genuine dancers from Arab countries as well as imitators and innovators who found a willing audience for burlesque in amusement parks and dance halls (Nieuwkerk, 1995: 42). Nieuwkerk also claims that Western dancers began travelling Eastward as a result of the growing public infatuation with belly dancing, but she does not provide examples of any dancers who did so in the immediate aftermath of the world exhibitions, nor reasons why they might do so. Given that Western audiences of the time were perfectly willing to accept unskilled burlesque dancers[3] as belly dancers, why take the trouble and expense of going all the way to Egypt to really learn the moves when one could simply adorn oneself with a glittering costume and the stage name Fatema?

The only dancer who definitely travelled to Algeria and Morocco in this period was French writer and performer Colette (Buonaventura, 1998: 97-8). Her captivating description of the performance of dancer Yamina from the Ouled Nail tribe in Algeria is available in an English compilation of her travel writings titled *Places*. Much to my irritation, the volume is organised by theme and the extracts are not dated, thus making it difficult to ascertain when Colette saw Yasmina perform[4]. Biographer Herbert Lottman indicates that the peripatetic Colette visited Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia on several occasions throughout her life, principally after she was already established in both literary and theatrical circles (Lottman, 1991). There is no evidence that she used these trips to gather technique or training in a particular movement style for her dance career, though she is known to have performed in several Orientalist-influenced fantasies, including the scandalous *Egyptian Dream* at the Moulin Rouge in 1907 which was banned by police for nearly inciting a riot (Lottman, 1991: 77; Buonaventura, 2003: 113). In this period it was not considered necessary to research Oriental dance by travelling to its countries of origin; inspiration from afar was considered sufficient to provide illumination of and affinity for it. Dancers must have assumed they would capture technique and a movement vocabulary through osmosis. The performers who brought Oriental dance into popularity and elevated its status to an artistic endeavour in

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[3] Is it really fair to assume the burlesque dancers were generally unskilled? Many of them probably did have a skilled technical movement vocabulary, but I think it is fair to say that they lacked the training in the dance vocabulary of Oriental dance. On the other hand, there is no formalized system of training in Egypt or other Arab countries, and I certainly don't believe that location is an automatic pathway to skill, or an automatic reason to believe a dancer is unskilled.

[4] The five original publications from whence the passages are extracted are referenced on the copyright page, but it is not clear which section comes from which book and thus when each was first published.

Europe and the United States, like Ruth St Denis, had no experience travelling in Arab countries to gain their knowledge. Contrast this with my research participants' adherence to the idea of cultural respect, reported in the previous chapter and analysed further in the coming section. The desire to faithfully represent a culture or cultures other than one's own coupled with the increasing ease of travelling to those cultures has contributed to a growing interest in belly dance tourism in recent years.

Travelling to Meet the Dance

There are numerous package tours available for dance enthusiasts in the West, sometimes through their local dance instructors who may only publicise such trips privately to their own students. Several of my personal dance instructors and friends who teach belly dance classes, both American and British, offer annual trips of this type. People who work primarily as instructors, like dancer and writer Morocco, may also open trips to members of the public who are not ordinarily their students. Morocco's website www.casbahdance.org, often shows examples of advertising for this kind of trip. Recently, professional touring companies have begun to get in on the game. A simple Google search for "belly dance tours" turned up over 800 results. Some of these tours were offered by travel companies based in the United States and Europe, but others were owned by people living in the destination country (generally Egypt or Turkey). As I discussed earlier, dancers are increasingly using YouTube as a venue for self promotion, and this holds for dance schools and retreats as well as performers. One example is Asi Haskal's "bally [sic] dance school in the middle east" (Haskal, 24 November 2006). Following the link to his website, www.asihaskal.com, reveals that his school is in Ramat Hasharon, Israel. While Haskal is far from the only belly dance teacher in Israel, as far as I can tell he is the only one marketing his school in the West, with English and French-language versions of his website as well as Hebrew.

My research participants listed several reasons behind travelling to or wanting to travel to the Middle East: increasing their professional value as teachers or performers, finding more skilled teachers, having a more intensive dance retreat than they are able to incorporate in their normal weekly routine, coming back with a greater understanding of the culture(s) from which belly dance stems, and becoming inspired by new moves or techniques.

Eleanor Keen and Nafeeseh Rahi-Young, dancers from London who I met at the Nile Group Oriental Dance festival in November 2008, mentioned the difficulty they were having finding teaching at an appropriately advanced level locally. Eleanor said,

"We don't want to have to come all the way to Cairo just to feel challenged. I'd love, I'd kill for a weekly class that really pushed me. They just don't really exist." But she also indicated that "…it's great coming here to be surrounded" by like-minded people who are all striving to improve (Keen and Rahi-Young, 20 November 2008).

Jim Boz also spoke about getting out of his regular dance training routine in order to experience a variety of different styles and to get inspired by different sources, indicating that he has taken workshops with almost 80 different instructors. But his most formative dance experience was travelling to Cairo in 2007 in order to take some private lessons and to experience an Oriental dance show in an Egyptian context. I asked how that affected his dance performance and understanding of dance.

> Oh my God…it completely changed everything and I wish I could put it into better words…but it just makes me realise how far off most Americans are with how it fits into the culture. This doesn't come from seeing the boat cruise shows and the dinner shows and going to the Marriott or anything, no this comes from, you know, 4.30 in the morning at the cabaret. (Boz, 14 March 2009)

Similarly, a number of dancers felt strongly enough about their experiences when travelling to Egypt for the first time to return to build a life there. In addition to the expatriate dancers I quoted in the previous chapter, Lorna, S, and Kitty, I also got to know Sara Farouk Ahmed in Egypt. Sara, formerly known as Maureen O'Farrell, has a film, stage and television career spanning acting, choreography, and directing. She is originally from Britain and has lived in Egypt for about ten years. Sara is well-known as a teacher and mentor throughout the British belly dance community; my participant Lorna Gow first went to Cairo on a trip organised by Sara. She was vocal about her commitment to the idea that in order to really understand Egyptian dance and to become a good dance performer, travelling to Egypt is necessary. After taking classes with a Tunisian dancer, she realised "…there wasn't any point in learning belly dance in England, you actually have to keep coming back to Egypt—for Egyptian dance—you had to come back to Egypt, to the source, to…learn it, really, on a regular basis" (Ahmed, 14 October 2008). Later in the interview, we spoke about dancers whose finances or other personal situations prohibit them from such journeys, saying that there can still be many benefits for such students, but Sara nevertheless advocated trying to travel.

> [When you can't come here]…it's not really so much to do with understanding, or you know, attempting to understand the dance or the culture or anything like this, it's much more about you benefiting from it yourself. I mean, if you want to take it further then you have to come…You have to find a way. There's always a way. Even if you have to wait ten years, there's a way. If you put a pound a week away, eventually you'll get here. (Ahmed, 14 October 2008)

But for Sara, travelling to Egypt is not only about the benefit a student might derive from it, feeling that the dance community must also give something back to Egypt by contributing to the dance-based economy; buying costumes, encouraging local tradespeople, coming to see live performances instead of sitting at home and watching them on YouTube. "You know, you just feel as if there should be a payback. Otherwise it turns into sort of 19th century colonialism, where all you do is put the sugar in the tea and never give a fuck about where it comes from" (Ahmed, 14 October 2008).

Figure 5: Mahmoud's costume shop in Khan el Khalili, 18 October 2008.

Tourism has implications for cultural identity and conceptions of authenticity. Many look down on tourism as something that dilutes heritage, makes a mockery of local culture, and forces locals into performing rather than living a culture (Tourism Concern; Turner and Ash, 1975: 197; Frow, 1991: 133-135; Hoskins, 2002; Schrift, 2004: 333) (though Michel Peillon also posits situations where locals engage in a mockery of visiting tourists, (Peillon, 1984)). The advantages of tourism are rarely discussed. Tourism is largely constructed around ideas of what consumers want, emphasising the exotic and the 'other' within the culture being visited. Alternatively, ideals of 'authentic' performance can also operate within the structure of tourism, often marketed as an antidote to the other, destructive kind of tourism that ruins the very culture it intended to celebrate.

One example of this is a *zaar* performance that I watched at the Makan Cultural Centre (also called the Egyptian Center for Culture and Art) with Lorna and some

visiting dancer guests of hers from the UK on 22 October 2008. *Zaar* is a type of dance and musical performed mainly by women in order to "harmonize the inner lives of participants" according to the information sheet we received (Received 22 Oct 2008b).

That evening, I met Lorna and her guests at her apartment in Mohandiseen around 8 PM. The three visitors that evening were a close friend of Lorna's and two former students from the period that Lorna taught professionally full-time in Scotland. One of the women resided in London and had only taken Lorna's workshops intermittently. While they were getting ready to go out I asked Lorna if there was a specific word in Arabic to differentiate 'folkloric' dancing from 'Oriental' dancing. She didn't know for sure but suggested it might be related to the word *funuun*, which is what her male folkloric backup dancers are called. She also said possibly people just use the different names of the regional dances of Egypt to refer to it. She pointed out that folkloric professional dancers have different legal restrictions than Oriental dancers. Unlike Oriental dancers, they are allowed to work during Ramadan. When foreigners were banned from Oriental dancing many of the professionals simply went out and got jobs as folkloric dancers. Also, folkloric dancers will get hired at el Sawy and other 'reputable' cultural venues, while belly dancers will not. This small exchange was typical of the ongoing conversation between Lorna and I, taking place in the room in her home that she uses as a dance studio, where her guests had partaken in a private dance lesson that morning.

We arrived at Makan at 10 minutes past nine. As a result we had to slip in late, the first song already being under way. It cost 20 Egyptian pounds to get in, a prohibitive amount for the majority of Cairene residents but on the scale of available evening entertainments, extremely reasonable. By contrast, the Nile Pharaoh boat where Lorna performs, operated by the Oberoi hotel group, cost approximately 200 Egyptian pounds including dinner, and the dancing we went to see at the Falafel Restaurant in the Ramses Hilton following the *zaar* had no cover charge but we were expected to pay hotel prices for dinner and drinks, within the same order of magnitude as the Oberoi boats. On another occasion I visited the Aladin restaurant at the Cairo Sheraton with Lorna and guests to see a dancer perform; this was also in the range of 150-250 pounds per person for a meal and entertainment.

Zaar songs are long, starting slowly and building to a climax with a sudden shift in rhythm near the end. In the musical and dancing group performing this zaar were three women and four men. The audience was a mix of locals and tourists. Lorna loosely translated some of the singing for me. I understood one song to be about "*alf*

leyla wa layl," a thousand and one nights. *Al-layl* was a recurring theme throughout the songs that evening. At one point one of the women took center stage and began to sing, clearly making reference to members of the audience. She pointed out particular people and sang to them, then gently mocked their movements, the position they were seated in, or in the case of one young unfortunate, his shaved head. Lorna told me the singer was singing about beautiful young girls and that she was flirting with the audience, in particular the young man, who she was teasing for being bald by asking how beautiful young women respond to his lack of hair. When her attention focused on him, he blushed and squirmed like a teenager[5].

The information sheet we received on arrival states that the Egyptian Center for Culture and Art (ECCA) was "founded in 2002 to record and promote traditional music in Egypt, increasingly in danger of being relegated to the status of an exotic and decontextualised tourist curiosity or to a place on the shelves of academic archives far from the daily lives of its dwindling practitioners" (Received 22 Oct 2008a). But they themselves make a good deal of money from the tourist trade, as was obvious from the audience makeup of both locals and visitors. While disparaging the nature of tourism as a force for destroying cultural context, they also make use of the tourist economy to create a space in which to perform traditional arts. Academia too is criticised by the ECCA, as something that removes units of cultural capital (in this case traditional music and dance) from their positions in everyday culture, locking them away in places where they will never be seen, practiced or promoted.

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[5] Video of the *zaar* is available on my YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/caitietube, titled "Zaar 1-6" respectively. Examples are included on the DVD accompanying this thesis.

Figure 6: Zaar at *Makan* Cultural Centre (Egyptian Centre for Culture and the Arts), 22 October 2008.

While the ECCA information sheet was very specific—musical recordings might be archived and therefore inaccessible to those who do not know how to look for them—the writer is metonymically referring to the larger problem of how academic culture relates to knowledge acquisition and access. On the whole, academics consider themselves to be engaging in a beneficial and useful enterprise by seeking, analysing and categorising knowledge. Denizens of the academic realm are aware of and do legitimately challenge the idea of the ivory tower, and the problem is usually perceived to be one of poor communications skills on the part of researchers rather than a hegemonic desire to control access to knowledge. I believe the vast majority of researchers are operating in good faith and with the highest goals of academe at heart, but either way the end result remains the same: instead of research being a completely illuminating exercise for the good of all, certain kinds of knowledge become available only to some, policed by a network of access barriers only navigable by the privileged few. While I certainly do not perceive my research in this way, and my hope is to bring the concepts I study to the attention of a wider audience rather than to confine them to an obscure library shelf, it is clear that my objectives, and those of all academic research, are not considered benign by all parties.

These problematic reflections are partially resolved by standard practice within the social sciences, especially anthropology. In the coming section "Gender Theory and Dance" I will discuss the 'contestation of knowledge' prompted by feminist-activist

studies in the 1960s and 1970s; from that time the accepted practice has been for researchers in these fields to consider at length the effects their studies will have on the communities being studied. There is an ever-growing body of literature on the dynamics of power and privilege between researcher and researched (Mohanty, 1988; Lewis, 1996; Narayan, 1997; Al-Ali and El-Kholy, 1999; Bibars, 1999; Lewis and Mills, 2003). I cannot yet say if my research will find its horizons limited to the shelves of an archive, but I find it heartening that all my interviewees expressed interest in seeing my finished work and a continued involvement with it. I am left with two questions: is academia (or tourism, for that matter) actually hastening the removal of these activities from daily life, as the above quote from Makan implies? Or is it artificially prolonging its use in those settings where it might otherwise have disappeared, thus enhancing the idea of cultural 'otherness' by fixing it to a particular point in history? Neither of these outcomes could be considered desirable.

A possible solution is suggested by Hobsbawm and Ranger's distinction between "custom" and "tradition" (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992). In brief, a "tradition" comprises formalised repetition in order to continually recreate connection with a past, whether that past is accurate or imaginary, while a custom need only *appear* to be congruent with the past, thus allowing innovation in social tradition while still bearing reference to history. I will discuss these concepts further in the forthcoming chapter section "What is Ethnic Dance?" In the previous chapter I made reference to William C. Young's article on how to resolve tensions in Egypt and other Islamic societies between increasingly conservative religious demands and the importance of dance in marking important community occasions and reproducing social order (Young, 1998). Young completes his article by suggesting different strategies for resolving those tensions, his solutions bearing reference to the differences between Hobsbawmian "tradition" and "custom." His suggestions are that Islamic reformers could campaign for Egyptians to return to hosting completely gender-segregated social gatherings, the "traditional" option, that Islamic reformers could ban all dance at their own weddings, which could be considered an innovation, or finally, that they attempt to redirect the focus onto the ritual significance of dance (Young, 1998). This third option, referring to the past while accounting for shifts in social ideology, could be considered following the route of "custom" rather than "tradition." The specific tensions he addresses are different from those I consider in this chapter. However, drawing on Young's terminology to suggest a possible solution to the opposition between cultural development and the influences of tourism and academic study, "custom" seems to be

the most viable space that allows for cultural change to emerge while still encouraging reference to historical precedent in its identity-forming capacity.

The next section will analyse the customs and traditions of dance scholarship by both academic and independent researchers, and the problematic discourses therein.

Oriental Dance Scholarship

In the introduction to the anthology *Belly Dance: Orientalism, Transnationalism and Harem Fantasy* (2005), Anthony Shay traces the roots of the professional belly dance scene in American urban centres along the Eastern seaboard. He suggests that two factors mainly led to the rise of the American belly dance community: first, increasing immigration from Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa due to growing political strife in the decades following World War II. Shay's second suggested contributing factor is the advent of the feminist movement in the United States with its focus on female sexuality and allowing women greater control over their own bodies (Shay and Sellers-Young, 2005: 14). Though Shay indicates that several professional dancers contributed to the trend, he mainly credits author Daniella Gioseffi with starting a movement that "interpreted belly dance as a site of sexual freedom and thus female power" (Shay and Sellers-Young, 2005: 14). Further, "Gioseffi acted as self-selected spokesperson for a movement that linked the dance with the social rights of women." This resonates with Hobsbawm's idea that traditions, whether naturally arising or "invented", can be used as a tool for encouraging the shift of social values and acceptable behaviour, in this case for women (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992: 14). Her book, *Earth Dancing* (Gioseffi, 1980)*,* may be the first of many dance enthusiasts' tomes to outline the history and development of belly dance with an emphasis on what it could mean for the modern, liberated woman. At that point very little academic research had been conducted on Egyptian or Arab dance, though there are two major articles from the 1960s and 70s: Morroe Berger's 1961 article "The Arab *Danse du Ventre*" in *Dance Perspectives* and Lois Ibsen al-Faruqi's "Dance as an Expression of Islamic Culture" from the Spring 1978 *Dance Research Journal* (Berger, 1961; Faruqi, 1978). Initially and even now, the information most widely circulated about dance was not based on scholarly research but on the work of hobbyists and enthusiasts like Wendy Buonaventura, Tina Hobin, Donna Carlton, Iris J. Stewart and Rosina-Fawzia B. Al-Rawi.

Dance enthusiasts are often criticised by their academic counterparts for being historically reconstructionist and principally interested in conceptualising belly dance as

an activity which serves the sexually liberationist aims of the Western feminist movement. In particular, researchers Anthony Shay, Stavros Stavrou Karayanni and male dance enthusiast Tariq Sultan (Tariq abd el-Malik) criticise female dance enthusiasts on the grounds that their collective writings, by ignoring or trivialising the historical evidence of male dancers, insinuate that this dance is a connection to the sacred feminine, thus postulating it as a female activity which creates a 'girls-only' club (Malik, 2000; Karayanni, 2004; Shay and Sellers-Young, 2005). Moreover, these academics also accuse Western and in particular North American dancers of viewing themselves as 'rescuers' and 'preservers' of the Oriental dance tradition, without whom it would have died out in its native lands.

Recently, new articles have diversified the study of Middle Eastern dance, focusing on its connections with gender in new ways that do not fall into a reactionary paradigm. The first contemporary academic looks at the genre, though, were mainly critiques of the enthusiasts' and amateurs' work. Shay and Karayanni (2005, 2004) as academics and Malik (2000) as a dancer-historian engaged in a reactionary campaign against the dancer-historians' feminist aims. Their criticisms of the dance enthusiasts are cogent academic critiques; without their research the field would lack valuable data and theoretical perspectives about male participation in the dance. However it is also evident that these researchers seek to serve their own agendas, which I see as the glorification of halcyon days where men were free to work as dancers as well as women. Though there is definite evidence that male dancers existed in the past, it is less clear whether public opinion paralleled or differed from the situation today. Secondly, in addition to the influence of the Western feminist movement, these researchers attribute the current widely-held belief in dance as a women's activity to the colonialist legacy, making it difficult for men to dance professionally in the Middle East.

What the dance enthusiasts lack in scholarly rigour they make up in volume and popularity compared to the academics. From sheer reiteration, the conjecture that Egyptian dance is a site of connection with the feminine divine, an ancient birthing ritual, and that it was performed only "by women and for women's purposes" (Stewart, 2000: 81) have become belly dance gospel. Dismissing the influence these women's ideas and findings had on communities of dancers in Europe and North America is impossible: for most dancers interested in studying the history of this dance tradition, these works remain the most easily accessible. Moreover, despite all the validly

criticised flaws, without their efforts this field of study would be even more in its infancy.

Despite being perfectly willing to point out the essentialisms in others' arguments, academic theorists seem not to see where they themselves take similarly untenable positions. Though the group of male dance scholars are clearly writing for an academic audience, there are still several inconsistencies in their research. How can Shay and particularly Karayanni object to sexually liberationist politics when they seek to emphasise the historically explicit sexual component of Oriental dance, contrary to the reformative efforts of state-sanctioned dance troupes like the Reda Troupe of Egypt? (Shay, 2005a: 77). Secondly, Karayanni outlines the problematic nature of the facts that nearly all the scholarly work on this dance tradition is in English and that there is such a lively dance culture in North America, yet he chose to publish his research in English and he undertook most of his dance training in Canada (Karayanni, 2004: xi-xv).

Comparing the assertions of a male dance researcher to the conclusions drawn by the original dance enthusiasts outlined above makes clear how essentialism and positivism create untenable positions concerning authenticity and 'ownership'. In the statements below, researcher Stavros Stavrou Karayanni concludes that North Americans have a great deal more to prove, if they ever truly can, than their Middle Eastern counterparts in order to become accepted as skilful or 'authentic' dancers in the Oriental dance tradition:

> …I worry that the priority is on a white, middle-class performance of femininity, which is also decidedly heterosexual in its signification. Sexually unequivocal interpretations have become not only fashionable (this group had that particular look that accords an almost archetypal performance of what seems to be a traditionally male construct of feminine beauty: white, fit, dynamic and youthful) but almost required (Karayanni, 2004: 169).

Karayanni further portrays the dance troupe he describes, called "Jillina and the Sahlala Dancers," as "a group of remarkably slim and fit female dancers (slimness contrasts with dancers' images from the Middle Eastern past)" and "perturbing" (Karayanni, 2004: 169). Elsewhere he asserts: "…many members of the North American dance community seem to thrive on the conviction that they are not mere guests to this art form…Some people, perpetuating a clearly colonialist mentality, are not happy being guests to an art; they have to take it over and own it completely" (Karayanni, 2004: 162). Edward Said refers to this obliquely in his essay "Farewell to Tahia" when he says parenthetically, "I except from this [lack of awareness of Tahia Carioca's repertoire] other belly dancers, all of whom today seem to be non-Arab—lots of Russians, Americans, Ukrainians, Armenians and French…" (Said, 2001: 230).

While I agree with Karayanni's suggestion that constructions of female beauty are ripe for disagreement and dialogue, and secondly his implication that the mindset of many North American dance enthusiasts is one of blissful ignorance about the relationships between dance history, Orientalism and colonialism, I find his language extremely problematic and personally challenging. Taken together, what he seems to be suggesting is that young, thin, Caucasian American women do not have the basic right to dance, but need in some way to demonstrate that they can rise above these categories before they can be allowed to declare themselves a part of this tradition. I find this just as discriminatory as any of the many assertions that Oriental dance belongs to women only: I can no more change my youth, country of origin and body shape to suit Karayanni's idea of what dancers should fundamentally be than he can change his gender to suit Gioseffi, Buonaventura, and Stewart's idea of who should be allowed to participate in Middle Eastern dance. Moreover, the majority of my research participants did not feel that "they have to take it over and own it completely," but rather that they were bound to acknowledge Middle Eastern cultural norms relating to performance when dancing.

My British research participant Nafeeseh Rahi-Young referred to this when I interviewed her and Eleanor Keen in Cairo when they visited for the Nile Group Oriental Dance Festival, saying "A lot of teachers teach moves, rather than the dance. And I wanted to base it more in the culture, more where it's coming from rather than teaching someone cool moves, because then you're just learning dance like any other. And this isn't a dance like any other at all…" (Keen and Rahi-Young, 20 November 2008). Clearly Nafeeseh is distinguishing between dance technique and the ephemeral qualities of expression that transform a series of movements into a dance, and specifically into an Egyptian dance. Both she and Eleanor stressed the importance of an understanding of Egyptian culture generally in order to connect with dance on an individual level, and to understand the context in which Egyptian stars, who may be role models for foreign dancers, operate. Jim Boz, who I interviewed at the Rakkasah West festival in Vallejo, California, held a similar opinion; that it can be easy to ignore the original cultural context but we have a responsibility to get to know it:

> As Americans I think…we don't really understand the cultural context that well and we have a tendency to appropriate…cultural references and cultural images; not go and really accept and understand but just sort of snag it… I think that's not necessarily; I mean it's neat because I think it kind of opens the door for people to get involved in something that they may not have been exposed to. But I think it's also a bad thing when we don't pay attention to the fact that, hey

this is somebody else's, you've got to really have a little bit more respect for that. (Boz, 14 March 2009)

I interviewed one dancer, Lacey Sanchez, who performs principally as an American Tribal Style dancer. My participants generally agree that Tribal Style, though it comes under the umbrella term 'belly dance,' cannot be categorised as Egyptian dance in any way. The relationship between them is akin to the relationship between Egyptian dance and Flamenco dance, or between ballet and modern dance: there are clearly some overlaps, but really, it is a different animal altogether. Lacey spoke about her awareness of this with reference to her physical appearance, saying that like many Tribal Style dancers she has tattoos. "I'm going to continue to get tattoos. It's who I am, you know, but I also understand that it's not appropriate at Egyptian weddings for me to show up. I understand that and I appreciate and I respect it" (Sanchez, 4 February 2009). Lacey spoke about Tribal Style as something particularly American; something that celebrates the idea of the melting pot and mixing cultures rather than holding on to the idea of preserving unique cultural traditions from their countries of origin. She told me that she was once asked to perform a Tribal Style show in a Middle Eastern restaurant, and though she did do it, she knew from the beginning that the audience would not respond:

They hated it. The audience hated it and I kind of knew better, but I was told to do it, you know. I knew they weren't going to like it. They don't understand it. There were a couple of people that thought it was cool, but in that environment it's not going to make sense, it's just not. I kind of just know that as a dancer, and I'm not hurt by it. I hope that they can open up to see and appreciate that we're trying to do it in a respectful way, but if they don't, that's okay too. You know, because…that's why when people moved over here, you had the Polish section of town, you had the Italian section, because they want to preserve [their cultures], and I can respect that too, but at the same time...I'm part of the people that want to evolve it, you know, and [that] pay homage and [that] are respectful at the same time. (Sanchez, 4 February 2009)

While all of my participants were aware of the fact that a shift in dance style does happen when it is transferred from one culture to another, people had different feelings about this: some felt these changes were always and only detrimental to dance, and that dancers should strive to align their style with Egyptian style as much as possible. Others felt that these changes were a ripe space for entirely new forms of dance to emerge, and such change should be celebrated. Whether performing traditional Egyptian style, American Tribal Style, or other cabaret styles, most of my participants felt that there were standards of behaviour and of understanding by which a dancer needs to prove they have earned the privilege of performing in a particular style. In the previous chapter I discussed my participants' general agreement that witnessing a dance performance in America or Britain and one in Egypt is a very different experience due

to differing expectations of what makes a 'good' performer. Karayanni's conviction appears to be that these differences are, in a sense, illegitimate: they simply make for an inauthentic or poor performance rather than being a new cultural development in their own right. While I do not enjoy many instances of fusion dance styles that I have seen, on a theoretical level I am much more cautious about censuring the development of new forms of dance in the name of preserving 'authenticity,' since I find that concept so problematic.

Making use of Butler's concept of the open coalition and the value that can be found in disagreement rather than accord (discussed in the coming section "Gender Theory and Dance"), though dance theorists and enthusiasts are unlikely to ever agree on all aspects of Middle Eastern dance, this may not be the stumbling block I first assumed when I encountered this discordant discussion. One way forward in this instance might be to agree that what is an essential aspect of Middle Eastern dance for one set of people may not be so for others: while one woman may prefer attending all-female classes, another dancer may only dance to music produced by Egyptian performers. It would be naive to think that a simple 'live and let live' attitude will settle all the disagreement and debate in the theoretical world of Oriental dance. More importantly, such an attitude would stifle the important creative and productive aspects of debate and discourse. This facet of conflict, that which stimulates creativity and growth, is vital for understanding the application of gender theory to the diversity of contradictory beliefs within the global belly dance community.

Gender Theory and Dance

I would argue that the principal current function of gender theory is simply to question foundational beliefs that are accepted as natural or needing no logical support, both in academic and non-academic contexts. For example, look at the parallels between gender and nationality: gender is often painted as the 'natural' division between the sexes; one of the remits of gender theory is to question this 'naturalism' and describe how people actually engage in very complex practices to continually reassert gender identity. Later in this chapter I discuss Hobsbawm and Ranger's notion of the "invented tradition," where they point out that nations claim to be the most "natural" organisations of the human condition, such that simply asserting their existence suffices as a validating process (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992: 14) However, the very fact of declaring this 'naturalness' and engaging in the pomp and circumstance we use to legitimise nations in fact speaks to their carefully constructed and constantly

maintained nature. This process of naturalisation and legitimisation is similar to that which people engage in every day to maintain their supposedly 'natural' gender identity.

From its very beginnings in connection with second-wave feminism in the 1960s, what we now call gender studies drew attention to the false premise of fundamental concepts (Giddens, 1994; Evans, 2003; Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004). Women's studies and feminist studies, from whence gender studies emerged, problematised the academic use of the male experience as an acceptable marker of the universal, for the first time calling into question the neutrality and objectivity of academic perspective (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004: ix). From the beginning the focus was on filling in the gaps of historical and literary knowledge which previously privileged masculine forms of knowledge. "The feminist academics of the 1970s had a strong sense of politics—and that sense was indicative in the rewriting and rethinking of disciplines across the social sciences and the humanities" (Evans, 2003: 91). From this initial focus on a feminist-activist perspective arose a general "contestation of knowledge" that questioned and critiqued the foundations of belief in the social sciences, arts and humanities (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004: xi). From this stance eventually arose the more contemporary idea that maleness and masculinity, not in their previous roles as the universal experience but rather as subjective entities, also deserve the kinds of questions raised in women's studies. 'Gender studies' became an increasingly popular term, though some critics claim that this reverts men to the subjective and women to the peripheral as part of a backlash against feminist thought (Giddens, 1994; Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004: xii). Queer theory also began to question the utility of the separation between sex and gender in feminist theory, for the latter's problematic introduction of "a damaging mind/body split" (Martin, 1996: 72). Further,

> …insofar as feminists have reduced the possibilities of gender to just two, that is, men and women, gender has come to do the work of stabilizing and universalizing binary opposites at other levels, including male and female sexuality, the work that the assumption of biological sex differences once did. (Martin, 1996: 72)

This too contributed to a need for a new theoretical field to further explore debates about how gender is constructed and enacted physically and socially.

For my research the most important theorist from the panoply of gender theorists is Judith Butler. One of Judith Butler's major thought projects concerns the idea of social norms, how they are created, and who they benefit. Most significantly for my research, a major theme that runs through her work is the idea that in a given cultural space and time, there is rarely a single set of norms in operation, but rather several.

Further, these norms can operate around and upon each other in a variety of configurations resulting in their working in concert or opposing one another. Not all people in that culture will choose to operate by the same sets of norms, and norms, including those governing gender, change over time (Butler, 1990; Butler, 1993; Butler, 1997; Butler, 2004; Armour and Ville, 2006). Supplementing this discussion of how the complexities of social norms apply to my current research, in the previous chapter I discussed contradictory attitudes towards dance in contemporary Egyptian society, even those held by a single individual, arising from differing sets of social norms that operate concurrently in the same culture.

Butler also states that any social category is subject to change through time and "must be subjected to a reworking from myriad directions, that it must emerge anew as a result of the cultural translations it undergoes" (Butler, 2004: 224). The idea that social categories change over time and in response to multiple cultural influences has bearing on the ideas of authenticity and ownership discussed earlier in this chapter. Where some theorists suggest that liminal spaces between cultures are incapable of producing 'authentic' cultural artefacts, Butler's concept of resignification provides us with the language to speak of these spaces as creative and productive cultural sectors.

Contestable categories are an essential part of Butler's theoretical landscape. Answering the question of whether terms that have a variety of disputed meanings are still valuable linguistic tools, Butler argues that questionable terms are not useless or obsolete, but rather may be in their most dynamic stage. Questionable terms in Butler's view are an opportunity to re-examine and put to new use concepts that were formerly accepted as unquestioned, settled categories (Butler, 2004: 179). This is a particularly useful idea when considering the problem of conceptual fixity in the field of Middle Eastern dance. Currently the nomenclature debate in Middle Eastern dance literature focuses on what this dance should or should not be called as discrete and mutually exclusive categories, giving the impression that one term will someday 'win' over the others and become the 'correct' term. Butler's approach to contested terms offers the possibility that, though such terms are problematic, there are not necessarily any real solutions to such conundrums. Any terms offered as alternatives to the original questioned terms also come with sets of associations to which any user may object, and new associations may grow up around these suggested solution terms that force the terminology to shift yet again. Here Butler suggests that keeping terminology open to question and debate may be the real solution, rather than attempting to replace each

problematic word with new terms that may be equally problematic, a concept I make use of later in this chapter.

Continuing in the theme of contestable categories, Butler's idea of the open coalition is a discursive model of social categorisation. Echoing her idea that even disputed terms have utility and may in fact be the most useful terms, she posits that the most stable social categories are those with an "essential incompleteness" (Butler, 1990: 14). Given that societies have different needs at different times, Butler suggests that the most successful categories are those that "serve as a permanently available site of contested meanings" (Butler, 1990: 15)[6]. Though Butler's main concern was describing the form and function of gender, the open coalition is applicable to contemporary dance in Egypt, and indeed to the global belly dance community. Not all interested parties are going to agree on what dance is or its full range of cultural associations, and further, dance clearly serves as a catalyst for discussing Egyptian social mores, as I discussed in the previous chapter. While it is difficult to conceive of dance as a coalition, the idea is that anyone engaging in public debate about dance is a participant in it: there are many different parties invested in the idea of Egyptian dance with varying opinions and driving factors, for instance the spectrum of dancers (professional or non-professional), researchers, audience members, religious leaders, news reporters and government agencies.

As I said, Butler's main purpose in defining the contestable category was to examine existing gender paradigms. When unquestioned, people often tend to perceive gender as immutable, unchangeable and stable throughout one's lifetime, but the reality of gender is that we are constantly performing and reinforcing our gender, and a failed performance puts one's status in jeopardy (Butler, 1990: 140). Performance in this sense means conveying intentions through a variety of bodily and non-bodily processes, including how we choose to express ourselves through writing. Hence, the very act of writing about gender is not a neutral, gender-free position. The very act of writing about gender is a gender-performative act. In addition to people's intentional methods for organising gender and other social categories, unconscious assumptions and *prima facie* acceptances from whence writers construct their gender systems also come forward (Butler, 1993; Butler, 2004). Further, linguistic constructions like other normative acts create the impossible, unintelligible and untouchable as well as that which is approved and preferred (Butler, 2004: 206). In the body of dance literature

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[6] For further discussions of the concept of the open coalition within economic and political theory see (Wood, 1988; Negishi, 1989; Deemen, 1997).

both academic and non-academic, as I discuss above, this manifests itself as essentialist, positivist constructions that posit one way of perceiving and enacting dance as the only "correct" way, while all others are flawed and even in their view dangerous.

While others associate Butler's concept of performativity primarily with J.L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* (Austin, 1962), she has clarified that in her early work, *Gender Trouble*, she was informed mainly by Derrida and Bourdieu, and it was only during *Excitable Speech* that she began to incorporate Austin (Armour and Ville, 2006: 286). This may explain why confusion has crept in as scholars attempt to build on or analyse Butler's theory: some insist that "performative" refers only to acts that proceed from a verbal (or written) statement. In other words, a performative act is an act of words:

> Most especially, Austin wished to emphasise that the performative utterance, "I bet you" and so on, was not a description of some action, inner or outer, prior or posterior, occurring *elsewhere* than in the utterance itself. To say those words in those circumstances *is* to offer the bet: the action in question lies in the act of uttering those words in those circumstances. (Gould, 1995: 20)

Sedgwick agrees with Gould: "In *How to Do Things with Words*, J.L. Austin suggested that, at least in principle, it might be possible to distinguish between utterances that merely *said* something (constative utterances) and those that *did* something (performative utterances). The defining instances of performative utterances are those whose utterance actually does the thing *described in them* (Sedgwick, 1998: 106).

Another requirement of the performative is its necessary repetition. Statements like "I thee wed," "I bet you," and "I dare you" (three oft-cited performative phrases in discussions of the subject) all depend on the understanding of all participants and witnesses that to say them is to perform the action of doing them, an understanding predicated on the repetition of or citation of a precedent of such an act (Butler, 1995: 205; Phelan, 1998: 10).

The performance of gender also requires repetition and repeated citation, but this does not mean that *actions* undertaken to perform gender are 'performative'—they are simply, according to those theorists like Sedgwick and Gould who insist that the performative must deal with words, a *performance* of gender. However, others indicate that acts—not just spoken acts—can also be performative through their repetitive citation of a socially expected norm. For example, Harriet Bradley implies this when she says "…it is through performativity—that is, the fact that we constantly play our gender, we 'do gender' through the clothes we wear, the words we use, the activities we carry out, the way we relate to our friends and relations." (Bradley, 2007: 71). Biddy

Martin indicates a similar conflation: "Over against feminists' use of an expressive model of gender, Butler suggests a performative model. The assumption of two neatly divided genders, as of just two discrete sexes, is constituted retrospectively on the basis of repeated performances of culturally sanctioned acts of gender…" (Martin, 1996: 106). Bradley and Martin indicate that performativity is "to do" rather than "to speak;" a direct contrast with other understandings of performativity. This confusion is captured somewhat by Richard Schechner: "Closer to the ground is the question of the relation of performativity to performance proper. Are there any limits to performativity?" (Schechner, 1998: 361) In a statement that might be understood as clarifying or as further exacerbating the problem, Butler says in *Undoing Gender* "In my view, performativity is not just about speech acts. It is also about bodily acts" (Butler, 2004: 198). She then goes on to use as an example the idea that the act of speaking transmits meanings that do not proceed from the words being spoken, but such an act is still bound up with words and not nonverbal communication alone.

Regardless of whether acts of gendered behaviour are performance or performative (and it is certainly the case that individuals engage in both mechanisms of identity formation), the key significances of these endeavours remain the same: to engage through speaking or acting, consciously or unconsciously, in activities that mark the self as gendered, and to do so repeatedly in order to continually reinforce a gendered impression. Whether we are speaking of performance or performativity, it is key to recall that both require internalisation of the continually repeated social norms that they uphold.

> …for Butler acts or practices cannot be said to be expressions of an underlying or interior gender core or self; the illusion of underlying core is produced by the gendered performances that are then taken to be its manifestation or expression… [F]or Butler all performances of gender and its relation to sex are imitations of fantasized ideals, hence masquerades, never copies of originals or of simple biological foundations. (Martin, 1996: 108)

Jon McKenzie describes this process of internalisation as "sedimentation": "Subjects do not expressively perform their genders; rather, gendered subjectivity is itself constituted through compulsory performances of social norms. Through repeated performances, these norms become sedimented *as* (and not in) gendered bodies" (McKenzie, 1998: 221).

The most integral part of Butler's theory for my research is her insistence that constructed norms, like gender though not limited solely to gender, are not fixed through their continually repeated performances, but that these terms can over time come to signify different sets of underlying meanings. Equally important is Butler's

assertion that the inability to rigidly define these categories is inherent to their utility rather than an impairment to their usefulness. The contestable category increasingly served as a guideline to 'slippery' theoretical concepts as my research developed, allowing me to see their lack of conceptual fixity as beneficial, an accurate reflection of how such categories are utilised in many different ways, rather than as a problem that needed solving before I could engage with these theoretical spaces.

Dance Theory and 'The Other'

What is Ethnic Dance?

According to Joann Kealiinhomoku, "in the generally accepted anthropological view, ethnic means a group which holds in common genetic, linguistic, and cultural ties, with special emphasis on cultural tradition. *By definition, therefore, every dance form must be an ethnic form*" (Kealiinohomoku, 2001: 39 emphasis mine). In her excellent article "An Anthropologist Looks at Ballet as a Form of Ethnic Dance" Kealiinohomoku outlines the problematic usage of the term 'ethnic dance.' Principally, she argues that though the term does have an appropriate use when comparing dances of different cultures, generally the word "ethnic" gets used as a mask for the more objectionable terms 'heathen,' 'pagan,' 'savage,' and 'exotic.' 'Ethnic,' in this sense, is merely a way of separating self or selves from the other. She outlines the universal linguistic trait of defining the world into 'we' and 'they,' further emphasising that "the yardstick for measuring humanity, of course, is "we." "We" are always good, civilized, superior; in short, "we" are the only creatures worthy of being considered fully human" (Kealiinohomoku, 2001: 41). Much like 'World' music, the term 'ethnic' dance simplifies into a single category music of many different styles and from varying global origins. The thing that is in opposition to the category of 'ethnic' dance, just plain old vanilla 'dance,' is not conceived as having any defining characteristics. By positioning dance in this way, we conceptualise it as being the blank canvas; the vanilla, basic, *normal* kind of dance. As Kealiinohomoku points out, this also creates a hierarchy in the way we perceive dance: there is our normal kind of dance, and then there is everything else. Tellingly, though Kealiinohomoku's article was originally published in 1969, it appears in several dance anthologies in the ensuing decades, and even in 2001 her thoughts on the matter are still considered pertinent and current enough to include in a dance history reader.

Kealiinhomoku did not argue that we should abandon the term 'ethnic,' (in much the same way that Butler argues that we should not abandon gendered terms but rather continually question what they currently mean) but that we should approach all dances with the same methodological rigour in situating them in relation to the cultures from whence they have sprung. Her article gives rise to some interesting questions: how best to approach dances that have become popular outside their home regions due to increasing globalisation, and how to approach dance performance as a tourist commodity. I discuss the issue of increasing numbers of dancers and hobbyists travelling to the Middle East as tourists seeking dance instruction in the next section, combining this with a discussion of the increasing globalisation of Arabic rhythms in music and dance. In addition to the constructions of authenticity and the significance of female performers discussed in the previous chapter (Young, 1998; Lengel, 2004; Zuhur, 2005), one response to the second question, that of tourism to witness dance performance rather than to increase the traveller's own technical skill, is discussed by dance scholar Yvonne Daniel (1996).

Daniel proposes the following general rules for authenticity: 1) anonymous authorship 2) accuracy or expertise in replicating a product used functionally by members of a particular social group and 3) the use of the items in question, functional in one society, as decoration, diversion, or deliberation by members of a different group (Daniel, 1996: 782). Additionally, Daniel makes a distinction between two methods of determining authenticity depending on what is being judged: visual arts are generally judged externally by a sort of analytical expert, whilst performing arts are an "'experiential' authenticity" (Daniel, 1996: 782). Daniel explains further that

> …experiential authenticity concerns itself with "perfect simulation", replication of a past, an isomorphism or similarity of structural form "…between a living-history activity or even, and that piece of the past it is meant to re-create" (Daniel, 1996: 783)

This definition is problematic: in this sense, authenticity distrusts growth and innovation. It restricts authenticity to a historical idea of correctness, almost precluding the notion that there can be an authentic present. Moreover, Daniel's predicates above restrict authenticity to a monocultural production. Any hybridity or outside influence on a given society by this measure is 'inauthentic,' no matter whether it be a welcome or accepted change by the original society. In a sense, no change can be an 'authentic' change: in seeking to enact 'authentic' cultural traditions, a society adhering to this definition may find itself unable to alter its traditions or rituals at all.

As ever, I find the idea of 'authenticity' too slippery a term to be truly of use in describing ephemeral cultural productions. Hobsbawm and Ranger offer an alternative view from that of Daniel in their 1992 *Invention of Tradition:*

> The object and characteristic of 'traditions,' including invented ones, is invariance. The past, real or invented to which they refer imposes fixed (normally formalised) practices, such as repetition. 'Custom' in traditional societies…does not preclude innovation and change up to a point, though evidently the requirement that it must appear compatible or even identical with precedent imposes substantial limitation on it. What it does is to give any desired change (or resistance to innovation) the sanction of precedent, social continuity and natural law as expressed in history. (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992: 2)

Daniel's concept of 'authenticity' conflates it with the Hobsbawm and Ranger definition of "tradition" as opposed to "custom". By decoupling the two ideas, there is the possibility that 'authenticity' could be used to describe customs as well as traditions. However, I still perceive a problem with the notion of 'authenticity' applied to ephemeral traditions, particularly movement-based traditions: dance differs from styles of furniture or architecture; those are physical objects that can be compared to one another in determining their veracity from a particular time and place, for which the idea of authenticity is perfectly useful and legitimate. Without records to describe change over time in a particular type of dance, it is difficult to compare movement in this way. Though we often think of dance as ahistorical, not only do particular dances wax and wane in popularity, but the dances themselves actually change over time. Social dances do not spring forth wholesale from public imagination and remain in stasis from the time of their conception, they develop and innovate just as society around them does. Why should a dance be less authentically developed through receiving influences from more than one culture?

Modernistic approaches to tourism and the 'authentic' experience have been criticised by scholars like Fife, Crick, and Nuryanti, who suggest that it is possible to engage with the idea of 'authenticity' through subversion, by using 'authentic' products in a tongue-in-cheek way to suggest that the modernist project of 'authenticity' is in fact impossible (Crick, 1994: 9; Nuryanti, 1996: 250-251; Fife, 2004). Further, scholar of Egyptian musical entertainment Virginia Danielson, discussing the multitude of influences in Umm Kalthoum's music, comments on the differences between what 'authenticity' means semantically in Arabic and the way we use the word in English. She indicates that Arab audiences perceive Umm Kalthoum's work as *aSil*, authentic, perhaps even the most archetypically authentic Arab and Egyptian music (Danielson, 1997: 158). Danielson implies that, though Arab audiences engage with the idea of

authenticity, it is mainly Western scholars who have the "problematic of categorising, and coping with the concepts of "tradition" and "authenticity"" (Danielson, 1997: 14). She seems to be saying that linguistically the Arab concept of 'authenticity' is more about centring around an aesthetic ideal than it is about drawing rigid epistemic categories.

Hobsbawm also covers the reinvention of traditional practices for nationalistic ends, using an example from Switzerland (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992: 6). This is echoed in the nationally funded Reda troupe of Egypt, who provided the 'safe,' official versions of Egyptian dances (Shay, 2005b: 76). Further, groups that are not nations can also make use of traditions to foster group cohesion, legitimise authority, and socialise members into appropriate value systems and conventions of behaviour (Kandiyoti, 1991; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992: 9). In the previous section "Oriental Dance Scholarship" I discussed American feminist adoption of belly dance as an empowering act. While I would not argue that this implementation affected the power relations within any feminist group, the main aim of doing so was to shift social values and acceptable behaviour for women within society generally. Finally, as I discussed above, Hobsbawm and Ranger point out that all nations claim to be the opposite of constructed, but rather such "natural" organisations of human existence that self-assertion suffices as a legitimising agency (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1992: 14). This too parallels the women's movement's idea that belly dance is the 'natural' realm of women, discussed earlier. Such a naturalisation echoes popular perception of gender: that gender is not something created or performed but rather a 'natural' division. In a way, this too is an invented tradition.

The present section questions the relevance and even the validity of the ideas of 'ethnic' dance and 'authenticity' respectively. However, I would like to clarify that I am not advocating studying dance divorced from the culture or cultures in which it is situated. Researcher Brenda Farnell sums up the argument against such a position:

> Some investigators have posited the existence of a pre-cultural, pre-cognitive, pre-linguistic realm of 'lived experience' to which we can appeal for instantaneous cross-cultural understanding when it comes to the body; as if the sheer fact of embodiment allows one to inhabit the world of the other. Unfortunately, such a view constitutes a romantic misconception that is, in fact, underpinned by an appeal to biological determinism. It entails a metaphysics of person that is extremely problematic from an anthropological perspective, because it requires a subjectivist separation of body from mind, which in turn must entail a separation of 'body' from the whole realm of cultural contexts, beliefs and intentions (Farnell, 1999: 148).

What I am arguing, rather, is against the idea that cultures exist in vacuums from one another: once we accept that cultural phenomena bear reference to the cultures in which they are situated, the next step is to examine places where cultures and the cultural productions arising from them overlap and interplay. The reality of the matter is that belly dance is practiced and performed in the cultural contexts of the United States, Europe and much of the globe at this time. Failing to study Oriental dance in these contexts with the excuse that they are out of context simply creates an information vacuum. Perhaps the best summary of this argument is in Tom Boellstorff's ethnography of the online virtual world Second Life:

> Anthropologists have long berated themselves (and been berated by others) for assuming that cultures are bounded wholes…
> Yet it is also clear that persons around the world understand themselves to belong to cultures that are discrete even if their boundaries are porous" (Boellstorff, 2008: 241).

On one hand, it is clear especially in an increasingly globalised world that cultures do interact. Yet, individuals still use culture as a reference point in identity formation and situating the self, using cultural phenomena as tools to do so.

While I remain convinced that cultures shift and change through interaction with one another, thus calling into question the whole idea of a single measure of authenticity, the course of my research led into some virtual and utopian spaces. Farnell argues convincingly against the idea of a pre-cultural space, but my research into globalisation must address the idea of the post-cultural space. The most common example of this is through digital media: nearly all my research participants reported watching video clips on YouTube as a way of researching what the rest of the belly dance community around the world is doing. Video clips can be like unreferenced, extracted sections of text; often they do not bear any referent to their origins. In these instances, it is not possible to examine dance as a nationalistic exercise or as a space to enact or rebel against cultural norms (though in some videos such markers are present). In these instances the dancer is operating on a truly global stage: instead of engaging in a participatory exercise bound to a specific space and time, the audience can be scattered throughout the globe and watch the performer at any time.

Dancing in Constructed Utopias: In Virtual Worlds and in Theme Parks

Even further removed from the normal expectations of live performance are digitally reconstructed dances performed in a virtual reality, like those in the online virtual world Second Life. Second Life is what is known as a MMORPG, which stands

for Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game. Other examples include World of Warcraft, RuneScape and Entropia Universe. Many MMORPGs, most famously World of Warcraft, operate on a monthly subscription payment model in order to participate, while Second Life is free to join.

Second Life is not technically a game at all because it doesn't have a goal, objective, or set of conditions to satisfy in order to 'win.' The artificial strictures that defines any kind of game from football to tic-tac-toe are not present in Second Life. There is no one set of activities a player needs to accomplish, but there are many activities in which a player can participate. One of these is dancing. In fact, going to virtual clubs and pubs to dance is one of the most common Second Life activities (Boellstorff, 2008: 16, 106).

One of my participants, Lyssa Poole, alerted me to a thriving belly dance community in Second Life, a concept that I had a very difficult time getting my head around at first. Lyssa told me that in Second Life there was an active belly dance community which met in various locations within the world of Second Life during the week to watch each other dance (Poole, 28 January 2009). Unlike real life, where dancers need to take classes to increase their skill, in Second Life there are animations users can buy or make that cause their avatars to belly dance. In addition to dancing these animations control all sorts of gestures such as giggling, smoking a cigarette, running the avatar's hand through its hair, and so forth. Because these animations are computer programs, they run exactly the same way every time and there is no need to put in effort to increase skill, except by collecting as many animations as possible and varying the order in which the user runs them. Most people are not advanced enough programmers to make their own animations, so for the most part, the same animations are being run on almost every avatar because those are the ones that are available.

Some animations are free, but the majority of them are purchased using Linden Dollars, the currency in Second Life. While it is free to sign up for Second Life, and there are many activities to do there without spending a single Linden Dollar, it does have a cash-based economy. On 24 December 2009 USA Today reported that online retail sales were on the rise, unlike the retail slump in the real world. While it may seem that this would have little or no affect on real-world economics, Linden Dollars are in fact purchasable for real-world currency. Jayne O'Donnell reported approximately US$1 billion in sales of virtual goods, most of which cost less than a dollar in 'real' money. They anticipated that this year, 2010, sales could increase to $1.6 billion (O'Donnell, 24 December 2009). The exchange rate for Linden Dollars hovers around

250LD to the US dollar. There is a lot of money to be made selling not only physical objects like clothing or houses or pets in Second Life, but also by selling, for example, different hairstyles, avatars that look like sharks, and animations like belly dance movements. My informant Lyssa personally had bought, using real money that she changed into the game's currency, costumes for her avatar.

A little more research turned up films of people's avatars performing purchased animations on YouTube. At this point I became completely fascinated by the idea of virtual belly dancing: here is a 'film,' actually a program that has been instructed to capture certain aspects of events within another program, of someone 'belly dancing.'[7] Suddenly, expertise in the field requires a completely different set of skills from those in the real world of belly dancing. Someone who had never once put on a hip scarf in real life could potentially be the Second Life world expert on belly dance, because she or he has the programming skills to create innovative movements, costuming, and accessories, has enough contacts to organise dance events within the online world, and the ability to capture images of the avatar dancing which can then be used for self-promotion.

All of this is so contrary to an experiential lived experience of belly dance that categorising it with the range of knowledges and experiences that my other informants reported was a challenge initially. However, contrary to my speculation above, my research indicates that the vast majority of people who take an interest in belly dancing online are the same as those whom it interests in real life. People who are motivated enough to put together an online community around this subject are guided by the same motivations in their non-digital lives. My original assumption was that people would only engage in a hobby online if it were an impossibility or an activity in which they did not normally engage in non-virtual life. This assumption that virtual realities are entirely bound by escapism is a common one, refuted by Tom Boellstorff:

> It is true that some persons spend time in virtual worlds to be something different: women becoming men or men becoming women, adults becoming children, disabled persons walking, humans becoming animals, and so on. However, many who participate in virtual worlds do not seek to escape from their actual lives. Such negative views of virtual worlds fail to consider forms of escapism in the actual world, from rituals to amusement parks to daydreaming: the degree to which an activity is "escapist" is independent of whether it is virtual or actual. (Boellstorff, 2008: 27)

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[7] For films of Second Life belly dancers, see my YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/caitietube. Click "Playlists", then "Second Life and Motion Capture Belly Dancing". As these videos were not recorded by me, I have not included them on the DVD accompanying this thesis.

Members of the Second Life belly dance community engage in all the internal group debates about standards of decency, tradition and historical accuracy that my real-life participants theorise in the course of their interaction with the dance community; not escapism at all but participating in a normative behaviour for the global belly dance community. In the next chapter I will address the digital component of the global dance community's debates when I explore how dancers become aware of and begin to engage with this aspect of the dance community.

I indicated above that a series of relatively few belly dance animations are being run on many people's avatars. Several videos are available on YouTube of dancers using the same sequence of movements, though the shapes of the avatars themselves and the music they use varies[8]. This can make it difficult at first to realize that the movements are in fact the same, but after it had been drawn to my attention for the first time it was obvious that though being 'performed' on avatars' bodies of different shapes, their motions were of the exact same duration and in the exact same sequence. Turning the sound from the video clips off helped: once I stopped looking for the avatars to respond to musical cues the way a live dancer would, the similitude between their routines became apparent. I also stated that these animations, like costumes and hairstyles, are for sale, though there are a few available for free through 'newbie' areas in the game. One of the most popular outlets for buying animations in Second Life is a digital animation company called Animazoo.

Animazoo is actually a motion-capture corporation based in Brighton, where they take sequences enacted in real life and digitize them to create animations for a variety of platforms, including animated films and animations for sale to individuals in Second Life. Animazoo worked with Brighton-based dancer Galit Mersand in February 2008 to create the basis of their first line of belly dance animations. Paul Collimore, the Director of Sales at Animazoo, told me that at the time they approached Galit to do some animation work with them, they already had a very successful store based in Second Life selling animations to players of the game. They were selling other types of dance at that juncture, like hip-hop, jazz and waltz. Dance animations are not their only product: they also sell animations that cause the avatar to make a gesture of surprise, walk like a crab, flick cigarette ash, etc. Paul indicated that they decided to commission Galit after several Second Life users requested belly dance sequences. There was enough market interest to motivate Animazoo to create a whole new range of belly

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[8] For three examples, see the videos embedded in my article on *Gilded Serpent* (McDonald, 16 February 2010)

dance animations. These animations are about 30 seconds to 1 minute in length and they tend to run on a loop, or the user can queue up several different clips one after the other to create a longer sequence (Collimore, 13 April 2010). It is also possible to have a custom animation generated but obviously this is a much more expensive process depending on the needs of the customer. Prices for single belly dance animations are 250-300 Linden dollars, and packages of dances that come in a set run between 2300-2500 Linden dollars. (That is US$1-1.50, or US$9-10.) Custom animations would be priced based on the complexity of the buyer's specifications, but would be exponentially more expensive.

In our interview Paul told me that the biggest-selling animations in Animazoo's Second Life retail store are hip-hop and what he called 'drunk' dancing, which basically makes a player's avatar look like a slightly tipsy person dancing in a club. Apparently when Animazoo first began this project of selling animations and dances for avatars, they initially brought in professional dance artists of various styles like hip-hop, waltz, salsa and so forth to do really high-quality performances upon which to base the animation sequences. However, they then got feedback from customers saying that what they really wanted was the kind of amateur dancing you might do at a nightclub. This corroborates Tom Boellstorff's findings that participating in this virtual world is not confined to those who wish to escape from their 'real' lives or to perform only activities that they would be unable to in their offline lives. Rather, there is some degree of overlap between players' offline and online activities. In contrast to the majority of people buying animations from Animazoo, the Second Life belly dance community were clamouring for some animations to use at online haflas, which are structured in a very similar way to their offline counterparts. As a result they were looking for professional-calibre sequences recognisable as belly dance rather than the informal improvisational sequences that appealed to the general Second Life public.

I interviewed Galit Mersand about her experiences filming with Animazoo. She indicated that the process was not very lengthy, taking perhaps two or three hours in all. She dressed in a suit she compared to a diving suit, upon which points had been picked out for the cameras and sensors to track. Galit brought a CD with her and improvised along to it. They did several takes because they discovered at times that the points on the suit appeared distorted and weren't processing correctly. They were also only able to use certain types of moves: some movements were too subtle to be captured by the motion capture technology. Any finger movements, anything with the head, and belly undulations were all too delicate to be captured by the suit, or the suit did not have

capture points in that area (the head and the fingers, for example, were not covered by this particular suit, so neck slides and intricate finger movements were not part of Animazoo's original animations based on Mersand's performance). Thus large hip lifts and drops, bumps, big arm movements and big circles were what worked best with the technology at the time. Galit had never heard of Second Life before getting involved with the project with Animazoo, and she told me that she hadn't really thought about it again until she got notified by a student of hers that her animations were getting very widely used by digital dancers in Second Life[9] (Mersand, 13 April 2010). Galit remains invigorated that her own moves are getting used around the world, even though the people using them may not be aware of her involvement with the project. After watching several different avatars do 'her' dance, Galit told me that she is excited about the creativity and the extreme costumes and images people have invented for themselves. She also said "I find the idea of secondlife [sic] a bit 'wrong' in the sense that people live their lives in cyber space instead of here and now. BUT I feel that maybe these clips show the nice and creative aspect of secondlife, now all they is need to go attend a belly dance class in real life. :)" (Mersand, 14 April 2010).

As I indicated, my research suggests that people who are involved with belly dance in Second Life are also connected to belly dance in their offline lives as well. Other players who do not share such an interest may try the animations for fun, just as individuals may take dance taster sessions or try a new hobby in real life. However, during my research I did not meet any users whose real lives do not include belly dance who have joined belly dancing groups or become involved in arranging events online. This is primarily based on my findings with the group Enlightened Divinity, which is also a location within Second Life. Enlightened Divinity was founded by a woman whose avatar is called KarenMichelle Lane. They host belly dance meetups in the Enlightened Divinity space weekly. She started Enlightened Divinity after two years in Second Life as a haven for people who are interested in belly dance. In an online interview KarenMichelle told me "I've always loved ancient history so the Misddle [sic] East holds a strong attraction for me thus my wish to also keep Belly Dancing alive here inSL" (Lane, 10 April 2009). Clearly, KarenMichelle also has a big interest in the spiritual aspect of belly dance and its connections with the ancient divine. I find it fascinating that even in such a futuristic medium this is one of the beliefs propounded by belly dancers.

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[9] This happened because the student noticed a series of movements that appeared to resemble a routine she learned in Galit's class. She saw these in videos I referenced in my article for digital belly dance magazine *Gilded Serpent* (McDonald, 16 February 2010).

I also researched two other Second Life belly dance groups. The first was Serenity Belly Dance, who were very much in keeping with the Enlightened Divinity model. The second, called Bellydancers, was more 'professional': they held events that users of Second Life would pay to attend, and it cost money to join the group. Just as in real life, there are a number of different reasons that people get involved with belly dance and people approach it with a number of different tropes or layers of understanding about what dance means. A comparison of the group charters of the three groups I researched mentioned should clarify some of these contrasts.

- Enlightened Divinity charter:

  Enlightened Divinity
  The Gods have graced us with the knowledge and power to bring healing and peace to the lands we own. Join us at Enlightened Divinity to experience the joy of true friendship and love.
  KarenMichelle[10]

- Bellydancers group charter:

  For those that love the art of Bellydance!
  Bellydancing is an exotic art, erotic, sexual and most beautiful. A way for a woman to speak with her body and nothing else.
  A solo dance performed by a woman and characterized by sinuous hip and abdominal movements.
  The noun belly dance has one meaning:
  Meaning #1: a Middle Eastern dance in which the dancer makes sensuous movements of the hips and abdomen (Bellydancers).
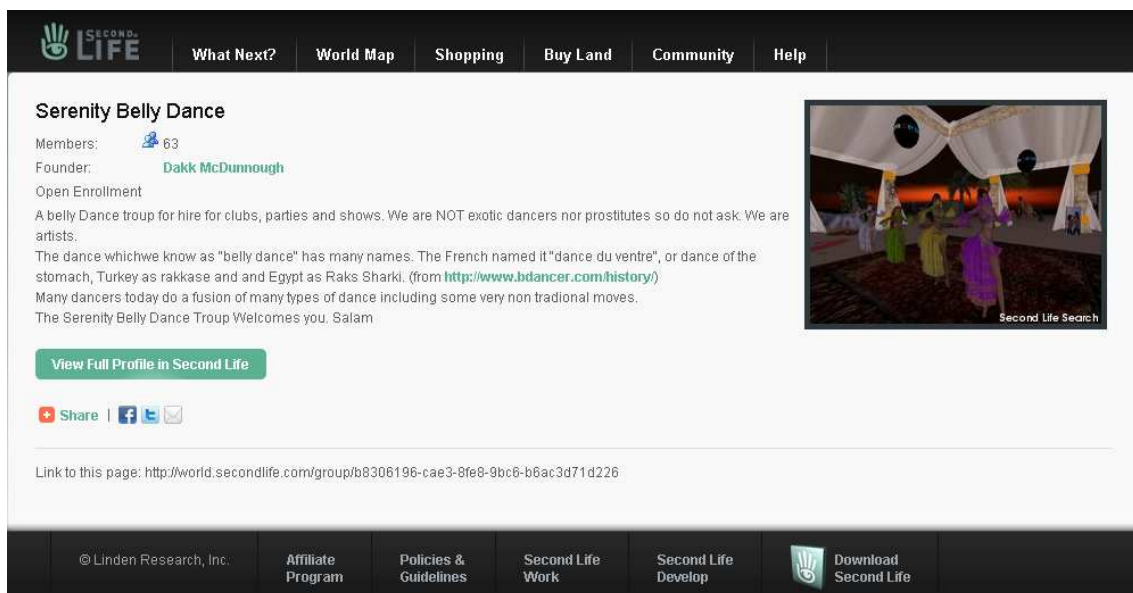
- Serenity Belly Dance charter:

Figure 7: Screen Shot of Serenity Belly Dance group's charter on the Second Life website.

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[10] Both Bellydancers and Serenity Belly Dance have charters that are visible on the Second Life Groups website as well as within the game itself. Enlightened Divinity's charter did not, at time of writing, have a listing on the Second Life Groups website. To refer to the group charter directly it is necessary to sign in to the game and search for the group while in the game.

A belly Dance troup [sic] for hire for clubs, parties and shows. We are NOT exotic dancers nor prostitutes so do not ask. We are artists.
The dance whichwe [sic] know as "belly dance" has many names. The French named it "dance du ventre", or dance of the stomach, Turkey as rakkase and and Egypt as Raks Sharki. (from http://www.bdancer.com/history/)
Many dancers today do a fusion of many types of dance including some very non tradonal [sic] moves.
The Serenity Belly Dance Troup Welcomes you. Salam (Serenity Belly Dance).

These charters typify similarities between community approaches to understandings of belly dance in real life and those that arise in virtual community interactions. It is possible to see parallels between the commonly differing or even conflicting narratives concerning what belly dance means and what it could and should mean; discussions which take place in Second Life as in the other venues and media I discuss throughout this thesis.

Boellstorff's argument about the relative escapism of a virtual world does not address why participants would want to engage in a physical activity like belly dance in a virtual reality where the measures of success, skill, or reward are so at odds with their non-virtual counterparts. One possible solution suggested by my research might be that rather than engaging with the physically rewarding aspects of belly dance—exercise, positive body image, and so on—participants in Second Life are looking for the community-building aspects of the hobby, such as those experienced when partaking in global dance community debates, something that does not require a physical embodiment to achieve; an activity that many dancers engage in online but outside virtual worlds, through message boards, listservs, and so forth. I am not ruling out the possibility that it also appeals on an escapist or 'overcoming the impossible in real life' level as well: individuals could also be attracted by actions the embodied avatar can perform that the individual is unable to in real life, such as a particularly complicated backbend. Another prospect is that the ability to customise the physicality of the avatar with relative ease compared to doing so to one's own body in real life—for example, buying virtual costumes for four or five US cents instead of a real one for many hundreds of dollars—appeals to some Second Life dancers. This would parallel the above-cited popularity of online retail among the general public who use Second Life and other virtual worlds reported in late 2008 (O'Donnell, 24 December 2009).

Another example of dance in what could be considered a utopian space outside the bounds of ordinary cultural experience is that of dancers at theme parks, especially Disney World's World Showcase in Epcot Centre, are operating in and helping to sustain a completely managed environment. There is a utopian aspiration in Disney

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World, with all the problems and exclusionary values that this phrase implies. This is true throughout the Disney experience, but especially so in the World Showcase which attempts to depict the 'essence' of each nation represented there. This means presenting a singular, unified discourse of what the 'essence' of each nation is, within a very limited spatial and temporal window, and presenting all aspects of it in a positive light. There is no room for disagreement, nuance, or complexity in the Disney message. There are many rational reasons for this: the driving force behind Disney's revenue is families with children. Disney World is also at heart an entertainment rather than an educational venue. However, it is obvious that distilling such varied and complex entities as nations down to a few thousand square feet including some 'authentic' food, a performance or two, and maybe a ride, involves an impressive amount of manipulation. Disney does make an effort to staff the World Showcase with performers (all Disney workers are performers in a sense) from the country represented. In this context, is a dance performance seen at the Moroccan pavilion an 'authentic' performance? Under these conditions, what would signify authenticity, and what would be the goal of an authentic performance?

The Moroccan Pavilion in Epcot Centre has two venues for belly dance performance, an outdoor stage where musicians and a dancer perform periodically throughout the day, and the Restaurant Marrakesh, the upscale dining establishment in that portion of the park. My companion on the day I visited was my mother; we arrived at the restaurant around 6:30 PM in order to catch the 7 PM belly dance show. As an economic comparison to the shows I experienced in Egypt, Disney World is marvellously, and for many, prohibitively, expensive. Nevertheless, even in the midst of an economic recession, the Themed Entertainment Association still reported a .5% gain in attendance at Disney's Epcot Centre in 2009 (Themed Entertainment Association and AECOM, 2009). In February of that year fees were $12 for parking, $50 for entry to a single park for a single day, $75 to get into more than one park in a single day. (Tax not included.)

When we arrived at Restaurant Marrakesh we heard the wait staff speaking to each other in Arabic, which was no surprise as I know Disney World staffs the World Showcase with people from the countries it represents: Canada is staffed by Canadians, Mexico by Mexicans, and so forth. In my interview the following day with Orlando-based Oriental dancer and talent representative Melanie LaJoie she indicated that the nations represented have a say in who gets to work in the Epcot pavilions (LaJoie, 6 February 2009). Often the staff are young people, leading me to surmise that many of

them are on a year abroad or a similar extended travel program away from their home countries.

The 'band' (two musicians from Mo'Rockin, the Arab-fusion band that provides for the Moroccan Pavilion's musical needs) came in around 7 and began to play. After about five minutes the dancer came out. Soraya was wearing a velvet blue costume in a very traditional cabaret style, except that she also wore a poorly matched body stocking to cover her midriff, and she wore either dance shorts or some other kind of covering underneath her skirt to cover the sides of her hips where eyelet slits in her skirt went up to her waist. I found this an interesting choice: if the costume she had chosen (or that Disney had provided) was too risqué for a family restaurant, why not wear a more covering costume to begin with rather than instituting the temporary-looking fixes of a body stocking and undershorts? This actually backfired by drawing attention to the areas that she was trying to cover up, since it did not look like a unified costume but a series of disparate pieces clashing in their function: some trying to reveal while others concealed.

Figure 8: Soraya at the Restaurant Marrakesh in Disney's Epcot Centre.

Soraya was an average dancer; she had clearly had some training and was displaying specific, recognisable pieces of dance vocabulary, but her stage presence was nonexistent. Soraya didn't smile or flirt or engage with the audience during her set. This being Disney World soon enough some kids from the audience ran up to the stage to have their picture taken with the dancer. This threw her performance off completely: she stopped dancing so the parents could take photos, standing still and leaning from

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side to side while holding the kids' hands. She clearly disliked that portion of her job. I can only speculate about why that would be but reasons could include that she feels this is disruptive to her set and that she is unable to plan a good dance routine because she never knows when she's going to have to interrupt it and dance with the children. Potentially she may have received complaints in the past from parents who didn't want their children interacting with a belly dancer, which they may perceive as overly sexy, but I doubt that most such parents would bring their children to a belly dance show in the first place. Any number of alternate explanations could be theorised about Soraya's visible frustration with performing, and I was unfortunately unable to speak to her after the show to get her thoughts on the matter.

Figure 9: Soraya taking photos with children.

After the photographs with the children Soraya did a very brief turn with a veil that had up until then been wrapped around her body, then a couple more spins and disappeared[11]. The whole performance had taken a grand total of 15 minutes. The musicians also went off at the time and recorded music began to play. I was actually astonished at how short the show had been. We waited to see the 8 PM show just to see if it would be any different.

A big party of what we took to be Disney executives from the way they were dressed and the way the staff treated them (management seated them; the chef came out

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[11] A video of Soraya performing is available on my YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/caitietube, titled "Belly Dancer at Disney's Moroccan Pavilion in Epcot". It is included on the DVD accompanying this thesis.

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to say hello) arrived just in time for the later show. This performance was the same setup: musicians came in and played for about five minutes before Soraya came out. This time she arrived playing zills and wore a black and silver costume of the same cut and style as the blue one. No body stocking for this show but she still wore little shorts, again matching her costume, underneath.

Soraya was more animated though still limiting her repertoire of movements to hip drops and an occasional chest lift. She also used the same travelling movements—a big circle around the floor then forward and back in front of the musicians. She stopped for pictures with some children and again completely lost her momentum. Then she went out into the audience and danced between the tables. Really she was just playing the zills while walking around. After she'd done both sides of the floor she came back to centre, did one turn around the floor and disappeared. Again the whole performance was under 15 minutes.

I was able to contrast my experience at these performances with visiting the Restaurant Marrakesh when I was a child. Memory is a faulty record of course, but my impressions of that show were so different that it is worth recounting them here.

I remember going for lunch at the Restaurant Marrakesh when I was probably seven or eight years old. My father had taken me for a day at Disney while my mother attended a business conference elsewhere in Orlando. At the time the belly dancer wore a cabaret outfit of a double slit-style swishy chiffon skirt in a sky blue. Over the skirt she wore a gold belt wide enough to hold the skirt in place and cover her hips and pelvis. On top I remember her wearing a gold bra—possibly a gold coin bra over a blue background. I definitely do not remember that dancer wearing a body stocking or shorts to cover her legs on the sides where the skirt was open, an impression corroborated by very distinct memory of wondering what exactly would happen if she were to make a fast turn. (Though she could have been wearing a flesh-coloured modesty piece that my young mind failed to notice.)

It is quite true that I was young and it was nearly twenty years ago at the time of writing. However if my memories are correct then Disney has significantly increased its modesty restrictions in the intervening years. This seems very strange to me, and brought to mind the increasing visibility of religious conservatism in Egypt. Clearly, it would be absurd to presume that the increase in Egyptian social conservatism has anything to do with shifting social mores (or professional dictates) in an imaginary recreation of Morocco half the world away in tourist-supported Florida, but perhaps this kind of conservatism is a global issue. After watching the performance my mother

suggested Disney was pandering to the Christian right, whose moralistic discourse is becoming increasingly prominent in the United States. Disney's popularity among Christian communities is already well documented; they are a significant enough audience demographic to affect Disney decisions[12].

Having described Soraya's performance and contrasted it to the performance I saw as a child in the same venue, the question of whether Soraya's was an 'authentic' performance, and what that might mean in this context, remains. The World Showcase in Epcot Centre does make efforts to recreate the foreign culture of each nation represented there, but like the national pavilions at 19th century world exhibitions, in the end these only serve to heighten the excoticisation of other cultures. They become places to visit outside of ordinary life, whose residents are objects of show. But the overarching commitments in the Disney utopia are to children and to family life, meaning that these displays are made in a celebratory sense. Consumers who enter the World Showcase are by and large aware that they are not being transported into an exact replica of the country they are visiting, but an embellished and sanitised space. With this in mind, consumers' expectations about what 'authenticity' means in this context might be unique to the Disney version of the cultural constructions they view there; in other words, they don't really expect to see the Eiffel tower when they visit the French Pavilion. But consumers do have expectations of performance quality when they enter the World Showcase, including the Moroccan Pavilion. These expectations have more to do with the Disney utopian ideal than the realities of local cultures in the World Showcase, leading to a hybridised understanding of what should be accepted as an 'authentic' performance.

Conclusions

Echoing my conclusions from the previous chapter, there is still a great deal of conceptual tension in the world of Oriental dance. By examining dance studies in general and the study of Egyptian dance in particular in light of Judith Butler's theory, I think it is possible to see disagreement as productive and creative rather than as destructive or as a terminal process. Especially useful in this theoretical landscape is Butler's concept of contestable categories and the open coalition (Butler, 1990: 14-15; Butler, 2004: 179): though all users of a term (like belly dance) may not agree on all the underlying associations of that term, it is more constructive to have a continually

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[12] One example of this came in 1999 when Miramax, a Disney subsidiary, dropped Kevin Smith's controversial film *Dogma* due to protests from Christian communities, most notably by the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights.

contested site of understandings available than to become immobilised by insisting on a fixed, single, immutable definition. This categorisation is useful to members of the global dance community who continually engage in discursive renegotiations of majority values and normative structures within that community as well as to academic scholars of Oriental dance.

Moreover, the field of dance studies continues to grow as researchers come to see dance in the light of a significantly revealing cultural product. Though performance studies is still a relatively young field, there is a growing acknowledgement of the relevance of performance and systematic movement to the study of culture. Adrienne Kaeppler discusses how systematised movement is cultural evidence in the same way that a physical artefact is:

> Structured movement systems occur in all known human societies. They are systems of knowledge—the products of action and interaction as well as processes through which action and interaction take place. These systems of knowledge are socially and culturally constructed—created, known, and agreed upon by a group of people and primarily preserved in memory. Though transient, movement systems have structured content, they can be visual manifestations of social relations and the subjects of elaborate aesthetic systems, and may assist in understanding cultural values (Kaeppler, 1999).

The very emergence of performance studies, though still in the process of defining its borders with anthropology, linguistics, psychology and drama (Schechner, 1998), indicates the need for a greater theoretical area focusing on movement in life; the life of movement.

Though dance studies is not a new discipline, in recent years there has been a great increase in the number of academic articles and books on belly dance specifically. As new writings add to the canon of belly dance research, the old paradigms of positivism, essentialism and reactionary responses are beginning to shift. Disagreement and debate are still more common than accord, but there is a difference: where some theorists posit arguments in such a way that it becomes clear they believe a single champion will emerge victorious from the canonical battleground, more constructive discussions are developing. Dance researchers and members of the global dance community are beginning to recognise that a single unified perspective on what dance is and its relationship to the cultures in which it is situated is unrealistic.

This seems to echo the increasingly widespread recognition in the social sciences generally that objectivity is an extremely questionable concept. Researchers can no longer expect to observe and draw conclusions about phenomena from a sort of removed plane, discovering the 'truth', but must acknowledge their subjectivities and

situate themselves with relation to their research. One of my major realisations in considering Butler's theoretical tools and using them to analyse dance literature is the importance of acknowledging multiplicities even in the same discipline. Like social norms, there are theoretical norms, and like their social counterparts, these norms work sometimes in concert, sometimes in conflict, and sometimes contradictorily. This is demonstrated in Seyla Benhabib's summary of the conflicts between feminist discourse and multicultural theory:

> Indeed, contemporary feminist discourse on these issues [understandings of gender and understandings of culture] is strongly polarized: theorists like Okin and Martha Nussbaum who raise liberal concerns about women's equality and rights in multi-cultural contexts are accused of Eurocentrism, imperialism, patriarchal feminism, or simply arrogance, ignorance, and insensitivity vis-à-vis other cultures (see Okin 1999). Multicultural theorists of both genders are in turn charged with cultural relativism, moral callousness, the defense of patriarchy, and compromising women's rights in order to preserve the plurality of traditions (Wolfe 2001). (Benhabib, 2002: 101).

Both discourses attempt to analyse the experience of women, but clearly reach different conclusions and form different strategies with regards to many aspects of women's experiences. But this does not mean there is only room for one theory concerning women's experience: rather than one discourse taking entire precedence over the other, consigning the second to complete obscurity, a multiplicity of understandings can now arise. Simply by recognising that there are alternatives to a single theoretical framework, and that the utility of such frameworks varies, a space for constructive theorising and discursive analysis opens. In this way, researchers can place concepts formerly held as objective and immutable, like gender, firmly in the realm of acceptably subjective topics for debate. Indeed, not only are such debates acceptable, but they are necessary to continually developing understandings of such concepts.

TRANSMISSION AND LEARNING: BUILDING THE DANCE

> The voice of your tambourine is hidden, and this dance of
> the world is visible; hidden is that itch, wherever I scratch.
> Jalal al-Din Rumi, poem 177. (Arberry translation, 1968)

This chapter focuses on creation and diffusion of dance capital: transmission of knowledge about belly dance as a subject, both in terms of choreography and of theoretical, historical, and ethical understandings accepted by the dance community. To examine this I look at physical dance products like CDs, DVDs, props, jewellery, costumes, books, magazines, etc; and dancers' personal histories of how they became involved with and continue to connect with local and global dance communities. My data focuses on Egypt, the United States and the United Kingdom. There is a risk that comparative analysis of the meaning of dance in these three nations will not be applicable to wider, transnational cultural values that operate within the Arab world and the West more generally. However, the dancers around the world do turn to Egypt and specifically to the dance scene in Cairo as an aspirational and inspirational force. What I mean by this is that many dancers wish to travel to Egypt to see dance in its 'home' context, as there is a widespread belief within the global dance community[1] that Egypt is the wellspring for belly dance development and history. My research participants discussed this sense in interviews, a sense which is also backed up in many personal statements found on dancers' websites as well as in numerous books, magazines, newsletters, and other informational sources about dance.

There is some historical basis for this trope: first, the long tradition of travel narratives describing Egypt that include sections about dance, such as that produced by Flaubert, outlined in the previous chapter. Second, the historical usage of Egypt as a metonym for the culture of the entire Middle East as exemplified by the 19th Century World's Fairs in which dancers who may not have been from Egypt performed in what was often termed the Egyptian Pavilion or in other ways referred to Egypt: though it is widely recorded that a dancer named Little Egypt performed in Chicago in 1893, there is very little biographical information about her, including whether or not she was

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[1] While there is no single, homogenised international dance community, as I discussed in chapters four and five, there is enough of a common subculture among dancers in very different geographical locations that it is appropriate to use this term when referring to common tropes that even if not all dancers hold, they would generally recognise, such as the widespread use of Egyptian and "Oriental" imagery discussed in this chapter.

actually from Egypt (Carlton, 1994; Buonaventura, 1998: 102). Finally, Egypt has been widely recognised as the centre of the entertainment industry for the Arabic-speaking world, particularly the film industry, ever since the Misr Bank financed the creation of Studio Misr in 1934 (Leaman, 2001: 25). Arabic-speaking friends often tell me that Egyptian colloquial style is the most commonly recognisable dialect throughout the Arab world because of Egyptian film and television exports. Currently other countries like Lebanon are providing a challenge to the historical precedent of Egypt as the centre of the Arab film industry, but Egyptian entertainment productions remain a significant part of the film and music industries throughout the Arabic-speaking world, meaning that cultural understandings throughout the Arab world are influenced strongly by Egyptian cultural and production values[2].

Not all dancers in the global community feel 'called' to Egypt: some of my participants spoke of Turkey as the venue of their personal inspiration. However, the use of Egypt as an imaginative space to explore aesthetic understandings remains a significant emblem amongst the globalised dance community, with frequent though often abstract references to, for example, the Pyramids or the Sphinx in designs for show programmes, magazine covers, and in the background of websites, further indications of how dancers in the global community continue to turn to Egypt as a source of principal inspiration.

Of course Egypt is also an actual space in which to perform, to glean further information about dancing, and to buy dance-related products. Dancers in the global community are aware of differences in performance styles from their own local methodology and how dance is performed in Egypt, something my research participants spoke about at length, which I will discuss in "Personal Dance Histories" later in this chapter.

Though many in the international dance community do show an awareness of and a reflexive process on these cultural differences, demonstrated through articles on personal websites, in specialist publications and through conversations with other dancers both in cyberspace and in person, this is not true of all dancers and all audiences

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[2] Roberta Dougherty indicates that there is a widespread belief both by Egyptians themselves and non-Egyptian aficionados of Egyptian cinema that all Egyptian films are entirely suffused with music and dancing, even though in actual fact this is not the case (Dougherty, 2005: 145). There are of course many films that do include dance performances or whose plots revolve around dancers' lives, however, the expectation of dance in an Egyptian film is much higher than its actual incidence, a sense of Egyptian cinema which suggests the importance of music and dance to recipients of these forms of entertainment, which as I indicated are consumed by a significant proportion of the Arabic-speaking world.

of dance. The differing perceptions of the context of belly dance in different cultures can result in a failure to translate these contextual perceptions, leading to misinterpretations of the purpose of dance. Nadjwa Adra indicates that in Western society, art is generally expected to include semantic intent; even modern and post-modern artistic works that may be abstract rather than literal are still rife with social messages. These audiences, then, "[w]hen exposed to the quivering hips and shoulders of belly dance performance…tend to assume intent, in this case, seduction" (Adra, 2005: 44). Adra goes on to point out that this assumption of semantic intention ignores the playful and humorous aspect of Oriental dance, its "ludic sense" (45). These misinterpretations can run both ways: "Meanwhile, many Arabs consider popular dances indigenous to Europe and the United States immoral. We have seen that belly dance avoids touch between performers and very rarely crosses sexual boundaries even in its exaggerated forms" (Adra, 2005: 46). In cultures where public displays of sexuality are constrained in this way, dances that require cross-gendered touching, like ballroom, swing and salsa, can appear wanton and lascivious. Another example of these differing cultural expectations, which I discussed in chapters three and four, is that while belly dance as a social activity and honorific of milestone events is celebrated in the Arab world this celebration does not translate to female entertainment in professional contexts (Young, 1998; Nieuwkerk, 2003). There is an expectation on the part of the global dance community, however, that professional dance is artistically honoured in the Middle East in the way it is (or sometimes the way that dancers wish it was) around the world. Discovering that this is not the case is often disappointing to dance enthusiasts; however, obtaining this kind of knowledge, especially by travelling to the Arab world and seeing it themselves, can ultimately lead a dancer to feel a greater degree of expertise and wisdom about her field, distinguishing her from those dancers who are versed solely in technique and not belly dance's cultural semantics.

These misinterpretations are not limited only to cross-cultural misunderstandings or developments, but also extend to the way dancers use or create understandings of what dance meant historically to justify current conventions. Dancer and researcher Andrea Deagon describes her personal experience with trying to glean information about belly dance:

> In the 1970s, there was so little information available that we had to take what we could get. This might be blurbs from record jackets written by studio hacks with no knowledge of anything Middle Eastern, or the wishful imaginings of spiritually inclined dancers, or real research and observations watered down by

transmission until the original meaning was all but lost. I look back now and shake my head at how naïve we were—until I hear these same stories circulating today (Deagon).

Deagon goes on to compare these dance origin myths to creation myths in ancient Egypt, specifically the conflicting beliefs of the priests of Atum and those of Ptah, the former holding that Atum ejaculated all of creation, while the latter believed that Ptah summoned the universe by speaking words of genesis. Deagon indicates that these parallel conceptions of the origins of the universe are not only differing accounts of the same event but also highlight the relative importance of different concepts (in the case of Atum and Ptah, fertility and intellect respectively) to the contemporary creators of the stories. "Like these ancient creation myths, most simple stories of the origins of Middle Eastern dance are essentially about *what the dance means now*" (Deagon). While this motivation for obsessively discussing the historical developments in belly dance is widely recognised in academic discussions of belly dance (Karayanni, 2004; Shay and Sellers-Young, 2005), it is rarely acknowledged within discourse generated within the dance community. Apart from Andrea Deagon, I have yet to see any dancer suggest that these continual and contradictory discussions of dance history are possibly unproductive, or even counterproductive.

I am not saying that all discussions of the history, development, and future development of dance should cease. Rather, I am arguing that the dance community would benefit from a more critical examination of the sources of information that guide conventional wisdom. This could lead to a greater understanding of the underlying motivations behind some of these conventions, leaving dancers free to choose whether they wish to subscribe to those motivating factors or not. In this way a greater multiplicity of the many alternative understandings of what dance is and what it means may become acceptable to the community at large, and dancers may feel less pressure to subscribe to a unitary conformist vision, in keeping with the idea of the open coalition that I discussed in chapter five. To clarify, the open coalition does not contravene accurately employing existing historical sources, nor does it contradict seeking accurate evidence for historical sources. Rather, the open coalition relates to how dancers interpret and make use of historical tropes and how new tropes are developed. Further, a firmer grounding in differing cultural understandings of dance could provide dancers and dance enthusiasts with a more concrete understanding of the distinction between representations of dance that are based in fantasy or have a deliberately imaginary, fantastical component and those intended to be 'traditional'. This could allow dancers

greater freedom to explore playful representations of dance that are not intended to be grounded in 'authentic' cultural reproductions. Conversely there is a risk that such a fantastical intentionality may be misinterpreted or understood in a one-dimensional fashion by audiences, a risk I discuss further in the coming section.

Transmission of Cultural Capital

In considering how culturally significant elements get transferred from one to another and the changes such elements undergo, it is important to examine what culture is. Though the discourse on what constitutes culture has been wide-ranging in the disciplines of the humanities and social sciences (Bauman, 1973; Crane, 1992; Robertson, 1992; Rajan, 1993; Featherstone, 1995b; Hall, 1997; Armbrust, 2000; Holes, 2005), for this research the most useful method of conceptualising culture is as a tool kit. Herbert J. Gans indicates that the prevailing current definition in America is Ann Swindler's idea that culture is a way of storing strategies and methods for negotiating social situations. "Swidler's tool-kit metaphor is graphic and useful, for it tells us at once that different people have access to tool kits of different costs and completeness" (Swidler, 1986; Gans, 1992: vii). This idea of culture as a tool kit is also useful in that it does not essentialise the elements that constitute a culture. In other words, people may have 'tools' from many different cultures, and no single list can ever fully describe what 'tools' belong to a single culture because such sets are always in flux. Thus, belly dance can be a tool in Egyptian culture and one in American culture, though it may be used for different purposes. Applying this specifically to my research, a dancer may view her understandings of movement vocabulary and the cultural understandings surrounding belly dance as a tool kit. When I interviewed Sara Farouk Ahmed, who is originally from the UK but who has lived in Egypt full-time for the past ten years, she spoke about how this idea of the tool kit (though her metaphor was actually a bag of gems) relates to individual agency: knowledge about movement vocabulary is valuable because dancers only have the ability to make choices about performance when they are in possession of a particular set of gems (or tools).

> What's really interesting about the dance is that you connect your little gems in your own little bag, and from time to time you throw things out, or you put things down to the bottom and other things come up to the top. That's why it's so hard to put a finger on what it [dance] actually is, because for most dancers it's not the same thing one night after the other. But obviously the more information you have, the bigger your bag. The more choice. And anything to do with education has to be about levels of choice, really. The more you know

the better. (Ahmed, 14 October 2008)

Specifically speaking about the potential movement vocabulary a dance student can draw upon through increasing education, Sara's metaphor remains suitable when referring to any type of cultural knowledge, including those relating to the ethics and etiquette of the international belly dance community.

Another useful theory in the context of my research is Michael Herzfeld's idea of cultural intimacy:

> …those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality, the familiarity with the bases of power that may at one moment assure the disenfranchised a degree of creative irreverence and at the next moment reinforce the effectiveness of intimidation. (Herzfeld, 2005: 3)

In previous chapters I spoke about the ambivalent place belly dance holds in Egyptian society; this could be considered an example of a culturally intimate piece of capital. This may also help to explain the multiple significances of Orientalism in performer's choices that I discuss in the next section: it is too simplistic to think of it as always a necessarily disempowering trope, though it is important not to downplay the under-analysis of the way Orientalism is used by the belly dance community.

Displacement in Belly Dance-Related Spaces

Belly dance has a considerable fantastical component. By this I mean dancers' and audiences' engagement with spaces of fantasy and displacement from one's ordinary life. I wish to contextualise the upcoming discussion of the importance of Renaissance Faires and the Society for Creative Anachronism in developing the American belly dance scene, something several of my American participants referred to in their personal dance histories. Like many spaces where belly dance is performed and taught, a Renaissance Faire is a field where consumers attempt to escape from their ordinary lives. Rosalind Williams describes 19th Century world exhibitions like those in London (1851), Paris (1855), and Chicago (1893) as part of an emerging "dream world of mass consumption" (Williams, 1991: 109). Barbara Sellers-Young categorises the Renaissance Pleasure Faire as part of this process, indicating that the encapsulating, intensely exaggerated environment of the Faire is designed to convey the sense of inhabiting an enhanced version of the past, though obviously, Faire attendees remain bodily grounded in the present (283). B. Joseph Pine and James Gilmore present a more cynical view of these spaces, describing them as outdoor shopping malls. "Consumers

judge them worth the fees because the festival operators script distinctive experiences around enticing themes, as well as stage activities that captivate customers before, after, and while they shop" (Pine and Gilmore, 1998: 101). Pine and Gilmore are describing spaces designed to appeal to mass consumers at large, but their opinion can be applied to festivals specifically for the dance community: the ability to purchase dance-related merchandise at these festivals is a significant draw, something that festival and event organisers heavily advertise, as I describe in the coming section "Methods of Communicating Belly Dance Understandings and Awareness."

Returning to the place Renaissance Faires played in the development of the American belly dance scene, these were some of the earliest venues for American Tribal Style dance, particularly as performed by Jamila Salimpour's company Bal Anat. Using the already liminal space of the Faire, Jamila was able to create a fantastical space for creating a new kind of belly dance. Sellers-Young uses Scheckner's definition of subjunctive experience to interpret the performances of Jamila's dance company, Bal Anat, as existing within the imaginative, fictional field of the Renaissance Pleasure Faire (284). These performances evolved from Orientalist discourses in which the Middle East represents the exotic other:

> The earthy and sensuous contours of nineteenth century representations were the imaginative field for the male and female dancers. The dancers of Bal Anat became a separate tribe in which masculinity and femininity were not bound by western normative structures. The dancers existed in a fictive Orient. (Sellers-Young, 2005: 284)

This kind of displaced, out-of-the-ordinary representation of self is not unique to the Renaissance Faire and in fact is common to many situations where belly dance is found. In the previous chapter I spoke about belly dancing at the Moroccan Pavilion in Disney World's Epcot Centre. Others have theorised the culture of displacement that Disney World embodies. Prager and Richardson analyse the inscription over the Disney World gates, which reads "Here you leave today, and enter the world of yesterday, tomorrow and fantasy." "What links the various "lands" in Disneyland is that they are all displacements: into the past, the present, and the fantastical" (Prager and Richardson, 1997: 209).

I described in chapter five the displacement I experienced when watching a dance performance in the Moroccan Pavilion, leading me to feel that I was in a constructed, utopian space with no real-world referent. But it is not only in the specialised atmosphere of the Renaissance Faire and Disney World that belly dancers

seek to create displacements from their ordinary lives. Onstage and in dance studios, dancers and teachers often attempt to create a harem-like retreat dominated by soft fabrics hanging from the ceiling, pillows piled in corners, and strategically displayed costumes. This echoes the deployment of Orientalism in the Middle Eastern nightclub scene in the United States between the 1950s and the 1970s, which Anne Rasmussen discusses, describing how this Orientalised space was created through music style and repertoire, including the titles and lyrics of songs; the costumes and decorations within the nightclub; and L.P. recordings produced from such performances and played in the clubs. "Professional musicians of the nightclub took advantage of the racist stereotypes of Orientalism because of their vague familiarity to audiences and their entertainment value" (Rasmussen, 2005: 174).

I argue that in many situations, like the Moroccan Pavilion at Disney World, these Orientalist values still come into play. For all the reasons that have already been critiqued by Edward Said (2003) and others, Orientalism is a dangerous series of stereotypes that not only lead to inaccurate perceptions of Middle Eastern cultures but can also contribute to a colonialist attitude whereby racist discourses are justified. However, Rasmussen also recognises that playing within these discourses can be empowering and profitable for performers, both musicians and dancers. Using Orientalism not as a realistic reflection of life or performance tropes in 'the Orient' but as a fictive creative space to explore values and expressions not normative to everyday life can be of value to performers. But there are two great risks by employing this strategy: first, that audiences or other members of the dance community will not perceive this fictive element, understanding the stereotypes to be realistic. Second, that audiences or members of the dance community will misinterpret the intentions of the performers, inferring that the performers themselves genuinely use Orientalism as an appropriate method for approaching understandings of Middle Eastern culture, rather than as a field of play.

Material Culture, Ephemeral Culture

Ephemeral culture is any aspect of culture that is transient or non-material. The following statement by Anne Rasmussen encapsulates an example of the difference between ephemeral and material culture: "While it is possible to enjoy dance with "canned" (pre-recorded) music, it is impossible to enjoy music with "canned" dance" (Rasmussen, 2005). While belly dance is itself ephemeral, performance being

something that by its very nature varies with each repetition, even when it is not an improvisational form like belly dance, there is also a significant material culture that surrounds belly dance. This comes in the form of costumes, props, and jewellery, but also in products like books, DVDs, magazines, and CDs[3].

Though performance culture is ephemeral, this does not mean that it is less significant than material culture in providing insights into social values, ideals, and desires. For example Barbara Sellers-Young argues that dancers' aesthetic performance choices, such as mother-goddess based dances and Hollywood-style harem dances, are expressions of yearning for social legitimacies that do not currently exist or are contentious. "…[I]n this case, a desire to legitimate current practice through a connection to a mythic past in order to create agency for the sensuality of the body, a sensuality that social modernism has attempted to regulate" (Sellers-Young, 2005: 298). However, though formalised instruction of and public performance of belly dance may serve a feminist sexually empowering purpose in its global context, as I explained in earlier chapters this is not the function it serves in Egyptian culture. Sellers-Young may be arguing that this oft-repeated interpretation of dance as a connection to ancient female divinities, propounded by such authors as Iris J. Stewart, who wrote *Sacred Woman, Sacred Dance* (2000), is acting as a sanctioning cover for the aim to confront unsatisfactory discourses about feminine sensuality in contemporary society. Concurring with this analysis that the dance community's desire to turn to the past is a method of legitimising current practice, Andrea Deagon says:

> …we tend to see the past as more simple than the present, and to imagine that today's complexity is a development from something more primitive and unified….We tend to use the past as a justification for present views or practices—we want to see our own ideas and practices as correct and natural, so we are easily distracted from the wide, confusing perspective of real history and slip into historical myths (Deagon).

Returning to the function of dancing in Egyptian culture, though it can be a reputable, honourable activity in a social context, the professional sphere of Oriental dance has always been a morally dubious arena, as discussed in chapters three and four. This does not mean that Egyptians are unaware of changes in the meanings/cultural utility of dance in the global arena. Najwa Adra believes that current practices within the professional dance communities in the Middle East have been so influenced by

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[3] I appreciate that music can be performed live and thus fall under the rubric of ephemeral culture that and dance can be recorded on video—though recordings of dance usually also include the music that was playing at the time of performance—and thus fall under the rubric of material culture, but in each case the variable is whether or not the art form has been recorded, not the art form itself.

increasing globalisation that they are no longer indigenous and as such these new performances are distasteful to locals (Adra, 2005: 47). Adra suggests that colonialist attitudes have influenced attitudes towards dance, particularly among those educated in the West:

> They simultaneously disdain it as a sign of backwardness and resent that it provides fodder for exoticising westerners to incorrectly label Arabs as sensuous and depraved. Further, the association of this dance with gender segregated parties and working class popular culture makes it appear the opposite of liberated feminism to many elite educated Middle Eastern women. (Adra, 2005: 47)

While I think Adra's article is astute on many points, I dispute one point Adra makes in the above section: that locals only recently began to find professional dancing distasteful. Based on research by Nieuwkerk and others (Young, 1998; Rasmussen, 2005), I believe that female public performance has always been a disreputable practice in Egypt, though conflicting discourses associating all dance with joy and the hiring of a professional dancer with prosperity prevented its poor reputation from pushing it out of fashion. While I have heard many Egyptians say that dancers now are not what they once were and that the golden age of dance is over, I am not convinced that this is entirely due to shifting aesthetics and changing movement vocabularies, though I admit that this may be a significant factor. Rather, I also posit that any morally dubious practice or taste can be redeemed through the filmy mist of nostalgia: one can be excused for enjoying belly dancing, that increasingly distasteful practice, by saying that the only good dancers were in the past and implicitly (or explicitly) maligning what are said to be the increasingly compromised morals that today's dancers represent.

I have a further challenge to Adra's suggestion that all change in dance style has been extra-digenous and no new developments have arisen locally: this skirts dangerously close to the idea that there is an 'authentic' dance vocabulary fixed at a certain time and in a certain place, and that all new development is a deviation from this 'authentic' style. In contrast with this attitude, as I mentioned previously, dancers throughout the global community are cognisant of stylistic differences in performers who were trained in different geographical regions. Equally, there is some awareness of differences in style that have developed over time within a particular region or country. On 12 September 2009 I attended a pair of workshops titled "Stars of the Golden Era" and "Modern Cairo Style" taught by my research participant Lorna Gow and hosted by the London belly dance hafla Saqarah, which is organised by my participants Nafeeseh Rahi-Young and Eleanor Keen. The workshops focused principally on Lorna's

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observations of differing movement vocabularies and stylistic choices between Cairene dancers in "the golden era" (the 1950s, 60s, and 70s) and those performing now. These differences can be observed principally through film clips of popular performers posted on YouTube[4]. Among other differences discussed in the workshops, Lorna focused on the increasing focus on using drums as opposed to the melody of a song as the driving impetus for the dance performance, a more forward-leaning posture in contemporary styles, and faster stage entrances based on a musical shift that has produced songs with shorter introductory sections. My point here is that these are differences in indigenous style: while it could be argued that these developments were influenced by outside factors, the fact that both golden-era and modern Egyptian styles differ from performances in, for example, the US and the UK (even when such performances are nominally in the traditional Egyptian style) indicates that these developments are not entirely motivated by external factors.

Though I disagree with Adra's argument that developments in belly dance style in Egypt have been entirely influenced by external factors, I do not wish to suggest that cross-cultural influence has not been a significant factor in the development of belly dance styles throughout the world. The world political situation can have unexpected consequences on many aspects of life, not least entertainment culture. Anne Rasmussen described conversations with a several musicians in which they spoke about the decline of attendance in Middle Eastern music clubs in Detroit, Cleveland, New York and Los Angeles in the wake of the Iraq war in 1991 (Rasmussen, 2005: 196). Partly this resulted from an increasing anxiety around Arab culture on the part of American audiences at the time, but the decrease in trade also reflected the subdued social mood in the Arab-American community in the wake of those events. However, the influences on culture in the wake of such events are not simplistic, and while there have been obvious negatives in the Arab-American entertainment community following international political conflict, there have also been positive developments[5]. Rasmussen argues that

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[4] Lorna did point out that though in the present day there are myriad films of dancers performing in nightclubs and at parties, previously dancers were only recorded in connection with full-length feature films. Some of the differences observed would naturally stem from this factor rather than stylistic developments over time.

[5] While I have not studied this in depth and it would be interesting to hear from more dancers about this, in an interview I conducted for a research project as an undergraduate I heard one American dancer remark that in the wake of the World Trade Centre bombings on September 11, 2001, she felt a much greater commitment to wearing a traditional cabaret-style costume when performing, where previously she was more relaxed about wearing innovative types of costumes, in order to demonstrate solidarity with the Arab-American community. Whether the Arab-American community at large would appreciate this gesture is an open question, but I believe that the community of Arab-American musicians and

the same political and economic crises of the last 50 years which have resulted in more negative stereotypes of the Arab world and the Middle East have also played a part in continually augmenting, renewing and developing Arab-American musical culture and Arab-American culture more generally, by stimulating immigration from those areas. "…These new populations have had a phenomenal effect on music, dance, community and American culture" (Rasmussen, 2005: 196).

Rasmussen goes on to suggest that these arrivals had three principal effects: first, new repertoires were added to those already circulating in the Middle Eastern music community in America; second, newly immigrant musicians and audiences had a renewed appreciation for the languages of their home countries, something that had been fading in second and third generation communities in the States. Finally, the increasing availability of musicians from one's home country meant increasingly homogenous musical ensembles. Where previously Arab-, Turk-, Armenian-, and Greek-Americans played together out of necessity, creating a mini-melting pot that reflected American culture more generally, it was now possible for regional differences in taste and musical tradition to assert themselves as there was a larger audience for each regional subset (Rasmussen, 2005: 196-7). Whether this is in itself a positive development is difficult for me to say; while many cultural consumers may relish the new power to choose how much of which particular musical or dance style they wish to imbibe, where previously this would have been controlled by the producers of culture and presumably repertoires were worked out in advance of audience viewing, it can also mean less exposure to diversity and multiplicity, perhaps resulting in less cultural hybridity and development and more entrenched views on 'authenticity.' Nevertheless, increasing public attention thrown on a country or region, however that attention is generated, often has the indirect result of encouraging curiosity about that region with lasting results that cannot necessarily be predicted.

Methods of Communicating Belly Dance Understandings and Awareness

There are two components to belly dance knowledge and understandings: the first is technique and the other is community awareness of normative practices and

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entertainers would understand the impulse to counteract prevailing distrustful discourses in America at the time by presenting Arab culture in a positive light (however contentious belly dance as a positive aspect of culture may be).

values. I include within the second component both understandings pertaining to professional behaviour, which may include information and advice about marketing, pricing, and managing a studio or professional company, and moral or cultural imperatives that dancers feel necessary to hash out and to use as a method of group definition. Both types of knowledge, technical and what could be termed the 'civics' of belly dance, are transmitted through a multitude of media. An area ripe for further research is an extensive catalogue of what types of media are currently available to aspiring belly dance students; due to time constraints and the overwhelming amount of media to present, I must limit myself to a generic overview of the possibilities, analysing in depth a limited scope of such media. In particular I have yet to come across an academic study concerning specialist trade magazines for belly dancers, though such a lack may simply result from the fact that any interested reader could subscribe to them rather than looking for an external description.

Most commonly, dancers in the global dance community at some point in their dance development will take formal classes at a dance studio. These classes may contribute to their 'civic' knowledge of belly dance as well as to technique. However, the vast majority of dancers who have a sense of community involvement will supplement what they learn in the studio with knowledge from written or visual materials. This includes looking at other dancers' websites, which may contain informative articles as well as personal information, subscribing or contributing to magazines like *Yallah* and *Mosaic*, and buying books like Wendy Buonaventura's *Serpent of the Nile* (Buonaventura, 1998), Tina Hobin's *Belly Dance: The Dance of Mother Earth* (Hobin, 2003), and Rosina-Fawzia Al-Rawi's *Grandmother's Secrets: The Ancient Ritual and Healing Power of Belly Dancing* (Al-Rawi, 2003). Dancers can also buy videotapes and DVDs to learn new techniques, though freely available instructional content on YouTube certainly provides an economic challenge to this model. One website, the Suhaila Salimpour studio, even offers distance-learning video classes on their website for a monthly subscription fee (Suhaila International).

From the amount of internet traffic around belly dancing I expected my participants to report having a much higher rate of involvement in the online discussions than they actually recalled. However, it is obvious from that same traffic that the internet does play a significant part in many dancers' lives, and many participants reported relying heavily on the internet for research about dance in the early days of their study of it, even if that use has changed over time. Even five years ago Barbara

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Sellers-Young pointed out that dancers use websites to engage in discursive communication about the history, origins, and nature of dance, to buy merchandise, and to keep blogs or write personal statements concerning their individual experience of dance (Sellers-Young, 2005: 296). Usage has only increased in that time; the main change that my participants reported was a greater engagement with using online video sharing websites like YouTube both for self-promotion and to look for trends, both historical and current, in dance techniques (Gow, 3 November 2008; Sanchez, 4 February 2009; S, 11 November 2008; Boz, 14 March 2009; Kitty, 14 November 2008; Zorba, 15 March 2009; Krynytzky, 20 January 2009; Keen and Rahi-Young, 20 November 2008; Saneaux, 24 January 2009; Poole, 28 January 2009). Sellers-Young goes on to say that many dancers supplement technical training obtained through live classes by using videos, and that some learn their preliminary movement vocabulary on video. One of my participants was initially trained in this way, as I describe in the coming section. Additionally, as I said, watching online videos and uploading online videos of themselves played an ongoing part in most dancers' lives even if they no longer used the internet to look for articles on or message-board-style discussions about issues relating dance. Dancers also spoke about searching the internet for video of classical performances by well-known dancers from the 1940s, 50s, 60s and 70s such as Naima Akef, Samia Gamal, and Raqia Hassan in order to compare those styles to what is happening today, as I discussed earlier when describing Lorna's workshops in September 2009.

Increasingly, the academic community has become a sponsor of Middle Eastern music and cultural awareness through workshops, concerts, and academic and practical performance-based courses. "It is important to note that professional musicians, whether originally from the Arab world, Turkey or Iran, find their most loyal and enthusiastic audiences not just from within their own "ethnic" communities but from within the American public at large" (Rasmussen, 2005: 198). Rasmussen's article describes a general shift in access to Middle Eastern music and dance available in the United States from the 1960s through the new millennium. The scene has changed from a small subculture that mixed musical and entertainment styles throughout the Middle East and Mediterranean region, a subculture that was focused on music and dance as popular entertainment, to a new dynamic in which cultural institutions like universities in concert with the producers of culture, musicians and dancers, pushed for increasingly conceptualising these forms as high arts (Rasmussen, 2005: 198-199). This insistence

on perceiving belly dance as an art is not limited to the United States, but is a project of the global dance community at large. I believe the endeavour to elevate this dance from a popular form of entertainment ('low' culture) to a 'fine' art form ('high' culture) goes hand-in-hand with the ideals of respect and the push for increasingly formalised technical instruction that I described in previous chapters. Sometimes this endeavour presents itself not as an attempt to elevate belly dance, but as an attempt to get ignorant members of the public to recognise that this dance is and always has been a type of 'high' culture, another example of (mis)using historical precedent to address not what dance once meant, but what it means now.

Dance is also globalised through the national and international dance festivals held around the world. I attended two such festivals: the November 2008 Nile Group Oriental Dance Festival in Cairo, held three times a year, and the Rakkasah West festival in Vallejo, California, held annually. As Barbara Sellers-Young writes, "Festivals provide opportunity for amateur dancers to take classes from internationally recognised professional performers, some of whom, such as Nadia Hamdi or Mahmoud Reda, are from the Middle East." (Sellers-Young, 2005: 296-7) A large part of the professional lives of internationally renowned teachers and performers, like my two respondents Jim Boz and Lorna Gow, is touring to teach and perform both at festivals and at specially organised dance workshops. Since amateur dancers can take classes from well-known teachers at such workshops as well as festivals, there are other motivations besides technical improvement that draw them to these large events. The chance to see and buy costumes from a number of different merchants all at once is another significant component of festivals: though in recent years it has become increasingly easy to buy costumes over the internet, even from distant places, for many dancers it is still exciting to see a variety of different styles in one place and to actually try things on, since the supply of locally available dance costumes through a nearby dance studio or perhaps one single merchant may be very limited. Hip scarves and coin belts are widely available in shops that may not sell other kinds of belly dance costume accoutrements[6], in part because coin belts became a fashionable accessory for the general public for a time, a fashion I believe was influenced primarily by the popular singer Shakira. Full costumes, though, especially of professional quality, are more

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[6] I am specifically thinking of new-age shops in this instance, an observation that could be seen to parallel the connection between contemporary feminine spirituality and belly dance discussed in the previous chapter. Dance accoutrements can be fairly consistently found in new-age shops in both Britain and the United States. Intriguingly, due to the vagaries of fashion cycles, dance-related clothing like harem pants can at times be found even in popular shops like H&M and Topshop (Vogue.com, Spring/Summer 2009).

difficult to find. Thus, a situation where such items are available in bulk is a big draw for many dancers.
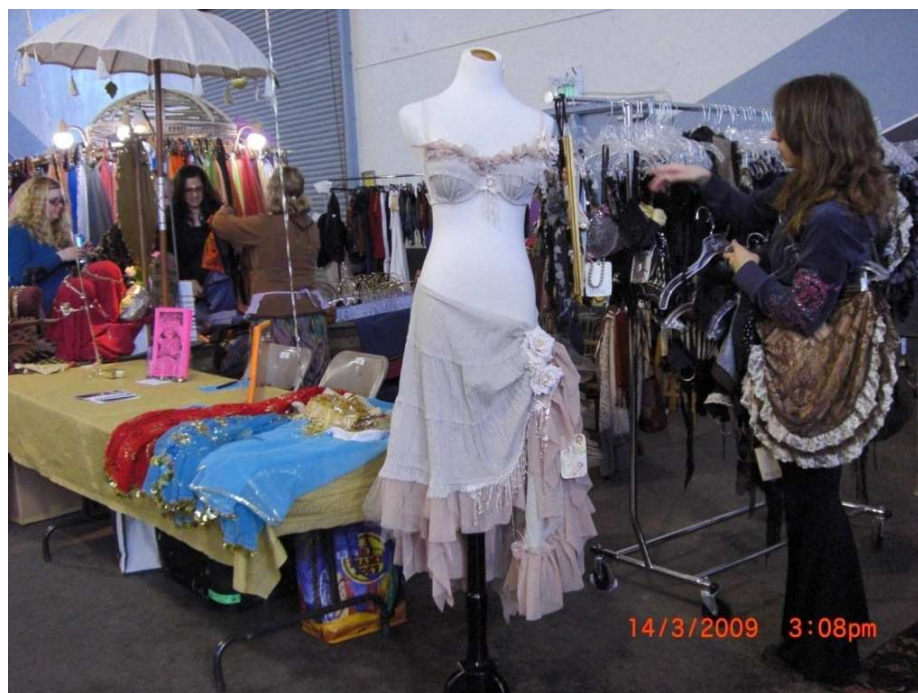

Figure 10: Costumes available in the Rakkasah 'souk', 13-15 March 2009.

A second big draw to dance festivals is a sense of solidarity kindled by getting to see just how large the dance community is as well as the far-flung places from whence many festival attendees come. My participants reported being excited and stimulated by being surrounded by so many like-minded people. At a dance festival or conference there is a palpable atmosphere of enthusiasm and camaraderie. Though Eleanor Keen and Nafeeseh Rahi-Young, co-organisers of the monthly *Saqarah* hafla in London, were sceptical about the unity of a single dance community in Britain, saying they felt the scene is actually quite fragmented, they agreed that a large festival such as the Nile Group Oriental Dance Festival in Cairo where I interviewed them made them more cognisant of being part of a larger global phenomenon.

> Eleanor: Yeah, I mean, in some ways I do feel part of the belly dance community if I come to a place like here.
> Nafeeseh: Or if I go to a really big workshop that's organised, there'll be certain faces that we see, or that we chat to, and it's quite nice to meet them [again]. There are forums going on at certain times. (Keen and Rahi-Young, 20 November 2008)

Eleanor also reported that on returning to the Nile Group Festival for the second time she saw several people that she got to know the first time around, saying, "It's really nice that you can see friendly faces again" (Keen and Rahi-Young, 20 November 2008). Like other kinds of hobbies that involve a sustained period away from daily life to meet

with like-minded enthusiasts, belly dancers often get to know a diverse group of people with whom their daily routines may not otherwise have brought them into contact. Sometimes these connections lead to more dynamic networks that move beyond the belly dance world, while other connections, though they may be quite close, fulfilling relationships, revolve entirely around dance and occur only in dance-specific spaces.

An issue not commonly addressed when discussing the belly dance community is members who may not themselves be dancers. Barbara Sellers-Young catalogues the backstage delegation of the Fat Chance Belly Dance troupe based in San Francisco as including "dancers, costume designers, internet specialists, and videographers who are responsible for producing the many products associated with the group" (Sellers-Young, 2005: 287). Fat Chance Belly Dance's products include a quarterly newsletter, instructional and performance videos, costumes, jewellery, books, and herbal products which are marketed all over the world through their website (287). Though Sellers-Young is specifically talking about the Fat Chance Belly Dance troupe in this instance, the same can be said of many well-known studios and troupes in the belly dance world, such as the extremely popular and highly marketed troupe Bellydance Superstars.

Even on a smaller and less commercial level, dancers' friends and families often get drawn in to dance events, giving up their own time by selling tickets; providing transportation for dancers, their costumes, props, and products they may have for sale; managing sound systems; designing and making costumes; providing childcare during performances and rehearsals; managing websites and so forth. One example of this is the *Saqarah* hafla community: though Nafeeseh and Eleanor are the hafla organisers, other people contribute as well. Nafeeseh's husband helps manage the sound system and DJ for the party that follows every Saqarah event, and both he and a close friend and professional photographer for the event, Maani Vadgama, assist in carrying and caring for the stage materials that *Saqarah* must bring to their venue each month. Other friends take tickets and manage the door. There are also people who may have a commercial interest in the dance community even though they may not be professional dancers, such as costume, prop, and music vendors. These kinds of peripheral community members are common to other enthusiast hobbies: boy and girl scouts, for example, are often dependent on parents to organise and manage activities, transportation, etc; martial arts participants often need vendors to supply specialist equipment and uniforms. An interesting area for future research could concern these

peripheral persons who, though they may not participate in a hobbyist community directly, are often integral to sustaining its viability.

Personal Dance Histories

In order to determine how my research participants felt they had received knowledge from the dance community, I asked them to recount their personal dance histories. Primarily this consisted of questions about how they came to be involved in the dance community originally, but I also questioned them about who they felt were their most significant or influential teachers. As I mentioned in chapter four, though each dancer had a unique history, a pattern did emerge in the course of interviews: often dancers started to take classes for fun or to get in shape, then began to find their lives enriched by dance in much more complex ways that ultimately led to teaching and performing professionally as well as contributing to dance community discourse.

Lorna, in addition to her professional work as a belly dancer on the Nile Pharaoh boats in Cairo, is an avid recreational salsa dancer. She told me that she began to take dance lessons in her early twenties:

> I started with West African dance, so I met somebody who said, "Come to my classes for African dancing," and at the same school they were doing belly dance. I was totally naïve, like really didn't have an image at all of what belly dance was. And, looking back, I can't actually believe how naïve I was. (Gow, 3 November 2008).

Lorna took dance for around three years before she began to teach. Like many professional dance teachers, it became her profession by accident rather than by design.

> I kind of fell into teaching as well; I didn't think I was good enough to teach, but the African dance teacher kept letting the class down and just not turning up…and I would start covering the class for him. And then eventually, they just said, "Look, actually we prefer your teaching style anyway."
>
> "No, I can't teach African dance, I'm more confident to teach belly dance."
>
> "Great, we'll have an hour of each." [laughter] So it started as an hour of each, and that was in the September, and then by the January I'd quit my full-time job, because I'd found I loved dance and I loved teaching, and I was quite good at it. (Gow, 3 November 2008)

Nafeeseh Rahi-Young along with Eleanor Keen runs a monthly belly dance hafla in London. I interviewed them together at the Nile Group Oriental Dance Festival in November 2008, where Nafeeseh explained that she became a teacher more at the request of friends than through her own professional development plans:

> I teach at the local university [which] asked me through a friend who

works there; she's basically, "Oh I'm not a belly dancer, but I know someone who does it."

I was a bit—I'd only been learning for about three years: "I don't think I've got the experience."

They were like, "We only want beginners." [A beginner's level class.]

I was like, "I can do beginners." (Keen and Rahi-Young, 20 November 2008).

Many of the dancers I spoke to agreed that belly dance aficionados often begin teaching after a relatively short period of time, often because they simply see it as an extension of their involvement with the dance community rather than because they themselves are experts. Nafeeseh commented:

> …I think in England there's a big push towards, if you've been learning for a short period of time, teach it. Whereas we [herself and Eleanor Keen] were both a bit more reticent, in that we both thought, until we're a bit more confident, even in the basics, you know, it's a bit more difficult to teach it. (Keen and Rahi-Young, 20 November 2008)

Jim Boz, based out of California and known globally as one of the most prominent male dancers, had a similar comment:

> Yeah, I sometimes run into students and they go, "Well I think I'm ready to teach."
>
> I go, "Well, why?"
>
> "Because I'm at that stage."
>
> I go, "Whoa, do you need to do this for work, because some of us do this for a job and if you decide to do that…you're just doing it just to do it? Some of us do this for, you know, a living…" (Boz, 14 March 2009).

Jim had come to belly dance through a very different path from the dancers I have mentioned so far, but one that is very common for American belly dancers, particularly on the West Coast. Earlier in this chapter under the section "Displacement in Belly Dance-Related Spaces" I discuss the association of Renaissance Faires with the development of American Tribal Style, with particular reference to Barbara Sellers-Young's comprehensive study of this phenomenon (Sellers-Young, 2005). An associated phenomenon is a group called the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA). The SCA website describes the organisation as follows:

> The SCA is an international organisation dedicated to researching and re-creating the arts and skills of pre-17th-century Europe. Our "Known World" consists of 19 kingdoms, with over 30,000 members residing in countries around the world. Members, dressed in clothing of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, attend events which feature tournaments, royal courts, feasts, dancing, various classes & workshops, and more. (Society for Creative Anachronism, 2009)

While the SCA and Renaissance Faires generally have no official ties (the SCA runs private events for its own members; Renaissance Faires are generally open to all as a

public spectacle on the order of a theme park, circus, or festival) there is a lot of overlap in the crowds that they draw. Jim Boz originally found belly dance through his affiliation with the SCA, saying that he first saw it performed at an SCA party and became intrigued enough to want to start taking classes himself (Boz, 14 March 2009). Around the same time, he began a Master's degree in jazz music and became fascinated by the differences in tonality between Western music and Arabic music as well as the parallels between improvisational jazz and Arabic music.

> It's on a completely different basis [Arabic music] and I really got into it, I enjoyed the hell out of it, learning the different directions that the music would go and that, the instrumentals, the arrangements and—I just kept going and fell in love with the music and it just snowballed from there. (Boz, 14 March 2009)

Becoming intrigued by the music first before taking up dancing is something that several of my research participants described. Eleanor Keen was another of these. Eleanor told me that she found a cassette tape of Arabic music that belonged to her boyfriend at the time, which she appropriated for her own use. "…and I was driving around in my car, with his cassette blaring from my car, and after a while I kinda got the natural inclinations that I kinda wanted to learn to dance it." She indicated that her boyfriend was not pleased about this development, to my surprise. When I questioned her further, Eleanor indicated that her boyfriend was English but had lived in various Middle Eastern countries and spoke several Arabic dialects fluently. As such, she felt that his understanding of belly dance was closer to the view of dance held by most Egyptians that I outlined in chapters three and four: though dance is celebrated in certain situations, professional or public displays of dance are morally unacceptable and reflect poorly not only on the dancer herself but also those associated with her. "So, yeah, started dancing and the relationship ended but the dance stayed!" (Keen and Rahi-Young, 20 November 2008).

Nafeeseh is of Iranian descent and learned some moves from her mother who would commonly dance at family events. Though this was a very different path of entry from Eleanor, the same ambivalent moral values (sometimes celebrated, sometimes repudiated) were also present in her understanding of what dance means: "My mother used to belly-dance in Iran…Arabic dance in Iran, they don't call it belly dance there. But she didn't teach me, and she wasn't keen on me doing it.   She showed me a few moves, but was like, "Oh, good girls don't do that."" (Keen and Rahi-Young, 20 November 2008)

Sara Farouk Ahmed, who now lives in Egypt full-time but who still has strong ties to the UK belly dance community as a mentor for many dancers, told me that she first saw belly dance in person in Egypt on a holiday at the end of 1981, shortly after finishing a television series. She had come to Egypt primarily because the romanticism of images like those in the film *Lawrence of Arabia* had appealed to her ever since she was a young child.

> And then I was very lucky because the tour guide was a young Egyptian woman from Heliopolis, our particular tour guide, and was quite interested in taking me to see dancing and blaming it on me, you know, like ringing her mum and saying, "terrible tourism and blah blah blah," so she took us to see quite a lot of dancing and because I'd been trained as a dancer as well as an actress I was really interested in it anyway, and I'd had quite a serious interest in Indian music before, so it wasn't like alien or anything. So I started—I took a couple of classes with Ibrahim Akef.

I interrupted to indicate that I did not know who that was, though since conducting the interview I have seen references to Akef as one of the premier dance teachers in the past 50 years of Egyptian dance. Sara described him this way:

> He was a relative of Naima Akef, the dancer, and if you ask anybody who was here in like, the seventies, eighties; he was this sort of master dance teacher who had this way of bringing out the best in you rather than telling you what to do. Very different approach to dance, actually. Dina[7] was trained by him. I mean she's very different than anybody before and, various people were trained by him. (Ahmed, 14 October 2008)

Sara's story was somewhat different from my other participants in that even though she is widely known for her workshops and trips or retreats for dancers (Lorna first came to Egypt on one such trip), she is not a full-time teacher or performer. Dance is clearly something that she cares deeply about and informs her life in myriad complex ways, but her professional life is not solely defined by it.

Another dancer who first became interested in belly dance on a trip abroad was Johanna Xenobia Krynytzky, who currently co-owns the Hip Expressions Belly Dance Studio in Saint Petersburg Florida with Karen Sun Ray Coletti. While in college her grandmother decided to take a two-week bus tour of Turkey and invited Johanna to accompany her.

> Our tour guide used to be a university professor; I was in college, so of course, I took extensive notes on everything that he was talking about. Then when we were in Istanbul, there was an extra excursion you could do, to go see a cultural dance show: "Oh of course, I want to go see a cultural dance show. What else am I doing here?" So we went, and that was my first experience seeing a belly dancer, never seen one before, never had been brought to my consciousness that

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[7] Dina is probably the most well-known dancer working in Egypt today.

it existed. *I Dream of Jeannie*[8] is the probably the closest I ever knew. So I'm sitting here, and these women come out, and in Turkey they're a lot less covered than they are in Egypt. So she's basically wearing a bathing suit, a little bathing suit with strips of fabric that, you know, cover and she's wiggling around like I've never a seen a woman wiggle around before. I'm looking at my grandma going, like, am I supposed to be watching this…? My family is Ukrainian, European, so…she's seen it before, nothing new. She's clapping…and I was just really amazed, because it was a very voluptuous woman, it wasn't a skinny Minnie up there, dancing around, and…the way she owned her body and the stage, was really inspiring….so that influenced my dancing right away. (Krynytzky, 20 January 2009)

Johanna then described returning to the University of Chicago and discovering that a new Middle Eastern Dance Club was forming. She and her roommate both began to take classes. Eventually the club began performing at events around campus. Johanna began taking classes several different days a week around the city. When the original teacher of the University of Chicago group moved away Johanna took over managing the troupe, which began to expand to bookings around the Chicago area (Krynytzky, 20 January 2009). In keeping with the pattern Nafeeseh and Jim described above, Johanna indicated that her first teacher had only been dancing for a couple of years before starting to teach, and Johanna followed much the same pattern when this teacher moved away and asked her to take over running the troupe.

Omaris Saneaux, one of the teachers at the Hip Expressions, began to get into dance when she came to her new life in the United States. She first saw belly dance on television in the Dominican Republic, from which she originates. After taking a few lessons in her home country she married and moved to Puerto Rico.

When I moved to Puerto Rico I have to start a new life, I have to start everything…Then I met a person who teaches [belly dance]... So then I start dancing or learning belly dance and more about the culture and everything. (Saneaux, 24 January 2009).

Omaris described how her life changed when she moved from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico, and how the belly dance community helped her to integrate in a new locality where she did not yet have any social ties outside her immediate family.

In Puerto Rico I didn't develop that [her advertising and photography career] because I was only with my husband and taking care of my baby. But belly dance changed my whole life completely. I was feeling very insecure meeting new people, and discovered that new music and the way of the movement

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[8] Popular American TV show that originally aired 1965-1970, in which an astronaut finds a bottle containing a female genie, imaginatively named "Jeannie". Hijinks ensue. The genie, played by blonde bombshell Barbara Eden, was consistently costumed in gauzy harem pants and a brightly-trimmed choli with a small waistcoat/vest over the top. Her piled-up hair supported a small fez-like hat with a veil that draped under her chin.

changed my life; it's like my passion. It has become part of my life…I fe[lt] really, really alone in Puerto Rico. I used to wait for my husband—my life was my husband; it was my whole family back in my country…And it was the first time I moved…I was the perfect daughter, always in the house, always respecting what my parents said and everything. But becoming a belly dancer changed my whole life because I feel admired not only by the students…I feel admired by my teacher, I was her first like grade student; by my own husband, by my friends, by my relatives and, you know, I was in a new country and that gave me the chance to meet new people with the same interest. And we can go together to the restaurants, we can practice together, and it was really good because I felt really lonely for one whole year. (Saneaux, 24 January 2009).

In addition to the social ties Omaris developed to people in the dance community in Puerto Rico, Omaris's confidence and self-esteem developed as her involvement with belly dance progressed. She told me that she began to assist her teacher in Puerto Rico after six months of taking classes there; three years later, she and her husband moved to Saint Petersburg where she became involved with the Hip Expressions studio.

Karen Sun Ray Coletti, Hip Expressions co-owner, spoke about growing up in a very musical and dance-oriented household: "…my mom says I danced one day and walked the next" (Coletti, 19 January 2009). Karen's father is Polynesian, and though he is mainly a musician, he and her mother infused Karen with a love of dance from an early age.

I started belly dancing when I was about 14. I became... my mom was teaching Hula classes and one of our students was married to a gentleman from Lebanon. He had a friend from Syria who did international folk dancing at the University of Florida, we became friends with them and I started to go to international folk dancing, so that is where I learnt to do the dances from all over the world. (Coletti, 19 January 2009)

Karen, like several other dancers, describes properly hearing the music as the key to belly dance, a skill she learned from her Syrian friend.

He taught me some basic movements since he had grown up in Syria, so I learned my first basic movements from him and the most important thing he taught me was how to hear the music, how to understand the music. That's what the movement is all about: being a visualisation of the music, in my opinion. (Coletti, 19 January 2009)

Unlike most of my research participants, who learned belly dance in formalised class structures, Karen was taught in an informal way from friends and acquaintances.

…I just continued just doing it on my own and being around people from the Mid-East and learning basic moves like you would do growing up in a home… So my early days of belly dancing was very self-taught [laughs] and I just made some things up as I went. So I wasn't very formal at all until I got much older. (Coletti, 19 January 2009)

The Hip Expressions Studio, by contrast, has a specific syllabus that Karen and Johanna have designed. This is common to many dance studios in the United States and Britain, some of whom have methods in which students can become 'certified'. There is a big debate in the dance community, touched on in chapters four and five, about whether this process of formalisation adds credibility or whether it puts too much focus on technique without incorporating the other dimensions of a successful dance performance.

Like Karen, Melanie LaJoie, currently owner of the A Magi Belly Dance troupe and studio in Orlando, also grew up dancing from an early age. "…the joke is I was a breech baby; I came out feet first, [laughs] so I was ready to dance" (LaJoie, 6 February 2009). Melanie grew up in Worcester, Massachusetts, becoming involved with the Lebanese community in the area. By pure happenstance, the neighbourhood included two people who became some of the most famous American names in belly dance in the 1960s, 70s and 80s: Vina Haddad and George Abdo. Music by George Abdo and His Flames of Araby remains a classic staple of the Middle Eastern dance scene in the United States, and the Smithsonian Folkways project has released an album of their songs. George's sister Vina frequently performed with the band as well as teaching classes in what Melanie describes as "a very classical Lebanese, Arabic style of belly dancing" (LaJoie, 6 February 2009). Melanie quickly became very closely involved with the dance community:

> Vina took me under her wings and that was it. And I was…just a young kid…
> So, there I was, in this Lebanese community and getting involved with Vina,
> meeting her brother, then doing a lot of travelling with them at the various
> venues that they would perform at or she would give workshops at and he would
> have big performances. So I was introduced at a very early age…(LaJoie, 6
> February 2009)

By the time she reached her teens, Melanie was already starting to perform solo. She went on to study many different styles of dance from all around the world, but Oriental dance continues to play an important role in her life, both personally and professionally. The fourth of the six event descriptions relates to the videos titled "A Magi 4 and 5" included on separate CD with this thesis is described below. This performance was part of the Arts Fest hosted by United Arts of Central Florida. It took place at the Orlando Public Library. The A Magi show lasted approximately an hour and incorporated several elements: group dance, group dance with Wings of Isis, solo by Melanie with wings of Isis, a Congolese drummer in traditional regalia, a group dance with scarves, a group dance with swords, a solo flamenco dancer, a group dance with candles (except they couldn't really light them in the library), a solo fan dancer (with the sword dancers

behind her), and a group dance with zills. After watching this performance, Melanie's disapproval of American Tribal Style (ATS) dance and costuming, which she had discussed with me in her interview the day before, took on a new dimension. I would certainly describe the group choreographies, and especially the vocal communication between dancers, as aligned with the aesthetics of Tribal Style. Melanie refers to her group's style as "Gypsy Ray", as in "Gypsy Cabaret Style". I understand her objections to the ATS name: Native Americans have tribes, so calling a form of belly dance American Tribal Style can cause confusion between the dances of American Indian tribes. However, I also wondered whether some Romany people would object to their identity as gypsies being associated with belly dance. Melanie told me her ancestry includes Russian gypsies, but, as I discuss in chapter six's look at cultural intimacy in the section "Transmission of Cultural Capital," there is often ambivalence on how common heritage can or should be treated, especially when presenting aspects of that heritage outside the group. At one point during the performance Melanie also educated the audience a little bit about the history of belly dance and the other dances the A Magi troupe presented, as well as involving the audience in a practical tutorial of the *zhighureet*[9].

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[9] A good example of a spontaneous *zhigureet* can also be heard during the Golden Pharaoh Wedding Party video.

Figure 11: Melanie LaJoie leading the A Magi dancers at the Orlando Arts Fest, 7 February 2009.[10]

Several of my research participants described belly dance as an empowering bodily act that helped develop their physical self-confidence, but few described this process when they told me the story of how they came to be interested in dance. One such person was Lyssa Poole. Lyssa, who was a student with the Hip Expressions studio in Saint Petersburg, Florida at the time of our interview, told me that her family were all very artistic and supportive of artistic endeavours.

> But the one thing I was never able to do was find a form of dance I liked, which is actually the art form that I like the most. It seems like if you were wanting to be in ballet, you had to be the perfect little like ballerina, which I'm not. And even in some of the jazz classes and stuff like that, I felt out of place because I wasn't small. I'm not small [laughs]. I am blessed with a curvy form and a strong body, and certain other forms of dance were just not meant for that. It literally was a late night, watching an infomercial, … what's the name, Zina, Nina? They have their little infomercial about, "learn belly dance now." And I'm like, you know what, that looks really cool. (Poole, 28 January 2009)

After obtaining some belly dance DVDs to learn her first moves, Lyssa began taking classes at a local gym. Throughout my interview with Lyssa she referred to belly dance as something that made her feel more herself, something with special meaning in her life. "My very first hip scarf, I made myself. It means a lot to me and I use it in almost

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[10] Videos of the A Magi dancers is also available on my YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/caitietube, titled "A Magi at Arts Fest." Examples are included on the DVD accompanying this thesis.

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every performance I do because it has special meaning, because I spent the time to sew each individual coin on" (Poole, 28 January 2009)[11].

One of my participants, Lacey Sanchez, an American Tribal Style dancer who manages Florida Tribal Dance in the Orlando area, first came to belly dance through an injury. "Jazz, ballet, ballroom; modern dance was my favourite. I was trying to go to San Diego [State University] for modern dance and I was injured so that led me not to be able to pursue those avenues, but I found that belly dancing was safer to do" (Sanchez, 4 February 2009). Lacey is not the only dancer whose injuries affected her dance choices: Lorna mentioned when I interviewed her that, though she enjoyed African dance, she stopped teaching it because she found that she sustained fewer injuries when she taught belly dance (Gow, 3 November 2008). I had several informal conversations with other dancers before starting my PhD in which a number reported becoming injured while taking other dance styles for many years (often ballet or modern) then starting belly dance, which puts less strain on muscles and joints. Lacey, who like Jim Boz was based in California for a time, also had connections to the SCA.

> So it was really, I don't want to say more traditional to get confused with Egypt but, but more earthy and folkloric, you know, and I was completely covered from head toe. I never exposed any skin when I learned. It was just very natural and …her [Lacey's first belly dance teacher and mentor] husband and all of her sons played the drums and so they would drum for us and we used recorded music really, really infrequently. (Sanchez, 4 February 2009)

Lacey attributed her current interest in drumming as well as dancing to the influence of her early involvement with the SCA. Now, Lacey makes a point of teaching her students to drum and provide music as well as to dance.

Zorba got into belly dance after being inspired by a friend who asked him to critique her work. After becoming involved with Greek dance at the encouragement of his wife in the mid-1990s, he began teaching Greek dance at lunchtime at work.

> One of my students was a belly dancer and she calls me up one day. She goes… "Can you come down to where we were dancing, a place called The Tent…I have a belly dance choreography I would like you to critique."
> I went, "Well, you know I don't know anything about belly dance."
> And she just goes, "Yeah, well, but you're a dancer and it doesn't matter what kind, you're a dancer." And so I went down there and watched her dance the thing. She went through it four or five times, did different things here and there. And I noticed the connectivity between the dancer and the music and I was just, I was just mesmerized. It's such beautiful dancing, just lovely. And,

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[11] None of my other participants mentioned this; however, several personal friends throughout my own belly dance history have done so and there are myriad resources online and in print for the dancer looking to personally sew a hip scarf among the other information available on creating one's own costumes.

oh, I watched it, and I said, you know, this is beautiful, I think I'm going to have to do this. (Zorba, 15 March 2009)

Interestingly, Zorba did not decide to take belly dance classes right away after seeing it for the first time. "It took me about five months. I first did a… any time I'm going to do anything, I research it to death" (Zorba, 15 March 2009). Like many dancers both male and female who are interested in learning about belly dance community values as well as technique, Zorba began his information quest on the internet, contacting several male dancers for impressions and advice.

In contrast to Zorba's experience in which he researched dance thoroughly before getting involved, like several of my other participants, Hungarian dancer S did not have a very clear idea of what belly dance was before she decided to try it. I interviewed S in Cairo in November 2008 while she tried to find permanent employment as a dancer.

> I was in high school, I was 16, and there was a friend of mine who saw and advertisement…She said, "Just for fun, let's try it, let's belly dance." We had no idea. So we went and there was a woman from Budapest…who taught belly dance and it was nice and we just couldn't stop. I went to college and I changed classes because I moved to different cities, but I always found the belly dance class somewhere, and I couldn't stop, yeah. I always continued. (S, 11 November 2008).

After dancing as a hobby for about five years, S was able to go to Crete to work nightly as a dancer in a café. She had also come to Egypt on several occasions for dance festivals, like the Nile Group Festival, which she was helping to organise at the time I interviewed her. After encouragement from the audience in Greece and from Egyptian friends she met during the Nile Group Festivals, she decided to try moving to Cairo and working as a dancer professionally full-time. Compared to some of my other research participants who had been dancing a much shorter time before it became a professional or semi-professional activity for them, S was a dancer on the hobby level only for a much longer period.

Kitty, a woman of French origin who now designs costumes in Cairo though she formerly danced professionally, also told me that she was not really aware of what belly dance was before she started. However, unlike my other research participants who may have started to take dance classes out of mere curiosity, Kitty went a step further and auditioned for a dancing job without knowing much about it. After starting her MA in Chemistry in France, she developed an allergy to some of the chemicals she worked with and needed to suspend her studies for a time.

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I mean, it was not my dream to be a belly dancer when I was younger, but then it started to be because I really loved dancing. Then I found in the newspaper that somebody was asking for a dancer, and after I have to stop my study, my mother asked me what I'm going to do and I told her, "I'm going to be a dancer."

She said, "Come on, you have to do something else."

"Okay, I'm going to study something else, but for now, I want one year just to release, because it's hard when you study something and then you have to stop, when all these years are for nothing." I felt really down and so I told her, "I just want to dance at least one year, because I like it, and just to feel better."

She said, "Okay …for a year do whatever you want, and after we'll see."….Then I found in the newspaper that somebody was asking for a dancer, a belly dancer. I didn't know anything about it, just I'd danced a lot of kinds of dance, as I told you before…I just pick up the phone and I called the guy. (Kitty, 14 November 2008)

After arranging a time to meet the club owner and some musicians, Kitty began to have misgivings.

I hanged [up] the phone, said, "Mother, I have a problem here…I didn't know anything about this dance." I even never saw it. And because I'm a lucky person, I just opened [turned on] the TV and there is a stupid show on that I never watch…

Then I heard the [presenter] saying, "Okay, so this girl, she has one minute to dance as a belly dancer"…I called my mother and said, "Look!" We had one minute, I had one minute to learn how to be a belly dancer, and she had one minute to know how to make a dress, because my mother, she's a very good tailor. So then we did it…one minute isn't quite long enough to [learn] [laugh]. (Kitty, 14 November 2008).

Kitty did get hired for that job, essentially developing her technique on the dance floor. However, she later came to Egypt and took classes with Ibrahim Akef, who I mentioned previously as a defining choreographer in developing contemporary Egyptian cabaret style. She also began dancing professionally on a cruise ship that ran in the summers from Alexandria, where through interacting with the audience and seeing what types of moves they preferred, Kitty refined her technique.

Nearly all the dancers I spoke to expressed some degree of spontaneity or serendipity in their career paths. Not a single dancer had decided on belly dance as a career path early in life. This is not surprising: choosing a career as a belly dancer is just as fantastical as a desire to become an actor or an astronaut. Perhaps it was for this reason that the professional dancers, teachers and studio owners expressed so much surprise and wonder when reflecting on how they had achieved their careers, even sometimes delighted disbelief that they had managed to centre their lives around dance so fully. However, successful professional dancers, just like successful entrepreneurs of all types, temper this passion about their work with commercial acumen in order to run successful businesses and thus to continue focusing their professional lives around

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dance. Efforts to this effect include the promotional materials discussed in the next section.

Promotional Materials

Throughout my research I collected or observed numerous materials related to dance classes, festivals, instructional articles websites, instructional videos and books available for purchase, specialist magazines, international tours arranged for dancers, regularly held dance events, and conferences, retreats and workshops. Since I will be discussing dancers' interactions with the digital world in a separate section and I have already addressed the issue of specialist publications, which in any case would be readily available to interested readers, in this section I will analyse examples of traditional paper marketing and promotion, starting with performers' business cards.

Business Cards

In the course of becoming acquainted with members of the professional belly dance community, I naturally began to collect a number of business cards. Some of these belonged to costumiers and musicians but in the main they provided contact details for individual dancers, dance troupes, or dance studios. Like many performance professionals it is quite common to find images of dancers on their cards. In several instances this meant a full-body shot on one side and a close up of the face on the other, with the dancer's contact information spread over the image on one or both sides. I have two examples of dancers whose cards are text-only, both of which direct recipients to a website that would include photographs of the dancer herself.

The most unique and informative of all the cards I received was Carmine T. Guida's; Carmine is a teacher and drummer both solo and for the New-York based band Djinn. Carmine's card has his information on the front, along with a photograph of himself. When folded open, the text "Emergency Hafla System Rhythm Response Card" is displayed vertically on the left side, across the top it says "In the event of a hafla please use the following rhythms:" below which is a series of ten different tempos ranging from Maqsum to Karşilama arranged in a sequence of musical drum scores. For example, Baladi is listed as

<u>**D**</u>   <u>**D**</u>   <u>TK</u>   <u>**T**</u>   <u>**D**</u>   <u>TK</u>   <u>**T**</u>   <u>TK</u>

On the back of the card are three stylised images of a dumbek, the type of drum Carmine plays, each with a hand drawn in to indicate where the hand is placed when

playing the three types of rhythm (Doum, Tek and Ka) on the drum (Doum is a beat in the centre of the drum, both Tek and Ka are sharper notes made by hitting the edge, though in different places). When I remarked on the exceptional design of the card Carmine told me that he sometimes had trouble with drum students grabbing stacks of them for reference.
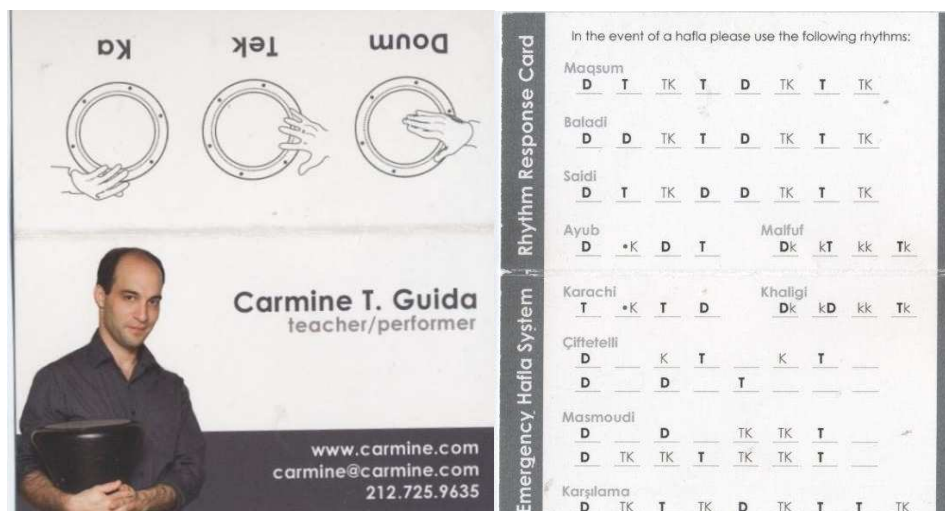

Figure 12: Carmine's business card, with "Emergency Hafla System Rhythm Response Card" in the folded middle.

While Carmine's card is clearly on another level, what it shares with the cards of dance professionals and with the cards of vocations related to dance like costume design is the desire to convey information about the nature of his or her work, beyond the contact details normally found on a business card. In chapter four I talked about the disconnect in understandings of what belly dance means within the dance community and for observers unconnected to that community. This disconnect, because it operates on a moral level, often pushes dancers into a personal quest to educate the public as much as possible about dance. Though limited to a space of only 2 X 3 ¼ inches, a business card is often the place where such education, both about themselves as individual performers and about the art of dance as a whole, starts. For example, despite the fact that a business card already implicitly communicates that the bearer is a professional, three of the cards I received specifically conveyed upon their owners the title of 'professional'. I perceive this as an attempt not only to convey status on themselves (marking themselves out as more 'expert' than other amateur dancers) but also to the trade of belly dance generally: a 'professional' Oriental dancer is not only one who has many skills on the dance floor, but also one who behaves in a professional manner, who only accepts certain kinds of engagements, and who understands, or wants clients to perceive that she understands, how to run a business. It is one way of

indicating that the bearer is not using the term 'belly dance' as a euphemism for other, more morally circumspect types of bodily performance. These are 'real' ('professional') belly dancers, not strippers or burlesque dancers imitating belly dance. Some cards specifically indicated the types of events for which a performer was available (e.g. weddings, corporate events, cultural festivals, workshops, etc.), making clear by association that 'professional' also means 'only available for highbrow gigs'.

Paper Advertising for Courses, Retreats, Special Events, and Studios

Paper advertisements for intensive courses and retreats run as special occasions separate from a general studio calendar generally come in three forms: a small, postcard-sized advertisement that may have writing on one or both sides; a half-page size (double the postcard size); or traditional print advertising in newspapers, specialist belly dance magazines, and programmes for other belly dance events. Advertising being what it is in the digital era, the cards universally directed people to a website with further information. Online advertising and promotion will be described more in the coming section "New Styles, New Spaces." The cards can be found laid out on tables, usually in the merchandise section, at classes, specialist workshops or festivals, and performance events like regularly held haflas. Haflas and festivals often have a commercial component to them where dancers can buy costumes, accessories, DVDs, CDs, books, magazines, and a plethora of other dance accessories. Some dance studios, like Hip Expressions in Saint Petersburg Florida and the now-closed Fazil's Dance Studio in Times Square, New York, have a permanent 'souk' for such items.

As with most advertising concerning Middle Eastern music and dance, these announcements are rife with images of the performers, sometimes in action and sometimes professional studio shots, the teachers of workshops, the souk and so forth. Naturally advertising also includes information on pricing, the aims of the event, and the types of proceedings that will be found there (workshops, competitions, shows, meals, shopping, etc.). A few themes emerged concerning multi-day dance festivals. Though the one I attended, Rakkasah West in Vallejo, California from 13-15 March, held workshops only in the week prior to the festival itself and was almost entirely focused on performing and the large bazaar, most multi-day events are teaching as well as performance-focused.

I present a sample of three examples of festival advertising from 2009 and one from 2007: first, Raqs Britannia at the Winter Gardens in Blackpool, UK from 29 June

to 1st July 2007; next, the Yaa Halla, Y'all event from August 13-16 in Texas; third, the Middle Eastern Music and Dance Camp in the Mendocino Woodlands, August 16-23; and finally, the Las Vegas Bellydance [sic] Intensive and Festival from September 10-13. Only one of these advertisements referred to the event as a "festival"; the rest used words like "a Gathering of the Stars" (Yaa Halla, Y'all), "The largest belly dance event in Europe" (Raqs Britannia), or a camp (Middle Eastern Music and Dance Camp). Even the Las Vegas-based event was described as both an "intensive" and a "festival".

Raqs Britannia's tagline, "Celebrating the art, practice and culture of Bellydance!" was echoed in the other advertisements. The Las Vegas Bellydance Intensive and Festival describes itself as "Four days of motivation and inspiration" and a "Catered lunch and Lecture with SHIRA: *Exploring the Tribal and Egyptian Connection*," while the Middle Eastern Music and Dance Camp promised dance classes, instruction on classical and folk instruments, parties with live music, coaching, performances, ethnic cuisine, and "folklore Discussions [sic]". Yaa Halla Y'all features a "Belly Dance Symposium". In addition to the element of performance practice, all the dance events advertised clearly include a culturally educational and discursive aspect as well. As I have discussed in previous chapters, the belly dance community is strongly committed to learning and creating not only the choreographies and technical elements of dance, but also the social mores and historical understandings that are the hallmarks of a community. The organisers of all four events clearly feel that this aspect of their product is a big enough draw to potential consumers that they explicitly advertise it.

Figure 13: Yaa Halla Y'all advertisement, referencing both local and 'Arabesque' visual tropes.

All four events also refer to their physical location in their advertising in addition to the geographical cultural roots of belly dance. This is an example of "glocalisation," developed by Roland Robertson (Robertson, 1992; Robertson, 1995). Robertson contends that globalised products and processes are always altered by the localities that they arrive in as well as those from which they originate. In other words, global products are localised. Dance scholar Brigid Kelly addresses this issue with reference to the international belly dance community in her unpublished MA dissertation in which she examines the way dancers "localise" the types of belly dance they perform and how they refer or do not refer to ideas of "The Orient" (Kelly, 2008). The examples I collected parallel Kelly's description of this phenomenon in the context of the New Zealand belly dance community. The very name "Yaa Halla Y'all" is a

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cheeky reference to Texas, while the sponsoring dance troupe/studio (Isis and the Star Dancers) fits in with that contemporary globalised belly dance practice of calling upon not modern Egypt but ancient Egypt as a historical, situating reference. Raqs Britannia's symbol is a common anthropomorphism: a female figure, helmeted, wrapped in a loose toga, sits beside a shield emblazoned with the UK flag, one arm upraised bearing, instead of the more traditional trident, a piece of cloth fluttering from her hand. It sits in the Q of Raqs Britannia.

Figure 14: Raqs Britannia flier, with Raqs Britannia symbol in centre of Q.

The Middle Eastern Music and Dance Camp is the most literal reference of the three: specifically stating that the camp will take place in the Mendocino Woodlands already provides a hint as to the rural nature of this particular event. The idea is brought home by the picture of a campfire surrounded by plastic kiosk tents with a ring of redwood trees in the background. Whilst the other three refer to these locations symbolically, either to the local culture in the way Raqs Britannia and Yaa Halla Y'all do, or to the commercial commodities in the place, the way the Las Vegas event does and which I will discuss below, the Middle Eastern Music and Dance Camp provides a straightforward reference to the surroundings dancers can expect through a photograph.
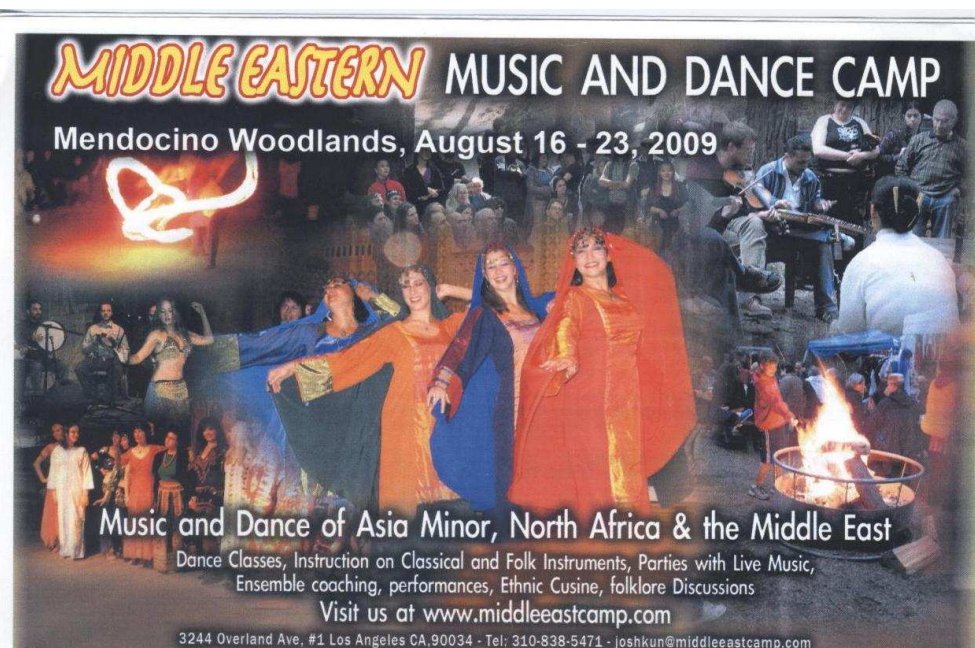
Figure 15: Middle Eastern Music and Dance Camp flier, with visual references to rural setting.

The Las Vegas Belly Dance Intensive and Festival card has a baize green background, like a poker table. Poker chips peek in from one corner. Six dancers are pictured in the centre of playing cards, their names written in the upper right-hand corner of the card. Five of the dancers are women; their cards form a straight flush with a hand reaching in to grasp the queen of spades, while the sixth card features the only male dancer (my research participant Jim Boz) as the joker. The official tourism logo of Las Vegas, a neon sign saying "Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas" graces the upper right hand of the card. On the reverse, two special events are advertised, the first titled "A Night in the City of Riches: An Evening of Exquisite Performances by an Array of Talented Artists" and the second "Viva Raks Vegas," picturing not only the standard glitzy images of belly dancers but also an Elvis impersonator. The second show is also not solely a dance show, but includes "Entertainment! Showgirls! Fun! Magic!

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Cocktails! Hors D'oeuvres! Vegas Meets Bellydance!" Guests are exhorted to "Socialize! Mingle!"

There is so much information in the Las Vegas advertisement that it can easily serve as a discussion starting point for how performers and promoters use visual tropes from the Orient to help advance their goals of creating a fantastical, imaginative space. As Rasmussen discussed earlier in this chapter, Orientalist values can be harnessed by entertainers in order to advance their advertising or entertainment aims. However, she was speaking about musicians who actually did originate culturally from the regions that the fantasy of Orientalism is drawn. She was speaking of a deliberate choice to use the fantasised discourse of Orientalism, despite (or perhaps because of) its negative connotations. This can be viewed in the light of the culturally intimate; something that may be viewed ambivalently when it is used as a stereotype outside a group but that may have a completely different significance within the group. I am not suggesting that all engagements with this type of visual shorthand are necessarily negative, though I do encourage greater critical reflection on how they are used in the dance world. Nor are these usages limited to 'Oriental' aesthetic tropes: the playing cards, the neon, and the Elvis impersonator are all clearly linked with Las Vegas in the public imagination. Connecting Las Vegas, recognisably the land of fantasy and unsubstantiated glitter, with belly dance, in my opinion, will leave few spectators expecting to attend the Las Vegas Belly Dance Conference (especially the closing event, "Viva Raks Vegas") with a serious intent to better understand belly dance in a 'traditional, authentic' sense. Wherever an Elvis impersonator operates, in my opinion, the audience has arrived seeking larger-than-life imitation and is already aware of and receptive to the fantastical nature of the event. In fact, Elvis impersonation has become its own distinct art form, separate entirely from the entertainment repertoire of Elvis himself. Parallels can be drawn between this act and Judith Butler's concept of drag as an imitation without a referent; playing with the definition of categories. The same can be said of belly dance performances in such a context: 'authentic' means 'authentically Vegas' rather than referring to some other, remote concept of 'authenticity.'

Figure 16: Adverstisement for the Las Vegas Bellydance Intensive and Fesetival 2009, with references to local Las Vegas theme as well as Middle Eastern visual tropes.

"A Night in the City of Riches," conversely, lists itself as "An evening of exquisite performances by an Array of Talented Artists," further exhorting audience members to "Celebrate the Art and Allure of Traditional and Progressive BELLYDANCE." Unlike "Viva Raks Vegas" ("It's a VEGAS party, Baby!"), this event is held in a library, another way it marks itself out as a cultural event. While "A Night in the City of Riches" does include "progressive" as well as "traditional" in the milieu of dance categories it presents, in the space of a quarter-page advertisement it is impossible to engage in a full and complex dialogue of what all these terms mean,

something that festival organiser and creative director Samira Tu'Ala and I discussed when I asked her permission to use the images for this chapter. She said:

> Having a women's studies minor has often been a challenge for me in terms of marketing belly dance. I often find myself conflicted about how to present things. Every year I do an online post-event survey to get feedback about the event and shows...every single year I get a ton of complaints on both sides of the spectrum regarding how we market things. Some folks complain that my shows are too modern/progressive/& not Middle-Eastern. Some folks complain that my shows are too Egyptian/Oriental/traditional. Using the phrase 'traditional & progressive' on the postcard was very much our attempt to placate the complainers…It's impossible to create a show that will appeal to the wide range of perspectives that walk into the theater. (Tu'Ala, 28 February 2010)

Intentionally or not, the term "traditional" in this context, especially surrounded by the visual tropes Samira has chosen, like the 'Arabic' lettering, could be interpreted as conveying the idea of this being the 'authentic' portion of the festival, in contrast with the more 'Vegas cabaret-style' portions of the festival. In chapter seven I will discuss further the problem of conveying meaning, and how it is the intentions of the performer (or creator of visual information, in this case) combined with the understandings of the audience from which meaning eventually emerges. Clearly Samira, through her feedback forms, has found this to be true as well.

Throughout this section I have attempted to provide an overview of the material and ephemeral methods by which dancers communicate knowledge about dance, both technical choreographic knowledge and understandings of the global dance community's 'civics.' However, dance is also an ever-changing medium. While some types of dance are formalised and can be expected to alter at a slower rate, or to split off into new types of dance when a sufficient amount of deviation has occurred, such as development of modern dance from ballet, belly dance is at heart an improvisational folkloric form. This, in concert with the increasing spread of belly dance to new cultures through multiple media, means that new styles and new understandings of the meaning of dance in culture begin to emerge.

New Styles, New Spaces: When Does Transmission Become Development?

I have alluded already to the changing nature of the methods by which dancers gain understandings about dance. Previously it was necessary to attend classes and, if one wished to advance beyond the level of classes available in one's geographic area, to seek out and put in the time and effort of travelling to where more advanced teachers were. However, it is now possible for even the most limited agoraphobe to take dance

classes over the internet (Suhaila International). Though the vast majority of dance students still take classes in person, the availability of alternative methods for augmenting dance knowledge has changed the very nature of the way dancers engage with their quest to understand dance. Most people assume that dance, something Barbara Sellers-Young describes as a "lived art," is conveyed bodily from the teacher to the student. But currently, dance development is driven, or at least quite strongly influenced, by media "…from the formal environment of art exhibits and exhibitions to the print media of newspapers and journals, the moving images of film, television, video, DVD and the dispersed images of the internet" (Sellers-Young, 2005: 276). Moreover, the context in which global audiences view dance has also changed dramatically in the past fifty years. Anne Rasmussen describes how audiences in the United States previously engaged with dance in Middle Eastern-themed nightclubs which originated in the 1950s, increased in the 1960s and 70s and then began to decline in the 1980s and 90s. Though cafés, restaurants and clubs still provide live performances of Middle Eastern music and dance, "…these kind of venues cannot be said to constitute the major context for Middle Eastern music and dance at the dawn of the 21st century" (Rasmussen, 2005: 194). Rasmussen further notes that nightclubs are currently a much smaller part of a dancer's professional clientele, with corporate and private events coming to the forefront, an observation corroborated by my interviews with participants.

While ethnic restaurants remain a significant venue where audiences might view belly dance, people with a serious interest are more likely to attend specialist events like the haflas organised by local dance communities around the world. Haflas, however, are attended by a significantly greater proportion of the belly dance community than by entertainment consumers at large; in fact, they can be viewed as community events and there is often an atmosphere of camaraderie and shared mutual understandings at such events in addition to their celebratory and entertainment values, discussed further in the next chapter. They are also a venue for amateur performers to practice their stage skills, and when a famous name in the dance community comes to town, a place to see new developments and try out new ideas. Like dance festivals, there may be a commercial element in that costumes, props, and music are on sale, though generally this is on a much smaller scale than at a large multi-day festival, with only one or two vendors attending.

I have already discussed Jamila Salimpour's dance troupe, Bal Anat, and its development in conjunction with the Renaissance Faires of northern California. I have discussed its use of fictional, imaginative histories to open a space to reconceptualise certain discourses of feminine sensuality. What I have not yet discussed is its novelty as a form: Bal Anat can be considered the first American Tribal Style dance troupe, developed not from a connection to a traceable historical dance lineage beyond its invention by Jamila Salimpour (though I would argue that in contrast, most dance styles claiming to be 'authentic' cannot substantiate their histories, no matter how fervently they insist these are traceable) but also from an imaginal one.

> Never having been to the Middle East, she [Jamila Salimpour] created what she readily admits was "half real" based on dances she had learned from Middle Eastern women friends and "part hokum." The hokum was based on interpretations of photographs, paintings, and films of the Middle East or set in the Middle East. These included pictures of tribal groups from the *National Geographic*, orientalist paintings by Gerome, films such as *Justine* set in North Africa, and a photo from a Moroccan cook book. (Sellers-Young, 2005: 284)

This milieu became a source of aesthetic inspiration for costuming and choreographic poses that currently inspires both female and male dancers. American Tribal Style (ATS) is now its own distinct genre, varying in costume, staging, posture, and movement vocabulary from other belly dance styles. Though Jamila Salimpour's account of the development of the Bal Anat troupe is very clear that many elements of it were not historically accurate, this does not necessarily translate to a full awareness throughout the belly dace community that it includes a big chunk of, in Salimpour's words, "hokum." ATS has a very distinct philosophical element to it, founded around ideas of female empowerment and the collective nature of a successful performance. These values, particularly those related to feminine power, are often associated with ancient ideas of the feminine sacred. There is a reluctance to ascribe these ideals to contemporary society, which may stem from a real feeling on the part of dancers that there is actually an insufficient discourse on female empowerment in modern culture, a failure that encourages them to look to ancient beliefs (or at least what they trust to be ancient beliefs) to resolve this deficiency. This can translate into dancers' acceptance of fictive elements of ATS as 'real' if they are not cognisant of the actually documented history of ATS's development, and a failure to appreciate Jamila Salimpour's skilful showmanship in devising an innovative space of play to explore these issues.

Conclusions

While there is widespread discussion of dance history and how dance was passed down from ancient times to now within the global dance community, there is very little discussion by dancers of how dance passes from one culture to another in the modern period. This is a very serious lack because it ignores recent developments in the dance community within the Arab world, perpetuating the illusion that dance vocabulary for Oriental dance has been static since ancient times except in newly developed styles like American Tribal Style. Equally significantly, it means that dancers are not engaging in a reflexive process concerning how their desire to create a liminal space outside ordinary life to explore aspects of the self that are ignored or denied by contemporary society can lead to perpetuation of Orientalist tropes, and specifically those revolving around imaginings of Egypt. While I am not convinced that the use of Orientalist paradigms is always necessarily pejorative within the dance community, and I believe it is possible to engage with them in a constructive sense, I am mindful that the dearth of discussion about how Orientalism is used means that dancers are not considering what would differentiate a productive, power-shifting utilisation of Orientalism from one that is 'played straight,' one that fails to question the power of this discourse.

There is not a sense from dancers that they are as much the creators of this dance as they are scholars and 'consumers' of it. While there is often a recognition of being part of something greater than themselves and of conscious efforts to build or sustain a community, the ways in which dancers actually alter the movement vocabulary or the methodology by which students learn about that movement vocabulary is not something upon which dancers consciously reflected in interviews. Though all dancers were aware of shifts in the way people have learned about dance, especially in the past ten years as the internet grew to have an increasing role in people's lives, they were not aware of themselves as agents of that change. In previous chapters I discussed dancers' awareness of social and moral convention within the dance community, for example unstated principles regarding appropriate costumes and choreography. Dancers were aware of their abilities to affect one another on this point, through arbitration of who could and could not appear in the shows they organise, or through articles and blog entries on their personal or professional websites and in trade publications, for example. However, they did not generally share a sense of being agents of change in dance

choreography or in the social conventions that guide participants in the international dance community.

The increasing number of channels for dancers to obtain information about dance, for example the increasingly disembodied transmission of dance choreography through online video clips, is a topic about which dancers do think. However, I obtained more information about this through personal interviews than through examining online dance forums and other community media, suggesting that unlike discussions of appropriate costumes and choreography, these reflections are not yet part of the belly dance diaspora's communal discourse. This could result from the relative novelty of these technologies and a need for greater exploration of how they *can* be used before dancers develop their thoughts on how they *should* be used.

Alternatively, there could simply be less contention over this subject than over other topics that dancers do discuss at length: after all, though distance-learning choreography is a relatively new phenomenon, photographs and paintings dating from the 19th century that exoticise dancers whilst containing relatively little accurate or culturally contextualising information are some of the most consistently cited examples of Orientalism (Graham-Brown, 1988; Mabro, 1991; Karayanni, 2004). Dancers are familiar with this form of decontextualisation, so much so that possibly they do not find it worth discussion. However, as I discussed above, the dance community may benefit from a greater degree of discursive engagement with these issues. Though my research participants indicated that on the whole they felt empowered by their experiences with dance and with the dance community, more active participation in discussions about Orientalism and embodiment may provide them with another method of achieving agency, especially as an increasingly academic focus on such issues develops. Increasing discourse emerging from within the dance community itself would naturally also benefit academic analyses of how dancers contextualise dancing and themselves as dancers using localised as well as exoticising tropes.

GENDER CHOREOLOGY

you shall above all things be glad and young
 For if you're young, whatever life you wear

 it will become you; and if you are glad
 whatever's living will yourself become.
 Girlboys may nothing more than boygirls need:
 i can entirely her only love…

 I'd rather learn from one bird how to sing
than teach ten thousand stars how not to dance
                e e cummings, "You Shall Above All Things be Glad and Young", 1938

Thus far this thesis has focused on the development of the international dance community and how the norms of the international community relate to cultural ideology about dance in Egypt. I have used elements of gender theory, principally Judith Butler's idea of the open coalition, to suggest solutions to problematic, conflicting concepts within the community. What I have yet to address is the relationship between gender and choreographic embodiment. This chapter will focus on dancers' gender performance. To ameliorate some of the awkwardness in referring to performance in its everyday sense and performance in its theatrical sense (including both amateur and professional performances), I will refer to the latter as shows or productions. I believe the purpose of Judith Butler's use of the words "performance" and "performativity" to describe the efforts, both conscious and unconscious, that people make on a daily basis to present a particular gendered image to others is a deliberate comparison to the conscious exertions of theatrical performance. To clarify, while she *compares* daily gender performance to theatrical performance, she is deliberately taking the term out of its theatrical sense in order to use it for a different purpose. There is a difference between these constant prosaic performances, in which we are all both audience and actor, and the experience of deliberately attending or participating in an entertainment in which the audience is aware of the effort being made by performers. This may seem self-evident, but in a discussion of gender performance that revolves around the subject of dance performance, it is necessary to clarify the multiple layers of this terminology.

This chapter will discuss Butlerian gender theory as it relates to the bodily experience of dance in both practice and production spaces. I will devote a section to discussing what space is available for male embodiment in the international dance

community and another to discussing the importance of a sympathetic audience to creating a space for feminine empowerment as well as what happens when such an audience is not available. I have split the discussion along gender lines for two reasons: first, the limited amount of information on male dancers, both in my own interviews and in the literature, means that they are still a singular enough phenomenon that they deserve their own dedicated space of discussion. Secondly, the issues that pertain to masculine embodiment are very different from those relating to feminine embodiment within dance performance as I shall discuss below.

My fieldwork in all three locations of Egypt, the United States, and Britain comprised a research pool of what I have been calling the international dance community. At no point did I interview dancers who were originally from Egypt, though both Lorna Gow, Scottish dancer and teacher who performs regularly on the Nile Pharaoh dinner cruise boats, and Sara Farouk Ahmed, actor, director, and teacher of dance when she returns to visit her native Britain, have chosen to make Egypt their homes for the past three and ten years respectively. Principally for this reason, my use of Butlerian theory to analyse gender in choreographic performance focuses primarily on conventions within the global dance community. For comparison with local norms within Egypt, I rely again on Karin van Nieuwkerk's extensive study of female Egyptian performers, *'A Trade Like Any Other': Female Singers and Dancers in Egypt*.

The 'global dance community' is made up of local communities and does not have a single set of conventions to dictate what behaviours and symbols are affiliated with the construction of gendered identities. However, throughout previous chapters I have attempted to convey the concept that the increasing globalisation experienced by belly dancers has given them access to a common range of understandings. This is as true of gendered performance as it is of shared understandings of dance history and community boundaries. Furthering that discussion, in the next section I will discuss Jane Sugarman's assertion that globalisation has generally allowed women to renegotiate understandings of femininity within their local communities, something I believe can equally apply to men and masculinities.

Gender Theory and Performance: Choreographic Embodiment

As acknowledged at the start of this chapter, there is a difficulty in distinguishing between performance in its theatrical sense and performance in its sense of a series of actions undertaken consciously or unconsciously to convey desired impressions about the self to others. Rebecca Schneider attempts to resolve this

problem by resorting to the ancient Greek term *theatron*[1]. The *theatron*, in addition to being the physical venue in which theatrical acts of performance were viewed, was also a space in which the conventions of theatricality were established. "The *theatron* could thus be read as a space that instituted reception as distanced from action and action as blinded to reception. He who sees does not act; he who acts does not see" (2006: 237). Theatrically we speak of the fourth wall; the invisible barrier between audience and actor which conventionally remains uncrossed except in certain types of performance in which this dichotomy is challenged, such as Commedia dell'Arte, Invisible Theatre, pantomime and other forms which involve audience participation. Conversely, dance performance has never been bounded by such restrictions because unlike theatre which is grounded in lingual text, dance is a social activity as well as a performance art. Dance has never been limited to the *theatron*, though some dance performances do adhere to those conventions. In ballet, for example, dancers do not directly address the audience. However, even during belly dance performances that are not social in nature it is much more common for dancers to look directly at the audience, leave the stage (if there is one) and dance around among them, or to invite audience members onstage to participate. This is much more relational than Schneider's model of the *theatron*. Nevertheless there is a distinction between a dance show with a paying audience, whether or not audience members also dance during the course of the show, and a social situation in which there is no professional dancer, a distinction that has yet to be adequately theorised.

In all of life, including both dance productions and impromptu social dance performances, gender is enacted as an iterative process. Dance is simply another arena in which gendered performances take place. Dance can even be a heightened arena for gender performance and creation of gendered bodily norms. Judith Butler has theorised at length about the degree of agency involved in bodily gender performance. While it is through the body that we exercise agency to express our gendered intentions, it is also potentially the site of unsuccessful gendered performance. A successful gendered performance depends on the acquiescence of the 'audiences' of such performances as well as the intentions of the individual. In this way, agency applying to the body does not stem purely from the self but is also the result of others' intentions and understandings (Butler, 2004: 20). Furthermore, the intention to provide such gendered

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[1] Schneider notes the term's meaning: "a place for viewing." She does not indicate when the term first came into use, perhaps because she is reclaiming the term for a new theoretical model rather than using it in its material sense. The Oxford Companions to Classical Civilization and Literature indicate that the term was in effect by the 5th century BC (Dionysius, Theatre of, 1996; Tomlinson, 1998).

performances is predicated on a relational need: "The particular sociality that belongs to bodily life, to sexual life, and to becoming gendered (which is always, to a certain extent, becoming gendered *for others*)..." (Butler, 2004: 25). It is only in relational life that gendered performances are needed. Butler is specifically speaking about social performances, but the same holds true of performance in a theatrical sense, which ultimately is predicated on social desire to share stories and express important social truths through a fantastical medium. In this sense all productions, as opposed to rituals which may or may not include a relational element, are practiced for others as well as for the self alone. The effect of such performances, regardless of the intentions of the performer, depends also on the understandings of the audience. "The understanding of how meanings are produced includes a recognition of active spectatorship" (Adair, 1992: 76). Significance is not due to the agency of the performer alone. Adair uses this concept to discuss how "particular cultural groups" can use spectatorial agency to produce understandings of performances that subvert predominant cultural imagery, a concept that relates to the third section of this chapter, in which I address how female performers feel about their personal empowerment utilising belly dance to engage with audiences as opposed to other styles.

Similarly, the intentions of dancers are also predicated on relationships with different styles of dance. Scholars discussing dance have thus far largely approached each genre as a singular phenomenon, examining different forms independently without reference to each other. However, in real life dancers whether social or professional often have access to many different forms of dance within their local sphere. An example of this is the thriving salsa dancing scene in Cairo, a scene in which the professional belly dancers I interviewed sometimes became involved as hobbyists. One of my participants also mentioned that there is a Scottish highland dancing troupe in Cairo among the other forms of dance that may be studied and seen there (Gow, 3 November 2008).

The ability to pick and choose from different styles of dance can be emblematic of women's desire to associate themselves or dis-associate themselves with particular sets of cultural values. One example can be seen among the Prespa community of Albania, where women use dance to align themselves with prevailing cultural values concerning women's honour, and to distance themselves from dishonourable women.

> Women...whose music and dance styles have been premised upon a display of modesty and propriety, have felt compelled to structure their performances in such a way as to distinguish themselves not only from the men of their community, but also from those "other women"—be they professional

entertainers, courtesans, prostitutes, or ritual specialists—who have lived and performed in their midst (Sugarman, 2003: 111)

While Sugarman here gives an example based on her fieldwork in the Prespa community, the idea of dance as a space in which both men and women can align their behaviour with community standards of propriety and distinguish themselves from improper persons ("other women")—or conversely, to challenge such standards—is applicable to many cultures. This is an example of what Judith Butler describes as "…[T]hrough the practice of gender performativity, we not only see how the norms that govern reality are cited but grasp one of the mechanisms by which reality is reproduced *and* altered in the course of that reproduction" (Butler, 2004: 218). In an increasingly globalised world, choosing a particular style of dance to exemplify these intended understandings of the self is an option increasingly available to both women and men.

Dance productions create spaces outside the ordinary boundaries of the everyday to explore aspects of selfhood that are not condoned by the constructions of usual social boundaries. In dance, this is accomplished not only through choreographic performance but also through the tangible material culture which surrounds it. Stavros Stavrou Karayanni calls for an examination of these physically transformative elements, saying that the 'technology' of adornment and makeup (he uses the French term "maqillage") can be analysed in the same light as choreographic movements in that they are intentional communications concerning the transformation of the body into a gendered and sexualised being: "Perhaps this is where the eroticism and exoticism associated with makeup become apparent and distinctly relevant. Makeup is erotic because it brings about a metamorphosis that follows auto-eroticism" (Karayanni, 2004: 89). Karayanni goes on to compare the performer's donning of makeup before a show to a ritual adornment, one designed to augment the body's potential as a canvas upon which to enact a performance. In the previous chapter I spoke about the importance of fantasy and displacement in the aesthetic tropes of the international belly dance community, principally referring to the example of the fantastical world created by American Tribal Style dance, though aesthetic fantasy is present also in cabaret, fusion, and "traditional" styles of belly dance. This is in alignment with Judith Butler's theory that fantasy is not merely that which occurs internally but that in fact "Fantasy structures relationality, and it comes into play in the stylisation of embodiment itself" (Butler, 2004: 217). The metamorphosis through adornment that Karayanni describes above can be thought of as actualising a fantastical version of the self; a version which may not operate in an

everyday relational context, but which nevertheless seeks an appropriate venue in which to speak out, overstepping the confines of internalised fantasy.

Butler further theorises the importance of changes that bodies undergo over time, altering not only in shape but also in what they signify to ourselves and to others. Though the changes of the growing and aging body are physical, alterations in perception of bodily significance take place through the interactions we experience. These interactions can take place on an individual level, or in the sense of engagement with cultural aesthetic tropes. An example can again be found in Sugarman's observations among Prespa Albanian women, which she extrapolates to discuss how female dancers throughout Europe, the Middle East, and North America use fantastical aesthetic tropes that may not be local to them in order to change the significance of the body:

> …[C]ultural forms have been instrumental in a larger process through which women within societies that have historically been patriarchal have been renegotiating their sense of themselves as women: often not by dismantling forms originating in patriarchal contexts, but rather by combining and juxtaposing them so as to convey a greater range of what women have come to regard as desirable "feminine" qualities (Sugarman, 2003).

Such changes require an awareness of difference in what female bodies signify locally and what they signify, or have the potential to signify, in contexts other than those in which these women currently operate. Equally important is a desire to shift the meanings of women's bodies in the local context and create new, transformed sets of significances.

Though Sugarman's focus is a process by which women negotiate and challenge acceptable practices of femininity, the same processes can also work for men seeking to explore masculinities. Stavros Stavrou Karayanni engages in such an exploration in *Dancing Fear and Desire*, in which he speculates on what kinds of bodies his grandfather imagined while playing Eastern tunes on his nay (male or female), and on how his grandfather himself would choreographically interpret the music (in a 'masculine' or 'feminine' way). As he says, "I pose these questions because there is something subversive in the very exercise" (Karayanni, 2004: 17). In the coming section I will further discuss male engagement with belly dance and how the men I interviewed conceived of dance as a space for interacting with and framing constructions of masculinity.

Dance Vocabulary and Gender: Men and Masculinities

For discovering personal experiences of male embodiment within the dance community, obviously my interviews with men as well as the small amount of literature at present available on the subject (Malik, 2000; Karayanni, 2004; Shay, 2005b) are of paramount importance. However, as gender is a relational act and the subjective understandings of those on the receiving end of gender performance are also important, I also discussed male belly dancers with my female participants, data I will present later in this section.

There is a growing body of literature on men in Oriental dance, and on men in dance more generally (Gard, 2001; Karayanni, 2004; Shay and Sellers-Young, 2005; Gard, 2006; Burt, 2007). Recently, male dancers and dance researchers began questioning the popularly accepted view that belly dance is and always has been an essentially feminine practice. Re-examining the descriptions of 19th century travel writers, some authors now conclude that what were originally portrayed as feminine movements or costumes may have been misinterpretations based on differing cultural expectations (Shay and Sellers-Young, 2005). To argue, based on travel writings, that male dancers historically were all cross-dressing or attempting to emulate female performers is conjecture. It is true that some male dancers did perform in female costume; French author Gerard de Nerval's perplexity upon discovering that three dancers he initially took to be female were in fact men is an oft-repeated example (Nieuwkerk, 1995: 33; Karayanni, 2004: 87). However, Anthony Shay points out that entertainers like Elton John, Boy George, and Sting all wear flamboyant, striking and rich costumes in order to add to their theatrical appearances as entertainers, and that although such costumes may use elements from both masculine and feminine styles, these celebrities are not actually cultivating female stage personas (Shay, 2005b: 77).

Not only is the suggestion that male dancers attempted to imitate women speculation, but the language used to discuss this idea, such as Wendy Buonaventura's typical assertion that dancers appeared "disguised as women, aping the women's dance…", is quite clearly tinged with bias (Buonaventura, 1998: 69). Male dancers are portrayed in this construction as interlopers in an art form that ultimately 'belongs' to women; men can only ever be imperfect imitators and apes. Even Nieuwkerk describes male dancers only as "replacement[s]" for women in the wake of the 1834 ban on public women, stating "The appearance of the *khawal* [male dancer] was similar to that of female dancers" (Nieuwkerk, 1995: 33). Here again the battleground of authenticity and who can lay the ultimate proprietary claim on this dance becomes apparent.

While male dance scholars are busily working to carve out or reclaim some legitimate space in the dance tradition, a question that remains not very widely addressed is the current Egyptian (and more widely throughout the Arab world) perception of male dancers with relation to the public ideas of honour and shame and to the discourse of public and private space within Islam discussed above. Where there are writings on male Egyptian dance, they concern historical figures like Hassan el-Belbeissi encountered by Flaubert on a trip to Egypt in 1849 (Flaubert, 1996). Nieuwkerk's prolific body of work about Egyptian performers rarely mentions contemporary ideology about male dancers, and Young's article discussed in chapters three and four on the ritual significance of Egyptian dance is devoted solely to the significance of female dancers (Nieuwkerk, 1995: 132; Young, 1998). Tellingly, Young feels no need to explain why he chose to discuss only female dancers; part of his unspoken premise is that either men do not dance or that their performances are not ritually significant in Egyptian society. The first point is obviously untrue: my own observations[2] recounted below, historical descriptions too numerous to cite, and innumerable videos available on YouTube, confirm that both men and women dance in Egypt, especially during public celebrations like weddings. The event descriptions for "Cairo Jazz Fest 1" and "Black Theam 8,11 and 12" video selections included on the accompanying CD demonstrate this. Their descriptions follow. Recorded 11 November 2008 at the Cairo Jazz Festival on the rooftop of the Trianon boat in Giza. About half an hour after we arrived at 11 PM, we saw a couple of women dancing in the aisle behind the couches which were set out behind the dance floor. There was a middle-aged woman with a large triangular scarf with a fringe tied around her hips and a younger woman who could have been her daughter. Some men had been dancing vigorously throughout the evening further away from us on the other side of the group of women. At this point a young man rushed around the front of the couches, sought out the younger woman who was dancing and pulled her into the middle of the dance floor. She tied her scarf, which had been around her shoulders, around her hips and began to dance. An older man beckoned the other woman with the triangular scarf and pulled her up as well. They all proceeded to dance for a good ten minutes, much to the delight of the audience. The men, who until now had been dancing very skillfully with each other in the back row, now took on a more supporting role, framing the women with their arms and hands and making the women the focus of the attention rather than

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[2] See my research channel, www.youtube.com/caitietube , videos "Cairo Jazz Fest 1", "Black Theama 4", "Black Theama 8", "Black Theama 11" and "Golden Pharaoh Wedding Party 1". These are also included on the DVD accompanying this thesis.

themselves. (Though one of them did a backbend on the floor at one point.) Near the end the younger man took the *keffiyeh* he was wearing around his neck and wrapped it around the hips of the younger woman, who behaved as though this were absurd and then handed it back to him. As she'd already been wearing something around her hips I wasn't able to tell if this were a personal rejection or simply that she found it encumbering. After another woman from the same group got up and began to sing with a microphone the band handed to her, the dancing eventually died out and the musicians stopped playing around 2:30 in the morning.

The videos of Black Theama were recorded at the El Sawy Culture Wheel on 4 October 2008. The first video (8) captures some spontaneous hand movements of a man in a striped shirt standing in front of me. This person is the crowd control/security guard for the evening. In video 11 I tried to capture the moment where the security guard finally gave up on trying to prevent the boys who were dancing in the aisles on the side of the stage from dancing in the space between the stage and the front row of seats. As they moved into the centre of the room they did a line dance that I only managed to capture a few seconds of. Video 12 is much better lit as it is the encore and the auditorium lights have gone up. People are moving towards the exits in this one but it is still possible to pick out some spontaneous dancing in the crowd.

 Sherifa Zuhur's, Laura Lengel's and L. L. Wynn's writings on gendered performance within Egypt and Tunisia, discussed at length in chapters three and four, all draw upon examples solely from female performers and are in fact about the challenge of the female performing body to Arab and Muslim tropes within the MENA region. Again, neither author feels compelled to address the problem of the male performing body (Lengel, 2004; Zuhur, 2005; Wynn, 2007). The silence around this issue may stem from the idea that male public performances are not a challenge to the previously discussed prevailing cultural ideals within Egypt and throughout the Arab world.

The majority of literature on male belly dancers focuses on their enactment of challenges to prevailing gender discourses, as in this example by Barbara Sellers-Young:

> … John [Compton]'s performance concentrates on his ability to complete a set of acrobatic poses—backbends, splits—and dance movements while balancing a tray with six lighted candles on his head. His demeanour throughout is friendly but with a playful challenge that questions the audience's ability to successfully realize the same level of balance, flexibility, and physical dexterity…
> …John sensually dances a definition of masculinity that is as fluid as his hips and as malleable as his spine: an enactment of the body that until recently would have been associated with the feminine. (Sellers-Young, 2005: 294-295)

Sellers-Young perceives performances by Compton and by other male performers such as the all-male dance company from Portland, the Suns of the Padisha, as masculine challenges to the association of Orientalist tropes with femininity, though she also indicates that it reproduces the stereotype of Orientalist sensual exoticism (295).

Though Sellers-Young and others seek to pin down different significances based in male performance, male dancers themselves do not necessarily feel that their performances are so portentous, as my participants Zorba and Jim Boz will describe below. This desire to play down the extraordinary nature of male belly dance performance may in part stem from an attempt to negotiate access to the form by presenting themselves as prosaic parts of the dance scene, in response to a fear that if they are thought of as extraordinary, there will be a 'legitimate' reason for excluding them. However, this does not mean that male dancers are not interested in becoming informed about the history and development of belly dance, as both Zorba and Jim revealed in their interviews. Male dancers often seek historical precedent to justify their current place in dance, in the same way that dancers generally look to history to support aims they are actually enacting in the present. This example of research into historical male choreographies by dancer and academic Anthony Shay shows this interest in discovering a past in which male dancers were an integral part of the entertainment community:

> Many of the movements of these dances were extremely sensual, at least to their audiences, a fact much commented on by Europeans. Moreover, like entertainers in the West, they strove to make their dance performances unique and different…the competition between groups…was very keen. In order to compete, the dancers performed athletic feats like somersaults, back flips, hand stands, they danced balanced on knives, wrote a patron's name in rice flour on the floor with their foot as they danced, among multiple other skills (Shay, 2005b: 65)

Both Zorba and Jim cited John Compton as a guide they turned to, whether directly or from a distance, in the course of their dance development. Jim told me that as a child he saw John performing the tray dance at a Renaissance Faire in northern California, an image that clearly stayed with him as he became more involved with dance (Boz, 14 March 2009).

> …John Compton is the co-director of Hahbi'Ru, another San Francisco Bay area belly dance company referred to as tribal. John does not consistently use this designation, instead he situates his performance as a male dancer within the vernacular of the Middle East and refers to himself as a contemporary "khawal," a reference to the male dancers of 19th century Egypt. This is in opposition to American Tribal whose performance he considers to be reminiscent of a "drill team." (Sellers-Young, 2005: 293)

John characterises himself by this historical designation for a dancer, *khawal*, which in contemporary Egypt carries an additional layer of significance as slang for a gay man, something that may or may not have been an alternate meaning of the word in 19th century Egypt. Whether John is deliberately playing on this alternate meaning or not, this decision to look to the past for an appropriate description of oneself as a dancer again parallels the technique I discussed in the previous chapter of making use of pasts both real and imaginary to address needs for contemporary meanings within the dance community.

In the interviews I conducted with men, what came up frequently was how men negotiate the discourse of feminine empowerment and acceptable female sensuality that so many dancers experience as central to their attraction to dance. Generally this took the form of male choreography—how male dancers actually performed—or what roles they have in the discursive negotiation of dance normativity. The ways in which men are taught about dance was much less frequently discussed by my participants and in the literature. One interview where this did come up was with Zorba.

Figure 17: Zorba in performance with Daughters of Damascus at Rakkasah West, 15 March 2009.

In describing how he researched belly dance, Zorba told me that he did a lot of work trying to find out where men fit in the dance community. Zorba does actually subscribe to the goddess-worshipping dance origin story, perceiving himself as a guest in an art form that does not truly 'belong' to him. Zorba's position was one of philosophical acceptance.

My feeling is that there are always different theories as to the origin of a dance and that's, you know, that's one of them. And then, you know, you hear about, you know, there were male dancers in Egypt until, you know, British colonialism, blah, blah, all this sort of thing and I think there's truth behind all of it. I'm sure somewhere, sometime there was a matriarchal culture that called the dancers part of goddess worship and I've got no problem with that. And, in fact, the troupe that I'm dancing with today, the leader of the troupe is a Wiccan and she's very much goddess theory oriented. And that, it works for us so it doesn't bother me. A lot of males it would, but it doesn't bother me. (Zorba, 15 March 2009).

Zorba further indicated that he felt more comfortable than most with the goddess origin story because he is a pagan, relating most closely to the goddess Athena. As part of his research he also got in touch with John Compton, director of the California-based Tribal Style troupe Habibi'Ru. This was a theme that emerged in both his and Jim Boz's interviews; both described a process of trying to find male mentors in the dance scene and then becoming mentors for men newer to the dance scene as they became more advanced. This is also clear from Zorba's website, www.doubleveil.net, which remains one of the most comprehensive resources for both beginner and more advanced male dancers through articles written by Zorba and by others that he has solicited for the site and through extensive links to other online resources. When I asked if being male posed a particular problem through his dance career, Zorba said, "Not really." But he also went on to say that:

It puzzled some of my dance sisters in that—all the teachers, of course, know about male dancers, but, you know, some of the baby bellies[3] don't. And then some of them are puzzled. Now, one of them told me one time that she just wondered, you know, what in tarnation[4] is he doing? And, it's like, I was here to learn dance just like you are. (Zorba, 15 March 2009)

Jim Boz described a similar experience when he first began attending classes. "…so when I go to belly dance class for the first time I go, 'where's the guys?' And they're like, 'guys don't belly dance, silly!' I go, 'yeah they do - I've seen it!' [laughter]" (Boz, 14 March 2009). Jim had previously seen male dancers performing at a Renaissance Faire in northern California, so in a situation where other men may have felt intimidated or out of place when faced with such a direct challenge, Jim could fall back on previous experience for support. He indicated that the discomfort with his presence in classes was somewhat exacerbated by having started in American Tribal Style (ATS). In the previous chapter I described the commitment to feminine empowerment that ATS sometimes comprises, which could potentially lead to women feeling like their sacred

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[3] An expression in use among North American dancers to describe younger, more inexperienced dancers.
[4] North American imprecatory slang (variant of darnation.)

feminine space had been compromised by the presence of a male in class. Jim describes a common challenge he received in class and his response: "…[The girls would ask], "well how can you be a guy and do this?" It's like, I don't think you quite understand what the dance is about but, okay..." (Boz, 14 March 2009). Though Jim did not criticise the aims of the feminine empowerment discourse of American Tribal Style, he clearly felt this could be a limiting understanding of belly dance that could preclude a deeper and richer understanding of the types of meanings belly dance can be a space to explore.

Figure 18: Jim Boz dancing at Rakkasah West, 14 March 2009.

Jim also described difficulties in trying to set up all-male classes: "There wasn't enough interest and I only ever got a couple of guys." Further, Jim did not want to encroach upon the teachers already working in the area, especially those he knew through taking classes from them himself: "I didn't want to…take classes, become a teacher and then set up shop in the same area without their [approval]—so that didn't work." (Boz, 14 March 2009)[5]. However, Jim later did begin teaching at the request of one of his instructors and, unlike Zorba who does not teach because he prefers performing and does not depend on dance for a living, Jim is now one of the global dance community's most well-known teachers. Even so, he still occasionally

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[5] Melanie LeJoie also described difficulties handling the relationship with students who wished to set up their own classes when I interviewed her, something I referred to in the chapter "Sanctions: Authorise, Penalise, Globalise" (LaJoie, 6 February 2009).

encounters resistance from students who are wary of being taught what they perceive as an entirely female art form by a man:

> There are a lot of people that said, "Well you know boys can't do this." I mean, I've taught workshops in areas where the promoters have almost got me negative feedback—"How on earth could you invite a guy to come and teach this and…how horrible it is to have a man doing this" and everything, you know. Really, I'm like, "Er, hello?" (Boz, 14 March 2009)

Jim was well aware that just as in elements of the North American dance community, in the Middle East, dancing *raqs sharqi* professionally is not considered the province of men. His position was simply that he was going to do it and the more people did not like it, the more he was going to continue doing it. When I asked him why he stuck to it in the face of any discouragement he'd received he said,

> Sheer bloody mindedness! [Laughter] Not to be terribly catty but…as I was coming up I remember the very first workshop I ever taught outside of my local area, and there was another instructor there and she was just nasty to me and she would tell me in the dressing room why I'd never be a real belly dancer because I couldn't do *this* and she came off the stage when I'm waiting in the wings, and she came off the stage and she goes, "And that's how it's done" (Boz, 14 March 2009).

While he did recount these elements of struggle during our interview, Jim also made sure to bring up the great amount of support and encouragement he had received from male and female dancers alike.

When I first started my research on dance I was unaware that within Egypt the most respected Oriental dance teachers have been men. Principal examples are Mahmoud Reda, founder of the Reda Troupe, and Ibrahim Akef, who I discussed in previous chapters. Though I now appreciate that men have been significant influences on Oriental dance within the Egyptian dance community in this way, I can see how female dancers in the global dance community, and particularly those whose concept of dance revolves around the feminine spiritual empowerment model, may be unaware of this history and thus have very strong, if unsubstantiated, opinions on how men have been historically and should be now involved. It is worth noting that this model of male principal choreographer to female dancer and the power relations thereby executed is one also discussed with reference to ballet (Adair, 1992: 17, 30-31; Banes, 1998: 10). One analyst even suggests that "…[O]ne reason why women initially developed a new area—modern dance—was because of their restricted access to creative positions in the existing one" (Burt, 2007: 3).

Thus far this choreographic dynamic does not seem to have been challenged in the Egyptian performance circuit, perhaps because unlike in the formalised structure of

ballet, a dancer in Egypt can very often be her own choreographer. She certainly has a greater degree of control over the musicians than a ballerina would, for it is the dancer who usually cues the musicians, especially signalling them when to finish a song, something I observed in performances[6] as well as discussing on a number of occasions with Lorna Gow. Though the topic did not arise during our formal research interview, one example Lorna mentioned was that when she first came to visit Egypt on a trip Sara Farouk Ahmed had organised, she jumped on stage to dance during a show they had gone to see. The musicians, in a traditional song ending, began to play faster and faster. In response, Lorna began to spin more and more rapidly. She was unaware that the musicians expected her to cue them as to when to finish the song, and she ended up spinning until terminally dizzy. In her current professional capacity, Lorna also has control over whether or not she will include the portion of the show where she dances around the restaurant to take photographs with individuals in the audience or remain on the stage for the duration of her performance, something she also arranges with her musicians and the photographer during the show and which I mentioned in chapter four.

Moving on from men's participation in classes and the comparative power dynamic of males as teachers and choreographers to men's performance, Zorba informed me that his approach choreographically is that he will physically perform any movement and wear any costume that does not explicitly require being female:

> The closer that I can be in appearance to my dance sisters without looking like I'm in drag, the better. And I have pretty much a policy about that which a lot of male dancers will disagree with, but my policy is if it ain't biology, it ain't real. I don't wear a bra because I'm a guy and I don't need one, but I'll wear a skirt … there's nothing anatomically derived about a skirt. (Zorba, 15 March 2009)

Zorba's biologically based conception of gender contrasts with the Butlerian approach I have taken, in which gender is a condition continually reconstructed and enacted within social space. Zorba indicated that there are a number of movements that male dancers are often encouraged not to do:

> Don't do mayas[7]. Don't do undulations. Don't do veilwork. You know, don't do this. Don't stand this way… You know, like okay, what am I supposed to do? (Zorba, 15 March 2009)

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[6] 24th October 2008; dancer called Randa at the Aladdin restaurant in the Cairo Sheraton. (Not the famous Randa Kamil.) Randa used a hand wave to cue the musicians to end the rapid finale of a song as she spun around rapidly.

[7] A term growing in popularity to refer to an "infinity sign" shape made perpendicular to the floor by circling the hips up and down alternately: ∞ Also known as "figure eights." As with most belly dance terminology it is used inconsistently: some dancers use it to refer only to "pushing over" figure eights, where the hips form the circles by first angling up and then pushing out from the centre, some use it to indicate "scooping under", where the circles are formed by first angling down and then pulling in towards the centre, and some use it as a generic term for both techniques.

When I asked who was insisting on all these rules, Zorba replied:

> Males themselves. Most of the gals either totally grok[8] what I'm talking about or if they don't they at least accept it that it works for me. All these limitations are coming from men because guys are absolutely terrified of anything being perceived as feminine. And I see that as going back to, you know, if you look at any feminist writings about the relative value of masculine and relative value of feminine; feminine values highly and male[s are] supposedly reducing themselves to do something that is feminine whereas women can do anything that is "masculine" and nobody thinks anything about it. That's not right. Like what does a real man do? Anything he damn well pleases, just like a real woman does.

Though he did not specifically mention it, Zorba's comments could be related to Sherry Ortner's "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" (Ortner, 1972) in which she posits that women are universally treated as second-class citizens, something due to the identification of femininity with "nature" and masculinity with "culture." In such a hierarchical binary system, men devalue themselves by associating with feminine traits or symbols of femininity, but women can only gain power by appropriating emblems or behaviours originally associated with masculinity. Thus, women frequently adopt male fashions, and names once considered masculine can in a few generations be used exclusively for women, but gender-significant symbols rarely make the converse journey. While Ortner's analysis has been criticised for its transcultural, ahistorical approach (MacCormack and Strathern, 1980; Walter, 1995; Rapp, 2001; Mack-Canty, 2004), Zorba finds it a useful way of categorising masculine anxieties about being perceived as feminine within the international belly dance community. However, though he perceives this system in operation, he does not condone it and would prefer that men also felt comfortable making use of 'feminine' signifiers.

Jim's opinion was largely similar to Zorba's concerning the 'difference' in men's and women's Oriental dance:

> …there still is a general area for men's styling, but there is not a [separate] men's Oriental dance. And I've run into people like trying to teach guys and trying to perpetuate some of those old bits of information that I just discovered to be not only useless but incorrect. (Boz, 14 March 2009)

However, he did feel there were some stylistic rules that contributed to maintaining masculinity while dancing:

> Well, some of them [the 'rules'] are like, you know, men should never do undulations, men should never do hip circles—okay, now I'm kind of with that because, you know, those big, Dina big-assed circles; I don't think that those look good on a guy! [laughter] Tito…does them well, but it still makes me a

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[8] A word developed by science fiction writer Robert Heinlein in his 1969 work *Stranger in a Strange Land* to describe the fullest and most comprehensive form of empathic understanding, now used in the US simply to describe understanding or sympathy.

little uncomfortable. But I teach, for a guy, that [where] there is a place that you would do a hip circle, there's another way: you do a deep knee bend and go down and that…to me it doesn't take away from the strength and masculinity of the dance.

To close, Zorba's approach to gender and dance is essentially biologically based, though not in the sense of biological differentiation between the sexes.

…[T]here's no such things as tall dancers versus short dancers dancing. There's no difference between fat dancers and skinny dancers dancing although these types of dancers do dance a little bit differently because they're built a little different. And therefore it stands that there's no difference between masculine and feminine dancers other than, you know, the differences that are going to be put in it anyway just like there is between all short, tall, skinny, fat and that kind of thing. And so I don't buy all this emphasis on, you know, don't do this move, don't do that move. And it's just a bunch of rule books that you find everywhere and if you paid attention to all of them there wouldn't be any dance left.

In this sense, Zorba seems to be advocating a position of not paying an undue amount of attention to the discursive process that the international dance community engages in if that process in any way limits a dancer's sense of possibility, though as I showed above, both Zorba and Jim did look to other male members of the dance community for support and currently provide that same support for newer male dancers.

In accordance with Judith Butler's conception of gender as something that is neither entirely the result of intention in the actor nor of the perceptions of the 'audience,' but rather that resides somewhere in between, I discussed perceptions of male belly dancers with my female as well as my male participants. It was most interesting to discuss the position of male dancers within the belly dance community because this was where my subjects' opinions varied most widely. Yet it was also the topic where they were least likely to elaborate on their beliefs without prompting, as though their feelings were so obvious or universally accepted that they needed no explanation. This can be compared to the naturalisation of gender ideology: while in fact we engage in efforts to construct, create and uphold gendered categories, we speak and think of them as though they are "natural" and need no explanation (Butler, 1990; Butler, 1997; Connell, 2000; Demetriou, 2001; Butler, 2004; Breen and Blumenfeld, 2005). My participants also appeared to feel that their beliefs were "natural" and therefore held by all, and would not need justification or explanation.

The most widely held view was that people who want to dance should be able to dance and it is free to everyone. However, this comes with the caveat that most of the women had strong reservations about the performances of male dancers they had seen. While they did not want to deny people's freedom in dancing, and several subscribed to the view that the feminine-centric origin story of belly dance was erroneous conjecture

and that therefore there is no historical basis for men not to dance, on the whole they just did not like watching men dance. Participants cited several reasons for this opinion: some male performers are overly effeminate and therefore not enjoyable, or certain movements they do are stylistically too feminine even if they are enjoyable to watch overall; men get too much credit and approbation when they get up on stage for their actual level of skill and therefore they are not pushed to try as hard; male belly dance is 'still in development' and there is a long way to go before there is a real standard the way there is for women. Eleanor Keen and Nafeeseh Rahi-Young told me that they talk about the position of men in dance frequently, both as dance enthusiasts and in their capacity as managers of the monthly hafla and showcase Saqarah in London. Though they expressed personal reservations about certain aspects of male performance and audience dynamic, Saqarah does invite male dancers perform. When I interviewed Eleanor and Nafeeseh in Cairo in November 2008 Eleanor said:

> In an ideal world I like to see male belly dancers like you have in flamenco where the woman has a role that's very feminine and the man has a role that's very masculine and yet they are doing complementary, if not the same, moves. And yet, the majority of the guys I've seen in belly dance look like gay guys trying to emulate women. And that isn't something I need to see. It's not something I feel is part of what I do. And I don't think it sort of sits with the essence of belly dance, personally. (Keen and Rahi-Young, 20 November 2008)

Eleanor refers not only to choreographic choices and physical movements, but also to costuming, a view Nafeeseh also expressed in the interview. They both felt that unlike women, male dancers do not have a clearly defined aesthetic tradition in terms of what they wear and their choreographic aesthetic paradigms on the stage. She indicated that she enjoys watching masculine dancers, but feels that they get too much acclaim for their skill level compared to women. She and Nafeeseh had strong feelings on this, particularly with regard to behaviours they believe that men get cheered for while a woman would have been censured for. They concluded by saying that until a reliable body of male teachers builds up, men will have difficulty crafting a fully developed style of their own (Keen and Rahi-Young, 20 November 2008).

This view was emblematic of that articulated by the majority of my female research participants[9]. A similar opinion was that of Kitty, who stated the general consensus that everyone is free to do as they like, but personally, she said,

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[9] Another source for gauging opinion on such matters is the public commentary on YouTube videos of male belly dancers, a source I do not wish to cite at length in this chapter because such commentary deserves a more complete examination of its own.

> I like male dancer[s]...when they are real, really men, when they show it, because as a woman, I really like to see this. But if I see a man who is not really giving me this impression of being a real man, I don't feel it. There is few dancer [sic], male dancer, who are gays, and who are really good dancers, really much better than woman, but I don't feel it, so it doesn't bring me any happiness, or even if I can see that they are great, but still, as a person, I don't feel it. (Kitty, 14 November 2008).

Here Kitty is engaging in gender classification as well as simply indicating a preference: according to Kitty, 'real' men adhere to a masculine (and by extension heterosexual) framework. Therefore, male persons who behave effeminately or give off feminine signals, are not really men. This conception of gender is in contrast with Zorba's biological definition outlined above. This ideology allows for a derivative understanding of how individuals' genders are endowed with meaning both through performance and through the understandings brought to such performances by others, much as in Butler's contributions to gender theory outlined earlier in this chapter. However, it is still a rigid understanding that withholds approbation from men who fail to pass the 'real man' test (though she did indicate that, like most of my participants, she would tolerate such performances even if not growing enthusiastic about them). This framework might explain why professional male entertainers in Egypt tend to perform mainly folkloric dance styles: these are perceived as having more masculine, athletic qualities than the movements found within Oriental dance. For a discussion of legitimising male dance through aligning it with the masculine concepts of athleticism and virility, see Michael Gard (Gard, 2001; Gard, 2006). Melanie LaJoie, owner of the A Magi Dance Studio and manager of the A Magi Dance Troupe in Orlando, Florida, said of one dancer, "He dances like a woman and he looks like a wrestler. It's just… [sighs] it's too freaky for me." She went on to indicate that she would love to see a dancer who "can make it look like a real dance, to really show that male side of dance" (LaJoie, 6 February 2009), sentiments which together reflect the dominant wish for a very dualistic expression of gender onstage. Lyssa Poole, dance student at the Hip Expressions studio in Saint Petersburg Florida, expressed a difficulty perceiving the choreographic motions of belly dance as heterosexually masculine when performed on the male body: "This first dancer I saw, he was doing tribal [American Tribal Style] and I kind of started laughing, and I said to myself, if that man is straight, I will do something [unclear]. There is no way, not that that's bad" (Poole, 28 January 2009). Like the majority of my participants, Lyssa was not opposed to the idea of men in dance regardless of their sexuality, and indeed she had taken active steps to learn about choreographing differently for men in the eventuality that she would someday teach

them, but as seen in the quote above she did perceive choreography as a vehicle for obtaining cues about a male performer's sexuality.

These statements, which I believe reflect more general opinion throughout the international dance community, seem to indicate that women feel belly dance should be a space to express heightened gender roles; exaggerated versions of masculinity or femininity that reflect dominant heterosexualised understandings of these roles within 'Western' society, whose predominating gender values are globalised throughout the international dance community along with other 'Western' cultural exports. This desire contrasts with John Compton's and Stavros Stavrou Karayanni's approach in which dance is a sphere to explore alternative expressions of gender identity that are sublimated by heterosexist discourse[10]. Strongly dualistic gender expression, which appears to be what the majority of my female participants want during dance performance, would be an aesthetic reflective of prevailing heterosexualised discourse. However, even for dancers seeking an arena in which to investigate and construct alternatives to this gender hegemonic system, this may not be a bad thing in and of itself. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler tells us that the repetition of heterosexualised aesthetic performances ought not to be stopped, though she also questions whether such performances can be utilised in a subversive way:

> That the power regimes of heterosexism and phallogocentrism seek to augment themselves through a constant repetition of their logic, their metaphysic, and their naturalized ontologies does not imply that repetition itself ought to be stopped—as if it could be. If repetition is bound to persist as the mechanism of the cultural reproduction of identities, then the crucial question emerges: What kind of subversive repetition might call into question the regulatory practice of identity itself? (Butler, 1990: 42)

As I indicated above, the majority of the women I interviewed expressed a desire for an onstage heteronormatively gendered world in which men perform a masculinity that is in choreographic opposition to female (and feminised) performance. Analysing this attitude with reference to one feminist discourse on drag that Butler discusses in *Gender Trouble* is revealing. Butler indicates that drag, cross-dressing, and what she terms the "sexual stylisation" of the butch/femme dichotomy can be viewed as a parody of the idea that there is an original gender identity from whence to copy.

> Within feminist theory, such parodic identities have been understood to be either degrading to women…or an uncritical appropriation of sex-role stereotyping from within the practice of heterosexuality (Butler, 1990: 174-175).

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[10] This heteronormative discourse is also operational in the Egyptian context as a 'home-grown' paradigm as well as from received globalized ideology, as I shall discuss below.

Though the performers that my female participants described as dancing in a 'feminine' (or in a 'non-straight') style may not be deliberately engaging in a parodic challenge to feminine identities, I believe that some female dancers may perceive this as an appropriation of behaviours and aesthetics that by rights should belong to them.

Another common objection to male dancers, expressed here by Eleanor and Nafeeseh, was any occasion when they felt male performers played to the baser instincts of their (largely female) audiences:

> N: There's one in particular in the UK…He'll get to a certain part and rip his top off.
> E: (Seems to be demonstrating movement.)
> N: And women go crazy. They know it's coming and it's like, "This isn't Chippendales." This isn't a strip show. I didn't come here for this, I came here for dancing. And we both know for a fact that [he] can actually dance, but he doesn't do it, he just plays........
> E: He just plays.
> N: ......with the crowd. And if a woman did that, we'd be going, "Slut."
> N: You know, if a man does it, all the women go crazy and so....
> E: One guy, in a scene like this, he went up and he shimmied his butt in [a woman's] face and we're like, "That's just wrong!"
> N: If a woman did that to a man—OH MY GOD—it would just be awful. They get away with a lot more and the crowd reacts to them a lot more. I find it patronising the way that the crowd reacts.

Similarly, Sarah Farouk Ahmed expressed discomfort with the dichotomy between the way crowds react to a female and to a male performer:

> You find quite often if you go to a hafla or something like that, the audience is mainly women. A man will get up on stage and do something and the women will be screaming with delight. But if a woman got up and did exactly the same thing they would just be watching. And that's kind of odd, because it's like the tables are sort of turned and I find that slightly uncomfortable. (Ahmed, 14 October 2008).

These performances do in fact reflect dominant heterosexist constructions of masculinity with reference to the female gaze, but they are still not emblematic of what most of my participants considered appropriate expressions of masculinity within the sphere of dance. However, this is in part due to the reaction of the audience, rather than the intentions of the dancer himself. The overt expression of female sexual desire on the part of the audience could still be considered a socially transgressive act[11] and it is this, coupled with the discursive response to such approbation by the dancer, that appears to be the focus of the disapproval and disquiet experienced by my participants. As I said above nearly all my female research participants were not impressed with the majority of male belly dancers that they saw. I referred to Kitty's assertion that, like the

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[11] One that would fit the model of dance as a place to explore aspects of the self outside everyday social norms.

majority of my research participants, she prefers to watch a highly gender-differentiated performance, with men performing in a strongly masculine way. She went on to explain that in Egypt, a desire for obvious sex differentiation among dance participants was common: "For here, if you dance as a man, you're a man, but if you dance as a woman, you're not a man any more, so they're not going to like you. This is the story" (Kitty, 14 November 2008). Sara Farouk Ahmed corroborated this attitude when she indicated that some Egyptians would never describe male performers as dancing as *raqs sharqi*, "Oriental dance". "The only men who perform Oriental dance in Egypt are female impersonators. I mean, Egyptian men don't *perform* Oriental dance. It's unheard of here. It's seen as a woman's dance. It's about women" (Ahmed, 14 October 2008). Sara did indicate a contrasting attitude to social dance in Egypt: unlike in Sara's native UK, men in Egypt can dance socially without calling into question their masculinity, and indeed can often enhance their perceived masculinity through social dance or through performing folkloric dance. Performances of masculinity actually can be corroborated through social dancing in the UK as well, but one thread of popular perception is that dancing, or at least admitting enjoying dancing in a non-ironic way, is always an 'unmanly' activity.

I was not surprised that an Egyptian audience would have the attitudes I described above to men performing onstage because they reflects Egyptian approaches to construction of gender roles within society as I discussed in chapters three and four. Academic references to the attitudes of Egyptian audiences to the gender identity of male performers are uncommon. Karin van Nieuwkerk's study indicates that "There are no male belly dancers any more—only male folk dancers…They are not highly esteemed, yet this is not on account of their immorality but because they do 'women's work'" (Nieuwkerk, 1995: 132). While conducting my fieldwork I did see one Egyptian male performer at the Nile Group Oriental Dance Festival at the Pyramiza Hotel in Doqqi on 19 November 2008, which included an audience of both Egyptian and international participants[12]. I unfortunately have no record of this performer's name. He did not perform in a folkloric style and was not wearing the traditional folkloric outfit of a gallabeyia and a loose turban, but rather used choreographies that would normally be considered exclusively within the domain of *raqs sharqi* and wore bellbottom-style trousers bedecked with spangles and a pink sheer mesh shirt. Though

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[12] World famous dancer and teacher Tito Seif was also there; he did not formally perform but he did some impromptu dancing on the stage along with other festival participants before the show began—in contrast to the other male dancer, Tito's style is much more folkloric and perceived as much more aligned with the hegemonic 'masculine' ideal.

technically skilled as any of his female counterparts that evening, his performance was received by the audience as an 'unsuccessful' performance of masculinity, one that, in accordance with Kitty's conditional statement above, caused a lukewarm reception among the audience.

These attitudes may be another way of understanding the reluctance on the part of female dancers in the international dance community to embrace non-heteronormative aesthetics within belly dance: having adopted other 'Oriental' aesthetic tropes and even moral understandings of what is choreographically and socially appropriate for a dancer in a Middle Eastern audience, dancers of the international community may be seeking to parallel 'Eastern' understandings in this way as well. Melanie LeJoie said that though she did teach male dancers privately, she preferred not to host mixed-gender classes. She listed several male dancers she enjoyed watching and also gave a few examples of those she did not, finally saying:

> The male side is more folkloric, I think, and the female side is much more feminine. To me, this is where a woman can be the goddess, this is where she can tap into that goddess part of herself and feel good about her body and feel good about what her body is doing and feel good about what it's doing to her body too. …You know, this dance started anciently, in the ancient times, as a dance for women, as a dance celebrating women being able to give birth to children, that being a miracle in itself. And then, later on, it started merging more with the folklore and the culture, and men started doing it also, I believe (LaJoie, 6 February 2009).

This understanding of the folkloric dances and choreography as masculine and the 'Oriental' style of cabaret dancing as feminine may be a reflection of this attempt to replicate ("ancient") Middle Eastern aesthetic tropes, which replicate modes of gendered understanding in the Middle East.

Women's Embodiment and the Importance of Audience Understanding

Particularly for women, drawing attention to the body and thence to sexuality can be either empowering or objectifying and demeaning. While belly dance is perceived throughout the world by many in the non-dance population as in the second category along with, for example, pole dancing, burlesque, and stripping, belly dancers themselves quite emphatically feel that they are empowered by their dance and draw very firm distinctions between themselves and those 'other' dancers, as I discussed earlier in chapter four's section "Normative Expectations of Gendered and Sexualised Behaviour". This further reflects the dynamic I expressed earlier using the example of Sugarman's article on Prespa women of Albania. This kind of attitude can be seen in

statements like Melanie LeJoie's: "I have an approach to it [belly dance] and an attitude towards it, that it isn't a striptease, burlesque thing, that it actually…allows you to be a better woman" (LaJoie, 6 February 2009). Clearly Melanie's implication is that burlesque and striptease would not allow one to be a better woman. Some of my other interviewees were firm about distinguishing between these styles of dance, but were less firm on the idea that burlesque was in itself a bad thing, like Zorba, who I quoted earlier in chapter four's section "Conventions and Resistance":

> Well, you know, I haven't got a problem with burlesque dancers. Burlesque can be just cute as hell. I just think you shouldn't be doing burlesque and call it belly dance. If you're doing a burlesque-belly fusion, label it that…because there's so much misconception about our dance form in the first place in the general public (Zorba, 15 March 2009).

Eleanor and Nafeeseh were of a very similar opinion:

> E: We can't have burlesque in belly dance and, in our opinion, they shouldn't be on the same stage. We LOVE burlesque.
> N: Yes.
> E and N: But just not together.

The only respondent who discussed the idea of creatively connecting with burlesque in her own performance was the American Tribal Style (ATS) dancer Lacey Sanchez, who principally appeared to be inspired by a new burlesque-influenced fashion in the ATS scene for long frilly bloomers instead of the more traditional loose-bottomed trousers that draw in tightly at the ankles, known to dancers throughout the global dance community as harem pants (Sanchez, 4 February 2009). Though it did not come up in our interview, I did also see Hip Expressions studio co-owner Johanna Xenobia Krynytzky perform what she labelled a belly dance-jazz fusion on the evening of the studio opening on 17 January 2009, a performance which, with its feather fans and swinging saxophone-centred music, some may have described as containing an element of burlesque.

To some degree, the firm categorical distinction belly dancers draw between themselves and dancers they perceive as more objectified is due to this phenomenon of wanting to align themselves with certain cultural values, but there is also a real element of difference. This difference is principally caused by the audience environment during belly dance events. Unlike burlesque dancers, strippers, and pole dancers, belly dance events take place in a principally female environment dominated by audiences of people who are themselves dancers or who are socially connected to dancers[13]. This could be

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[13] I have casually observed an increasing trend for teaching pole dancing as fitness and burlesque dancing as a feminist, self-empowering exercise in the United States and Great Britain in the past ten years, a trend which echoes Sugarman's observation of female dancers appropriating many different styles of

seen in the light of Susan Bennett's categorisation of "constituency" audiences, those that are seeking performance models alternative to predominant theatre institutions and norms (Bennett, 1997: 58). Bennett uses the example of emerging feminist theatre in the 1970s and 1980s, something that would parallel the development of a feminist-conscious belly dance scene in the United States, as documented by Anthony Shay and Barbara Sellers-Young (Shay and Sellers-Young, 2005: 11-19). I have repeatedly stated that dance is a place outside ordinary life for women to explore alternative constructions of femininity that may include expressions of sexualised femininity that are inexpressible in daily life. I believe this holds true for women in Egypt as well as those in the globalised belly dance community, but especially for the latter, as I discussed in the previous chapter with reference to the fantastical aesthetic tropes that belly dance provides an opportunity to explore. Christy Adair describes the dualistic nature of dance, in which it both enforces dominant gender paradigms through its employment power structure and its display of the female body, as well as and providing a space for resistance to these same norms through creative fantasy, a space which is truly subjective and cannot be "colonised" by external interests or expectations (Adair, 1992: 31). For this reason there is a tension between trying on the alternative expressions of femininity in a supportive environment principally consisting of women who are also experiencing the same impulses and doing so when faced with an audience whose estimation of the performance and the performer is based principally in bodily objectification and who will not be responsive to the idea of the dancer as subject, as the one driving and guiding the performance. Bennett encapsulates this view of performance, in opposition to dance's role as a fantastical introspective force, when she says, "A performance can activate a diversity of responses, but it is the audience which finally ascribes meaning and usefulness to any cultural product" (Bennett, 1997: 156).

Throughout this chapter I have utilised Butler's idea that gender performance is not merely predicated on the agency and intentions of the performer, but also depends on the expectations and reactions of those receiving the performance. In belly dance, the intentions and expectations of what dance signifies to both dancer and audience are often felicitously aligned, regardless of the audience's reaction to an individual's personal performance. By this I mean that though dancers may criticise one another's performances choreographically, it will rarely be for the reason that the dance form they have chosen is bodily degrading to the individual—a criticism that would be

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dance in order to shift the boundaries of femininity. In these amateur teaching and learning situations, pole dancing and burlesque may more closely resemble the belly dance dynamic than in more traditional professional settings.

nonsensical from a person who has also chosen to enact the same form and to commit to community values concerning that form.

Belly dancers' choices to engage with a community-oriented approach to dance, instead of a purely choreographic one in which they do not allow dance to affect other areas of their lives, affects the performer-audience dynamic and the significance of choreographic embodiment. When decontextualised from these aspects, the movements in themselves would have very different layers of meaning than those it takes on as a result of the choices I just described. As Christy Adair says:

> The understanding of how meanings are produced includes a recognition of active spectatorship. This offers particular cultural groups the opportunity of producing alternative readings of dominant images which are based on different shared codes, experiences and conventions (Adair, 1992: 76)

Dancers' continuing engagement with discourse surrounding belly dance, analysed in previous chapters, shows a motivation on their part to control the layers of meaning that their bodies signify. The fact that the audiences of belly dance events in the international community are principally made up of dancers themselves means that these attempts during choreographic events (as opposed to the other discursive processes in which belly dancers engage) have much greater chances of success. I believe this holds true even on occasions where dancers are not principal audience members, because dancers feel that there is a community ready with support and advice to which they can turn when they do experience dissonance between their performance intentions and those that the audience wishes to project upon them. This support comes both indirectly, from reading books, articles in trade magazines and on blogs or websites devoted specifically to belly dance like bhuz.com or shira.net, and directly from mentors in the dance community. I saw examples of this mentoring in Lorna Gow's long-standing interest and eventual settling in Cairo, facilitated by her mentor and teacher Sara Farouk Ahmed. Lorna went on to advise and assist my research participant S when S first moved to Cairo looking for work as a professional dancer. Lorna eventually helped her find a place working on a dinner boat not far from her own. Melanie LaJoie keeps a photograph of her first teacher, Vina Haddad, up in her studio in testament to the guidance she received as a young dancer. With such reinforcements to their self-image, dancers can more easily stay true to their choreographic purposes when faced with the task of creating meaning for an audience who comes to the performance with an internal set of cultural contexts over which the dancers have limited or no control.

Conclusions

While some attention has been paid to performance studies and the embodiment of gender, largely this has focused on theatrical performance that is grounded in text or on theories of the gaze derived from film studies, both of which lack the community basis found among dancers both hobbyist and professional. The gendered experiences and constructions of non-verbal productions have thus far largely been ignored, and where a theoretical eye has been turned to these performance spaces, it has principally focused on femaleness and shifting constructions of femininity. Dance as a space for men to express and in which to challenge prevailing gender norms remains an emerging field, one that deserves greater scholarly attention like that provided by Ramsay Burt in *The Male Dancer: Bodies, Spectacle, Sexualities* (2007). Burt, though, is focused on Western theatrical dance and as such his study is not informed by dance that takes place in social situations (nor on non-Western traditions and developments arising from those). Nevertheless, while the academic literature about this phenomenon is still in the process of being formulated, men who belly dance do discuss with one another the role that dance plays in their lives, and they do seek information from textual sources on the position of men in dance, something that will hopefully assist in the development of a theoretical body of work about men in dance generally.

Similarly, dance scholars have not often taken a comparative approach to examine how different types of dance may have different significances in a given individual's life. My female participants were especially apt to compare their choreographic and aesthetic styles with other types of dance in order to distinguish the type of femininity with which they wished to be aligned from the 'other' kind. However, it appears to be largely the shared community ethics of the international belly dance community that help dancers feel empowered and liberated by dance, rather than any specific aesthetic or choreographic differences. It is this community spirit that prevents belly dancers from feeling objectified or immobilised into a singular bodily-centred interpretation of what they are performing. This, the manner in which a supportive community can be a means for negotiating constructions of the self when faced with the gaze of the audience which is outside the performer's control, is also an area that has yet to inspire an adequate body of theoretical literature in performance studies or anthropology. Some parallels can be found with examinations of theatres that "work outside dominant roles of representation" (Bennett, 1997: 17). Audiences for these types of theatre (or dance) are not drawn together from the success or failure of the performance itself alone, but also obtain fulfilment through the experiences that

surround attending such a performance. In the case of belly dancers, this might include the markets for new costumes and so forth that often attend belly dance events, but it will also most likely include the joy of being able to speak freely and at length about dance with others who, on a deeper level than is conventional to their everyday lives, share this joy. Bennett describes this confluence between the goals and desires of the performers and that of those receiving the performance as a "correlation of cultural codes", saying that "…[T]he oppositional practice of some theatre companies (particularly feminist, lesbian and gay, or ethnic-identified groups) has relied on a similar correlation of codes" (Bennett, 1997: 26). The main distinctions I would draw between this model and the one I have attempted to present in this chapter are first, that the theatre groups to which Bennett refers are not necessarily community theatre groups who may include non-professionals in their stage productions, while belly dance events are more often than not made up of amateurs as well as professionals, if not entirely so. Secondly, though dancers may experience a strong sense of community through local, national and international connections they form, these are often much looser coalitions than those exemplified by formalised theatrical companies. Some are tightly-run professional organisations, such as the Belly Dance Superstars, but much of the community sense experienced by my research participants appeared to be predicated by much more informal connections, like meeting and becoming friends at a local hafla.

My male participants were more cognisant of their own impact on the dance community at large than my female participants: the men were aware that they personally may have had an impact on the way male dancers are perceived through their interactions with other students, audience members, and the worldwide network of dancers who communicate on the web. Both Jim and Zorba indicated that they felt the situation had shifted and the community as a whole is now growing more comfortable with the idea of male dancers. There remains a tension surrounding how a dance form widely perceived to be a vehicle for feminine empowerment can accommodate masculinity and embodied maleness (though Jim and Zorba's position was basically that they themselves felt no anxiety about it and they didn't care about the opinions of anybody who did.)

Even more intriguingly, one of the main unresolved tensions that came up in interviews with participants was not embodied masculinity within belly dance, but male dancers embodying a feminine style. It appears to be impossible to resolve one of these tensions without engaging the other: male dancers could choose to experience belly dance solely as a place to explore femininity, reserving it as a specifically feminine

arena. However, I cannot envision male dancers, my participants specifically but also well-known male members of the dance community like Tariq Sultan, abandoning their masculine conceptions of belly dance. Moreover, this would not satisfy those who expressed a desire to see a more masculine style of dance rather than men dancing in a feminised style. Alternatively, dancers who perceive belly dance as a venue for the sacred feminine in modern life, as a sacrosanct venue for exploring feminine power, could adjust their view to permit masculine readings of belly dance. While there is evidence that the dance community as a whole is moving away from the conception of belly dance as a singularly feminine and specifically female activity, there are still dancers for whom the male dancing body feels like a hostile invasion. Clearly any change on that score must come from within those individuals and an attempt to impose such a change from the outside would be unsuccessful.

I would never seek to undermine an individual's personal fulfilment from what they get out of dance. Considering the wide range of needs and desires expressed by dancers in the interviews I conducted as well as personal statements in books, blogs, and on listservs, I suggest that the most likely possibility is that belly dance will remain a permanent site of contestation, an open coalition category in the Butlerian model I described in the previous chapter, a place where dance can concurrently hold several different meanings.

CONCLUSIONS

We dance round in a ring and suppose, but the secret sits in the middle and knows.
Robert Frost "The Secret Sits", 1942

Dance ethnographer Adrienne Kaeppler states that that movement systems of all types and particularly dances are "…cultural artefacts, which, in their specific combinations and uses, belong to a specific culture or subculture and can be activated for specific purposes" (Kaeppler, 1999: 15). I agree in part; however, my own research argues that through the processes of globalisation movements generated within the context of one community may migrate into new and unexpected places where they can take on new ranges of meaning. Further, understandings of what such movements mean can be used in conjunction with or opposition to discourses about movement systems extant within the 'receiving' culture. This thesis has been an attempt to address how and why particular movements migrate across cultures as well as the ways in which movements and their meanings are altered in the process. In order to examine those phenomena, I assessed the movement system which is often called 'belly dance' as the locus of an international community defined by a mutual interest rather than geography, political affiliations, or shared cultural history. In the introduction I raised four key research questions that encompass the major aims of my research. My concluding analysis of these four major questions is presented below, supplemented by closing thoughts about secondary themes that arose during the course of my research.

The relationship between dance, anthropology, and performance studies is still in a state of flux and clearly my conclusions are informed by the theoretical framework I chose. Had this project grown out of the departments of Cultural Studies, Gender Studies, Performance Studies or a Dance department, my results obviously would have been formed by quite different theoretical tropes. Dance anthropology in general and research in the Middle East/North Africa region in particular would benefit from continuing to grow and generating greater synthesis between philosophical positions from different academic disciplines. Empirically, thus far work on Oriental dance in the Middle East has principally focused on Cairo. I have argued a number of historical reasons for this, principally in chapter four, "Transmission and Learning: Building the Dance". Some existing studies of this type of professional dance also focus on Turkey (Potuoglu-Cook, 2006) and small-scale studies on dance in social contexts in the Gulf and North Africa have also been produced (Berger, 1961; Faruqi, 1978; Campbell, 1998; Kent and Franken, 1998; Young, 1998; Adra, 2001; Adra, 2005). My hope is that

these regions will continue to spark the interest of researchers and that more in-depth, long term studies will begin to grow.

Engaging with Theory

Dance ethnographers, like anthropologists, sociologists, geographers and other denizens of Area Studies, are finding it increasingly necessary to address globalisation and transnational cultural issues. "A new generation of students has emerged whose environments oscillate between the local and the global…whose experiences and identities transcend those of mono-nationalism" (Buckland, 1999: 3). This allows dance and performance studies more generally to rethink the perception of aesthetic paradigms embodied by certain types of dance, what Buckland identifies as "western theatre art dance" (2), as 'neutral'; as that to which all 'other' forms of dance are in opposition. In much the same way that the emergence of the critically theoretical positions taken by feminist and women's studies caused a 'contestation of knowledge' within the social sciences and humanities that resulted in a challenge to the former academic paradigm of objectivity as I discussed in chapter three, "Dance and Theory: Research as Argument and Serendipity", this challenge within dance studies ultimately results in scholars engaging with multiple layers of subjectivities.

A related theme that emerged in my research was the question of how to negotiate cultural specificity in a globalised world where cultures and cultural products operate in and around one another, a world in which it is necessary to navigate a number of differing cultural discourses at the same time. In many ways this situation nothing new, as Foucault pointed out when discussing conflicting discourses of power operating in and around one another (Foucault, 1990; Foucault, 1991; Foucault, 2000). However, in the post-colonial era, there is no longer a simplistic power model between the producers and the consumers of cultural capital (Rajan, 1993; Abu-Lughod, 1998a; Chowdhry and Nair, 2002; Lewis and Mills, 2003). Rather, cultural artefacts can come from literally anywhere and, enabled by physical vehicles and electronic media that allow such artefacts to be transmitted internationally with increasing ease, they can end up anywhere else. I had this brought home to me in Luxor as I walked down the street for the first time in April 2008 to find that several of the men touting felucca rides and working in market stalls were wearing Bob Marley shirts and listening to reggae. It is a mark of my still developing understanding of cultural consumption and globalisation that at the time I did not find it strange that American products like Coca-Cola and McDonald's were available everywhere, but I experienced a moment of cognitive

dissonance when encountering Jamaican music instead of local *balady* pop music in Luxor[1].

Reflecting the first major research question, how gender theory can provide a framework for analysing the development of identity-forming cultural phenomena, gender theory contributed to my thinking about dance in several ways. First in chapter three, through my use of contestable categories as a space for not resolving but becoming comfortable with the lack of fixity about major identity issues within the belly dance community. Principally, I used this to discuss what dance should or should not be called, as well as borrowing this concept to consider how to reconcile discourses about authenticity with artistic freedom and development. Butler's attitude to the imagination, of the realm of fantasy, as something that is not merely internal but which informs our approaches to projecting images of the self outward onto the world was also a substantial foundation of my thinking (Butler, 2004: 28-29). I utilised it in chapter four, "Transmission and Learning: Building the Dance" to analyse fantastical visions of 'the Orient' that dancers in the international community engage with as well as their combination with local cultural tropes, which also relates to Anne Rassmusen's exploration of utilising Orientalist fantasy in American Middle Eastern music and dance clubs from the 1950s to the 1980s, Barbara Sellers-Young's examination of the hybrid fantasy and Orientalist tropes of American Tribal Style dance, and Kelly's discussion of negotiating global and local paradigms in the New Zealand belly dance community (Rasmussen, 2005; Sellers-Young, 2005; Kelly, 2008). I also use the Butlerian idea of fantasy in chapter five, "Gender Choreology," for the principal application for which she developed it, to examine how individuals perform and audiences receive performances of gender. However, where she uses "performance" as a means for describing the everyday action of creating gender, analogising it to the processes in operation during theatrical performance, I am referring to gendered performances that take place literally onstage (Butler, 2004: 204-231).

Butler's examination of gender performance and understandings of what a successful performance are also contribute to a discussion about where meaning in performance is generated, along with developments from dance and performance studies (Adair, 1992; Bennett, 1997). This takes place in chapter five in a discussion of how

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[1] My time in Cairo, both during that initial research trip and my subsequent living there from September through November of that year, involved frequent (virtually continuous in public places) 'overhearings' of Egyptian pop music playing—or being sung by people—in restaurants, on car radios, and on stereos in the small kiosks selling cigarettes, tissues and candy. The reggae was genuinely unusual, but still highlights my point that products from a range of cultures transcend traditional colonialist models of production and consumption.

belly dancers especially in North America and Europe negotiate standards of behaviour related to female public performance and how they contrast their experiences with those of dancers in other 'questionable' categories like burlesque artists and pole dancers. Belly dancers in the international community are aware that their art has the potential, in the public mind, to be classified with these other types of dance and most wish to separate themselves from the negative associations that go hand-in-hand with these 'other' types of dance. This relates to Sugarman's analysis of utilising different styles of dance to situate the female dancing body as either upholding or challenging normative social tropes of female sexuality and bodily display (Sugarman, 2003). As I argue throughout my thesis, dancers challenge existing conceptions of appropriate female sexuality and explorations of the definition of femininity, but they do so by creating a space outside ordinary life and adopting differing conventions for that space than they would in their ordinary lives. Some feminist discourses would cast this as problematic: how can dancers challenge restrictive prevailing social discourses if they are creating a space *outside* those existing paradigms in order to act against them? Further, to combat the negative association of belly dance with unacceptable expressions of sexuality, dancers contrast themselves with other female dancers operating in different aesthetic tropes, colluding in a dichotomy that requires privileging one form of women's experience over another.

However, as has been demonstrated on numerous occasions, there is no single feminism that can encompass the goals and needs of all women, nor can any single movement speak to a universalised 'women's experience'. As such, the differing approaches to the goals and the tools of feminism would evaluate these problems and arrive at distinct solutions. The flaws in a singular universalised feminist paradigm has been shown, among other ways, in the challenges to feminist separatism in the 1960s and 1970s that arose out of a need for engaging with the interaction between discourses about gender, race, and class (Smith, 2000; Bhavnani, 2001; Lewis and Mills, 2003). In a way, the creation of a separate space through the aesthetics and praxis of belly dance in the international dance community to explore alternative discourses of femininity echoes the feminist separatist movement of the 1960s and 1970s. However, as I said, the strategy of such separatism was challenged on the grounds that this vision failed to recognise the multiplicity of normative structures and processes within society that women must negotiate. One benefit of a having external sites for reflecting on the problematic discourses in which we operate is that these allow challenges to such discourses that might be prohibited in the course of enacting them in ordinary practice.

A difficulty I already touched on is the fact that discourses do not operate in vacuums: once the discoveries had or new strategies developed in such removed spaces are brought back into ordinary life, new conundrums can emerge from the interactions of these fresh strategies intended to challenge existing problematics. For this reason, the fantastical realm that belly dance provides must be used in the Butlerian sense of a trope that is not bounded to internal (in this case, internal to the dance community) constructions of self. Rather, in order for this space to be constructive, it must be a liminal area whose boundaries are porous with normative, everyday categories of being. Given that, as I discussed in chapter four as well as in chapter two under the heading "Conventions and Resistance", dancers' lives are informed on a multiple levels by dance, I can conclude that this process is already in operation, and I believe dancers in the international community will benefit from further active reflections on and discussions of how dance informs their daily lives as well as being an escape from or an oppositional category to their daily experiences.

The majority of belly dancers clearly perceive themselves as engaging in something positive and empowering while deeming some other forms of dance as eliding closer to an interpretation of the female body[2] with which they would rather not associate their own art form. In part this stems from a desire to be 'true' to Oriental dance's Middle Eastern roots: the aesthetic paradigms and choreographic tropes of burlesque and striptease do not have a history there. To keep the two separate, even when, like Eleanor Keen, Nafeeseh Rahi-Young, and Zorba, dancers also enjoy watching burlesque or perceive these other forms of dance as potential sites for female sexual empowerment, is their way of marking their cultural understanding and respect for the Middle East as well as their desire to prevent public confusion about what this dance is and what it means. Further, dancers often stress the emphasis on spirituality and the sacred feminine that is found in the international belly dance community. As I discussed in chapter two, there is a lack of historical evidence for dance being utilised in this way in the Middle East (Dox, 2005; Shay, 2005b) and some academic scholars very strongly object to this emphasis on the ground that it sometimes can be used as a vehicle for denying a place for men in dance (Karayanni, 2004; Shay and Sellers-Young, 2005). However, this emphasis on feminine empowerment through the spiritualised nature of belly dance is certainly something that many contemporary belly dancers have found personally important. I believe it does facilitate mediating dancers' concerns about how

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[2] While, as I discussed principally in chapter five, the male dancing body is problematic within the understandings of the belly dance community, it is so for very different reasons than those under discussion.

to approach their own dance experiences as challenging existing discourses of feminine expressions of sexuality while still remaining 'honourable', unlike the forms of dance with which they contrast themselves. The multiple layers of meaning of belly dance are important to them: burlesque, strip tease and pole dancing are understood by my participants as focused principally if not solely around the erotic, where they wish to create a discourse that includes other elements. In the Arab world, belly dance is not perceived as exclusively a discourse of the erotic—one of its main functions is to express joy at family weddings, after all—though it certainly includes a discourse of the erotic (Nieuwkerk, 1995; Young, 1998; Said, 2000; Said, 2001; Adra, 2005). While the tropes and understandings of why belly dance cannot be reduced only to the erotic may not have translated exactly when migrating from the public understandings of dance in Egypt and throughout the Arab world more generally to the paradigms adopted by dancers and for the international dance community, the significant result is that for both it serves more than just the singular function that those 'other' forms of dance are perceived as doing.

My use of gender theory also relates more widely to post-structuralist challenges to the creation of social processes and institutions that deal in normative discourses. This is principally true with respect to discourses of appropriate feminine expressions of sexuality and how belly dance can be used to challenge this, as I just described. However, it also relates to the normative discourses that emerge within the belly dance community itself with regard to a number of issues like the nomenclature debate. This is particularly relevant to the ongoing conversation about male dancers. As I discussed in chapter five, there is a tension between how a dance form widely perceived as a vehicle for feminine empowerment can be used as a forum for exploring both dominant and alternative masculinities, and whether this is possible without challenging the validity of the first usage. This is a conversation that is only beginning to take shape. While Butler indicates that open coalitions are categories of "essential incompleteness" that, through the means of that very imperfection, make those groupings the most stable (Butler, 1990: 14), the problematic of the male dancing body specifically and the association of masculinity with belly dancing more generally has not yet resulted in a discursive category that could be considered stable. Through continuing discussion and praxis, an 'open coalition' relevant to the experience of male dancers may emerge, but such a coalition is only just starting to form. Yet the fact that such a discussion is emerging at all is an encouraging sign, for as Shay and Karayanni have both discussed at length, prior to the recent surge of academic interest in belly dance, prevailing

discourse within both the academic and the international dance community completely failed to address male dancers' experiences at all despite the existence of historical evidence for such experiences (Karayanni, 2004; Shay, 2005b; Shay and Sellers-Young, 2005) A related issue is 'queering' belly dance from a female perspective as well as a male one. Male dancers are an issue in a way that female dancers are not; a major reason their presence in the dance community is seen as problematic revolves around heteronormative tropes. Whether women can or do use dance in the same way is unclear, nor is this something that emerged in either the existing literature or in participant interviews. The idea may be worth exploring, especially considering the early connection of belly dance with the rise of second-wave feminism in the United States (Dox, 2005; Shay and Sellers-Young, 2005: 12-19), which shared links with the women's gay rights movement.

There is a dichotomy between academic interest in the praxis of belly dance and the community of belly dancers, and in the community's own research and discourse exploration through non-academic channels. My goal from the very beginning of postgraduate research was always to engage with audiences beyond the bounds of academia. It is not enough to produce heavily philosophical work for the consumption of the esoteric few; discussions about the discourses operating in people's lives need to be recognised by and engaged with by those people themselves (Lewis, 1996: 25-26; Srinivasan, 1998; Al-Ali, 2000: 88-91; Marchand and Runyan, 2000: 15, 20; Lewis and Mills, 2003: 5-6). In other words, the subjects of academia must be able to recognise themselves within academic discourse, and to actively shape, often through challenging existing scholarly frameworks, academic understandings as well as learning from those understandings. For this reason I wished to address the international belly dance community directly and the wider communities within which it operates. This group engages in theorising and paradigm creation whether the academy takes notice or not, and one of my goals was to share with them some of the ways in which these discourses that they negotiate in their everyday 'dance lives' relate to overarching theoretical tropes in the social sciences. I also wanted to encourage dancers to take a more critical—in the sense of questioning and investigative—stance towards received wisdom and prevailing discourses within the dance community by making use of the academic writings on the subject.

Empirical Outcomes

Addressing my second major research question, how the international belly dance community engages with social norms in Egypt, a key outcome of this thesis in chapters three and four is a critical comparison of how dancers throughout the international community engage with paradigms of social normativity within Egypt. I conclude that some tropes are adopted, some adapted, and some rejected outright. To assess this I engaged in a historical overview of public discourse on dance in Egypt, ultimately looking at current public opinion including both legal and social or moral expectations of dancers, both local and foreign, working there. These tropes do not operate in a single direction, however: the praxis and institutions of dance in Egypt, especially in related commercial industries like costuming and dance festivals, are affected by what is going on elsewhere in the world as dancers flock to Cairo to consume what is available there. This is glocalisation in action, as costumiers and choreographers adopt the desires of dance tourists in order to remain professionally competitive. This leads to a discussion in chapter four on whether such changes are always and inherently bad. It is overly simplistic to say that this type of relationship is entirely destructive of 'authentic' local culture. As my research participant Sarah Farouk Ahmed pointed out, it is important to give back to the community that provides such a wealth of inspiration (Ahmed, 14 October 2008). The increasing practice of travelling to Cairo for costumes, props and other goods ultimately contributes to the Egyptian economy and gives dancers in the international community a fuller understanding of the cultural significance of the dance that they perform in its 'home' context. This can deepen international dancers' engagement with the meaning dance has in their lives and promote richer, more reflective choices about things like costumes, choreography, and music, in keeping with Swidler's metaphor of the tool kit by which cultural understandings are negotiated (Swidler, 1986).

Regarding the third key research question, the significance of authenticity in framing debates about ephemeral cultural products like dance, another theme that arose from this comparison was a look in chapter five at the emergence of formalised quality standards across the international dance community as opposed to the informal, shifting paradigms of belly dance 'civics' that have been the norm up until now. I feel dubious about the formalisation of this dance form for several reasons: such a process involves freezing a dance tradition in its development at one period in time which will ever after be referred to as the ideal way of doing things, as in ballet; the motivations of dance teachers for formalisation could be that by touting their own system as the best or most

'authentic' style they may ensure a commercial monopoly; the development of standards could be fragmentary to the international community of dancers as distinctions develop that cause fewer points of commonality between dancers of differing styles; and as I shall discuss below, it has the potential for causing dichotomies in public discourse on performing arts and social dancing. However, doing so can also provide benefits. One of my research participants decided to move to India to try dancing professionally there as part of a troupe of belly dancers. In the process of obtaining her work visa, she found that one of the most beneficial facilitators was a credential provided after the end of a 'certification' course. Indian officials were dubious of the artistic merit of belly dance, just as I discussed with regards to public opinion of foreign dancers in Cairo in chapter two (though in Egypt the stereotype applies principally to dancers from Eastern Europe), and they suspected her intentions were morally dubious. Providing a certificate demonstrating her qualifications assuaged their concerns. This replicates the dichotomy of comparing one type of dance—in this case, quite literally the licit, the licensed—with another in order to indicate conformity with expectations of appropriate behaviour and moral standards. It also replicates Nieuwkerk's findings that within Egypt, professionalization caused a dichotomy in the perception of performing arts by providing a means to distinguish between highly esteemed 'professionals' and less well-regarded, or even actively suspiciously perceived, amateurs or those who perform in venues outside the 'artistic' realm (Nieuwkerk, 1995: 179). While I question the impact this process has on public perceptions of dance in the long run, as the dichotomy it creates can cause moral suspicion to fall on amateur dancers where previously there was no distinction between the categories of amateur and professional except in terms of technical skill, it had a materially positive effect for this participant.

My final major research question concerns the relationship between physical and virtual vehicles that allow the transmission of cultural capital and the elision of physical boundaries for community formation: for virtual media I am specifically thinking of the internet, which can serve as an emerging field where specific cultural references are removed, as in dance clips on YouTube that do not bear reference to a particular locality. YouTube is a very important factor for my research participants, both as a means by which to gain information about stylistic trends both past and present, and as a promotional force for their own videos. Though my participants principally discussed other online informational resources, like listservs and message boards, as something that they engaged with at early stages in their dance trajectories that they had since

abandoned, these remain important means of engaging with the discursive history and creation of normative standards in the international dance community. Also, while dancers may not utilise networking sites marketed specifically for belly dancers like bhuz.com, many participate in other social networking sites like Facebook which they use as promotional tools through, for example, sharing photographs of occasions at which dancing has occurred, distributing electronic invitations to events, and contacting others with similar interests who may live in diverse geographic locations. Around these practices, informal conversations about dance take place which contribute to the negotiation of discourse within the international dance community. Other media, like satellite television and DVDs and CDs that may once have been obtainable only in certain regions but can now be purchased around the globe with the click of a button, also allow consumers unprecedented access to the aesthetic tropes of different cultures.

The final theme that emerged during my research was the unpredictable nature of research. While there is a tradition, referred to in my introduction, within anthropology of discussing diversions and unexpected occurrences during fieldwork, rarely are these developments themselves approached as a positive development within the research project. In contrast, some other disciplines do not pay any attention at all to the unexpected within the research process (Macaulay, 2004), despite the fact that even within the more standardised methods of the hard sciences researchers often struggle with techniques that do not work in the expected manner or mathematical tools that produce results different from those expected, resulting in a need to rethink the aims and methods of the project. While the difficulties and privations of culture shock are unique to researchers engaging in fieldwork (though of course not all fieldwork involves these issues), the unexpected and iterative nature of research in progress is common across all disciplines. As I argued in my introduction, franker discussion of these issues would be beneficial not only for novice researchers who might go into the field better prepared, but also for the general public to better understand that the process of research is not predetermined at the outset but rather is the process of dealing with the unexpected. This is not to privilege such discussions over the outcomes of research, but rather to say that process and product are inevitably linked in ways that it is worth emphasising when considering the final outcomes of a research project.

Dancing to the Examined Tune

In the third year of my PhD I had an experience that caused me to reflect on the process of critically engaging with discourse creation, normative standards within the

belly dance community, and cultural hybridity in terms of process as well as product. A female friend invited me to a Halloween party which would double as her birthday celebration. I decided to wear a belly dance costume to the party. After making this decision, I realised I could not do so without some self-reflexive analysis. Where previously I would have quite merrily donned my chiffon and spangles for such an event, thinking only of the enjoyment I would have and not devoting even the slightest moment of consideration to the themes I described above, I found that I was incapable of such unreflective gratification while in the process of writing a thesis about these very issues. Fortuitously, Socrates tells us that the unexamined life is not worth living (Plato, West et al., 1998: 92). After briefly musing on the existential question of whether going for Halloween as something that you actually are is a valid application of the subversive purposes of that holiday, I returned to the vital question: the difference between utilising the aesthetic tropes of belly dance for the purpose of dancing (actually being a belly dancer) and making use of the Orientalist-fantasy imagery of belly dance as a symbol of something else (dressing up *as* a belly dancer). By dressing up as a dancer without dancing, I felt I would be playing to the stereotypes about belly dancing that dancers, including myself, generally wish to refute. How could dancers in the international community[3] take my work seriously if I myself did something that could be perceived as contravening the legitimising purpose of my own thesis?

However, one of the things I hope this thesis has expressed is the value in questioning received wisdom and prevailing discourse. I believe this can be accomplished through the subversive nature of the playful in addition to direct challenges. As well as calling into question prevailing social norms, which is one of the functions of dance both within Egypt and as it is utilised by the international belly dance community, I believe dancers should also approach existing paradigms within their own community with a critical eye and a mind open to new developments and different ways of thinking. I decided that if I were to attend the party in my dance costume it would carry several layers of meaning for me: first, I could express joy for my friend's birthday celebration, exactly in keeping with the celebratory purpose of dance both in the Arab world and in the international dance community. Though the party would be a mixed crowd of men and women, I would be using dance in keeping with its feminist bent to celebrate on behalf of my female friend. Finally, the costume I would wear was

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[3] Though my experience would actually not have been subjected to the normative scrutiny of the international belly dance community, because none of its other members were there. However, returning to Foucault, discourses of normalization are internalized to produce self-policing behavior (Foucault, 1991). This could be perceived as one instance where such a process operates to uphold consistency in internal values held by the subject: me.

a fancy red *galabeya* trimmed in tartan, bought from my Scottish friend and research participant Lorna Gow. In the course of our discussion about authenticity in dance, I asked Lorna why she would happily wear a costume trimmed in tartan but she would not not dance *khaleegy*[4] dance, dance from the Gulf Arab countries, despite the frequent presence of audiences of Gulf Arabs on her boats. "Yes, well, that's because that's me [the tartan costume] and I believe you should always put a bit of your own personality into everything you do. But…it's not the dancing that's changed, it's just a wee bit extra of making people think." (Gow, 3 November 2008). What she means by this is that she is an Egyptian dancer in style, which has very different aesthetic tropes than styles local to the Arabian Gulf. Pride in her Scottish heritage informs Lorna's dance as well whether or not she is wearing a tartan costume. Here is a prime example of glocalisation: utilising a variety of tropes with different origins in order to create something with newly significant, and in this case deeply personal, meaning. Lorna's use of Scottish as well as Egyptian aesthetic tropes calls into question existing discourses of 'authenticity' within the international belly dance community, in keeping with newly emerging ideas about glocalisation. My own reasons for wanting the tartan costume are different; as the product of multinational American immigration over several generations, my own family's connections to Scotland are far more tenuous than Lorna's. At my friend's birthday party, the tartan would serve to celebrate my friend's Scottish origins.

At the end of all my abstract cogitation, perhaps it will come as no surprise that I decided to wear my costume. The purpose of leading an examined life is not to spend one's entire life in contemplation without engaging in the joy of active agency, whether that agency conforms to or subverts the discourses operating in one's life. Rather, such examinations are intended to enrich and inform the actions one chooses. These critical reflections can only be facilitated by continuing to seek understandings of operative cultural discourses through experiential as well as literary and theoretical knowledge. After spending an extended period in Egypt, I found that my thoughts on contextualising dance outside of the culture(s) from which it originates had changed a great deal. As a young dancer starting on my learning trajectory in the United States, though I respected dancers that were able to travel to the Arab world, I did not see the necessity for doing so myself as long as my teachers were providing me with adequate technique, including stage presence and charisma. Whatever new styles and interpretations people wanted to try, however people wanted to experiment with belly

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[4] Spelled as Lorna spells it on her blog with its Egyptian inflection.

dance, were all fine with me: what authority could tell them they were wrong to do so? Now, I look back on that attitude as naïve and lacking an understanding of the standards that the dance community does in fact use, though they are constantly challenged and contested. Though I still find fault with Karayanni's categorisation of non-Arab dancers as "guests" (Karayanni, 2004: 161), I now have a much clearer understanding of dance in the context of Egyptian social and national life, making me much more cognisant of what it means to place that style of dance in a different cultural context, and further, to use it as a starting point for new development and explorations in emerging styles within the umbrella term of 'belly dance'. I have had to revise my initial view that belly dance in all locations is equivalent and that suggestions to the contrary are positing an untenable hierarchy of performance evaluation based on cultural relativism rather than skill.   Instead, I now believe stylistic difference stemming from culturally different expectations is something that will continually refresh and invigorate the global dance community, if not always bringing it into harmony.

APPENDIX

I have included with this thesis a DVD of selected videos recorded while conducting my fieldwork. There are fourteen clips that have been categorised into the six events at which they were recorded. A brief description of each event and the names of the clips related to that event follows in the order they are presented on the DVD. Full descriptions of each selection are incorporated in the body of the text, and these descriptions are cross-referenced below. The complete set of more than 50 videos that I recorded during the course of my research can be seen on my public YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/caitietube.

Video Selections in Order of Appearance on the DVD:

- **Cairo Jazz Fest 1:** Filmed 11 November 2008 on the rooftop of the Trianon boat in Giza. Spontaneous female and male dancing. See detailed description in chapter seven, "Gender Choreology."

- **Golden Pharaoh Wedding Party:** Filmed 20 November 2008 on the dock of the Golden Pharaoh dinner cruise boat in Giza. Research participant Lorna Gow maintaining her distance from spontaneous dancing until informed the party included a member of the boat staff. Detailed description in chapter four, "Sanctions: Authorise, Penalise, Globalise."

- **Black Theama 8, 11 and 12:** Filmed 4 October 2008 at the El Sawy Culture Wheel in Zamalek. Spontaneous hand movements of security guard in Black Theama 8. Clip 11 captures guard capitulating to male members of the crowd who wished to dance in front of the stage. Clip 12 is from the encore song, showing spontaneous dancing as the crowd exits. Detailed descriptions are in chapter seven, "Gender Choreology."

- **Zaar 1-6:** Filmed 22 October 2008 at the Makan Centre for Culture and the Arts in downtown Cairo. This selection shows the long, slow build of zaar song as well as the principal female singer interacting with the audience members. Detailed description is in chapter five, "Dance and Theory: Research as Argument and Serendipity."

- **Soraya:** Filmed 5 February 2009 at Restaurant Marrakesh in the Moroccan Pavilion at Epcot Center, Disney World, Orlando, Florida. Between second 15

and 19 it is just about possible to glimpse the modesty shorts I discuss in chapter five, "Dance and Theory: Research as Argument and Serendipity."

- **A Magi 4 and 5:** Filmed 7 February 2009 at the Arts Festival in the Orlando, Florida public library. The Arts Festival was hosted by United Arts of Central Florida. These clips show a comprehensive selection of dance styles performed by a group of professional and semi-professional dancers affiliated with the A Magi Temple and Belly Dance School run by research participant Melanie LaJoie. A full description of this performance can be found in chapter six, "Transmission and Learning: Building the Dance."

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