



Global Moves: Belly Dance as an Extra/Ordinary Space to Explore Social Paradigms in Egypt and Around the World

Caitlin McDonald

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This book 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 romanticized and fantasized 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 potential to be a site for defining appropriate gendered behavior, a space for competition (friendly or unfriendly), and even a tool of resistance as cultural norms shift. I provide a comparative analysis of how dancers in the international dance community utilize 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. All types of dance provide a space outside ordinary life to challenge or to uphold predominant social paradigms. One effect of globalization is the increase in worldwide exposure of local dance forms from many regions. These not only fuse to create new forms but operate alongside one another in what can be seen as a global marketplace of dance. Different dances are then imbued with values and norms of the receiving culture. Choosing to dance in non-local styles becomes a reflection of a locally value-based choice. This book examines the way globalization via cultural, economic, and technological vehicles affects a culturally rich, values-laden social phenomenon practiced in the Middle East and by an increasing international community. The book has a particular focus on paradigms of gender that are explored in dancing and in community discussions about dance.

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