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Walk Like an Egyptian: Belly Dance past and present practice in England

Cooper, Siouxsie

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Plymouth University

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Walk Like an Egyptian

Siouxsie Cooper

Walk like an Egyptian

Belly Dance past and present practice in England



by Siouxsie Cooper

University of Plymouth

in fulfilment of a degree in Doctor of Philosophy

University College of Falmouth

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Abstract

How Belly Dance practitioners in England construct a sense of self-identity, social-identity and identity-in-practice in a border-crossing Belly Dance ethnoscape is of interest for this research project. What kinds of identities-in-practice do Belly Dancers in England construct in order to authenticate their performance? By applying social theories of education and identity formation, in particular Holland et al's "figured worlds" (2001), it is possible to critically frame the development of a practitioner's Belly Dance identity over a period of time. The research presents that case that Belly Dance in England has an identifiable past and present practice, one that continually wrestles with ownership of what is apparently a Middle Eastern cultural export. Drawing from a literature based case study of two pioneering artists in the early 1980s, Hilal and Buonaventura, the research describes a distinctive English Belly Dance tradition and identities. There is an explanation of how the English Belly Dance form has since competed on the global stage. The research also describes how current inheritors of that tradition –Anne White, Caroline Afifi and Siouxsie Cooper are taken as case studies– appropriate and signal Egyptian Belly Dance as the dominant reference point from which to authenticate their dancing practice; whilst at the same time subverting the Orientalist paradigm underpinning the Belly Dance trope. Identifying "narratives of authenticity" enable the current generations of English Belly Dancers to form distinctive Belly Dancing identities-in-practice. Drawing from both social theories of education and identity formation and reflexive ethnographic modes of inquiry, *Walk like an Egyptian* examines Belly Dance in England as a translocated dance form, and the mechanisms which allow its authenticity are analysed. In answer to the research question it is possible for an English practitioner of Belly Dance to produce an authentic Belly Dance performance through the production of various narratives of authenticity, narratives which both borrow from and resist pre-existing narratives of authenticity.

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Chapter 1**1. Introduction****1.1 The research question**

This research project emerged during a changing period in my own Belly Dance practice, one that signalled my shifting identity in the field and, more substantially, the impact closer cultural exchanges I forged with practitioners from the Egyptian Belly Dance community had on my practice. These two factors motivated the development of this research project to understand the changing political and ideological landscape of Belly Dance in England. The issue of being a non-Middle Eastern practitioner of Belly Dance provokes the question of whether it is possible for an English Belly Dancer to create an authentic Belly Dance performance. Not only are ethnicity, ownership and identity key issues emerging from this research question but there remains the contentious feminist issue relating to the search for authenticity through training with “Egyptian” practitioners located in a society with a distinctive gender-separation in the public spheres of Egyptian society (Abu-Lughod 2003). I am suggesting here that the Egyptian cultural context represents an antithesis to the Western feminist search for integration, identity and equality beyond a separatist notion of a conservative heterosexual normative in public life. In effect, the search for authenticity through the representation of a gender-separatist culture found in Egypt could be considered a retrograde step, one in which Western Belly Dancers are complicit in turning the clocks back. It remains that the search for some form of validity through a direct experience of the Egyptian version of the dance has become a common occurrence on the current English Belly Dance scene.

The research question is how authenticity in the performance of Belly Dance can be achieved by English Belly dance practitioners. Implicitly, answering this question requires us to analyze what constitutes ‘authenticity’. What kinds of identities-in-practice do Belly Dancers construct in order to authenticate their performance? Why is ‘authenticity’ a significant factor in the establishment of a professional Belly Dancing practice? In order to examine these questions, this thesis specifically considers Belly Dance as performed by English dance practitioners. I focus on three current practitioners as narrative case studies, and analyse the multiple narratives each creates and describes to ‘authenticate’ their practice. It is important to add that a variety of these narratives are inherited from an ‘English Belly Dance’ past. It is therefore extremely useful to identify that tradition and its defining narratives as a prelude to the case studies.

The dominant ‘other culture’ to Belly Dance in England today tends to be Egypt, and is indeed the case with each of the case studies. The case studies aspire towards an ‘Egyptian’ form of Belly Dance, and consider it to be an indicator of ‘authenticity’. However, my research reveals that deliberately constructed narratives have privileged this name and style of the dance, describing it as ‘authentic’ over other names and styles. In fact, my research into the English Belly Dance tradition shows that the Belly Dance of the 1980s and 1990s referred to other Middle Eastern cultures as frequently as the Egyptian culture(s).

The issue of ‘authenticity’ is one of competing narratives: narratives of imagined history/ies, of ideological and aesthetic vision, of ethnic and cultural heritage, of professional credentials, and of economic value within a local and global community. Such narratives are then embodied and performed through specific dance movement vocabularies, approaches to teaching, dance styles, and solo and group performances. These narratives and the ways in which they are performed all

contribute to the construction of (individual and community) dance-identity and the relative economic value of leading practitioners.

Therefore, in answer to the research question, I argue ‘authenticity’ can be successfully achieved when a community creates or “buys into” a particular narrative of authenticity, one in which the practitioner can author and construct a Belly Dancing identity. This approach has been adopted by English practitioners in order to authenticate their Belly Dance identity, create and own an English Belly Dance tradition, and improve their economic value as artists in a larger Belly Dance global market.

As a researcher and a Belly Dance practitioner I argue Belly Dance is not only a community dance form (Bacon, 2003 and Paul, 1998) and a global/glocal cultural commodity found in cyberspace and *translocated*¹ between Egypt and other countries (McDonald, 2010). It is also a fantastical performance art offering multiple identities and performance narratives with which female participants² find a mode of expression that speaks to their political, social, cultural and female condition in contemporary Western society. McDonald points out that Belly Dance offers “a space to reconceptualise certain discourses of feminine sensuality” (2010, 177). She insists most participants in any given Belly Dance community are not engaged with their desire to create a liminal space outside ordinary life. She states: “to explore aspects of the self that are ignored or denied by contemporary society can lead to perpetuation of Orientalist tropes” (Ibid,

1McDonald refers to Appadurai’s conception of glocal, and translocated communities who share identities – what he terms as ethnoscapes beyond national borders – in which cultural exchange and production is found (1996).

2There are a rising number of male Belly Dancers in England and abroad. Interestingly, the majority of male Belly Dancers are gay which has its own peculiarities in terms of women allowing gay men into their female-centric activities because they do not pose a direct threat and gay male dancers finding the Belly Dance form conducive to presenting other forms of “maleness” in performance (see Burt DATE, Karayanni 2004 and Shay 2010).

177). I am suggesting that McDonald's warning should not preclude this research engagement with the Belly Dancing-Self created by English practitioners, promoting instead a method of tracing responses and changes practitioners undergo during a lifetime of performing Belly Dance. In terms of the incongruity concerning feminist politics in Belly Dance discourse this is a significant discursive point of departure for this research.

In a multicultural society, these questions cannot be ignored. Key dance scholars since the late 1960s have described a "cultural turn" in the research field, one which maintains that all dances are ethnic (Kealiinohomoku 1969) and that some dances are more ethnic than others (Buckland, 1999). Belly Dance has been variously classified as an ethnic dance genre (Adra 2005, Lorius 1996 and Nieuwkerke 1995); a dance genre subject to hierarchal evaluation of what constitutes Eurocentric "high art" culture. Principally it is the display of female bodies with an emphasis on pelvic movement, and revealing costuming that has commonly seen Belly Dance associated with the sex industry in both Egypt and England. Dox (2006) claims the ubiquitous Belly Dance veil and attributing Orientalist mythos offers a credible distance and "shield" between Belly Dance and stripping – but only just (Ibid, 57). By contrast, I would assert that the female body on display, with percussive pelvic movements, draws attention to key elements concerning the display, use and representation of women in performance that other "Western" dance, performance and theatre forms have a tendency to erase or ignore completely (Adair 1986, Goodman 1993, Jones 1998, Phelan & Rickett 2001).

We are living in a global village and the process of globalisation, particularly with the cultural dimensions (Appadurai, 1996) of this shift towards different configurations of identity beyond nation-statehood, forces us to consider what is and how cultural difference is being assimilated, adopted, represented and contextualised. Outside academia and the dance conservatoire,

students of dance opt for world dance genres and the gradual eroding of the aesthetic and ideological definitions of what is dance, who can participate, what form it takes and for what its purpose is, are being redefined in the community (Bacon 2003 and Rowell 2000). The rise in the number of research projects testifies to the emergence of world dance scholarship (Leigh-Foster 2010) and within Belly Dance scholarship researchers and commentators are dealing with issues as varied as the American imperialist ambition underpinning new Belly Dance fusion (Maira 2008) to an ethnographic study of the interaction between Belly Dancers with their male-only Lebanese audiences in Brazil (Tofik-Karam 2010). Belly Dance is an ideal site for dance scholarship and the study of “bodily theories” (Leigh-Foster 1995, 8) presenting the complex issues of identity and the negotiations of gender, ethnicity, power, sexuality and economics found within the dance genre on the global stage.

1.2 Egypt and Belly Dance Tourism

It is important to consider the nation-state of Egypt and its ambivalent³ assertion that Belly Dance is an Egyptian art form. An Egyptologist guiding a tour of English Belly Dance tourists to the Valley of the Kings, Luxor notes: “As a country, we have been under the rule of many colonial powers since Cleopatra. For over two millennia we have welcomed Romans, the Arabs, the French and the British. And now we have tourists like you. You like our country, you like our sun, you love our history and we love sharing it with you – you are welcome, any time” (Said Kamel, 2005). Said’s generous tourist patten is illustrative of Egypt’s turbulent past. It also represents Egypt’s capacity to accommodate invaders in various ways, this specific example

³ I use the term ambivalent to highlight the estranged relationship Belly Dance practitioners have within their own society, one which hires a Belly Dancer to celebrate a wedding but would never invite a Belly Dancer socially to share tea with the family. With reference to Roushdy’s (2010) research a recent attempt by Belly Dance professionals to gain government approval to establish a Belly Dance institute was unsuccessful in its final stages of approval in the government (late 2009).

through the tourist trade. The last two colonial powers were France (1798-1801) and Britain (1882-1922). Today English Belly Dancers travel to Egypt in search of Belly Dance instruction and authentication of their own practices, arguably continuing the colonial project through cultural exchange (Maira 2008). Still, it remains the case that Egypt is invested in productising its past (Wynn 2008, McClure 2002) in an attempt to assert its ownership of Belly Dance.

Significantly Egypt promotes its ancient and modern past for economic survival which ironically perpetuates the Orientalist domination through the exchange of a cultural product like Belly Dance. The exchange of Belly Dance expertise and authority is a key indicator of authenticity, an authenticity that asserts that non-Egyptians performing Belly Dance do not possess authenticity and never will. Consequently, the monopoly Egypt has on Belly Dance expertise, authority and cultural value gains most of its Belly Dance dollars through the constant stream of aspiring non-Egyptian Belly Dance artists seeking an affirmation which will never be conferred.

The result of this Egyptian assertion of ownership and authenticity is the stymieing of artist frustration Belly Dance practice worldwide. Belly Dance in the West is frozen in time, place and beyond reach for any artist in the field, so why continue? The research project does not claim to be dealing with the complex issues of third world economics and politics, even though such exist and have an indirect relevance to the subject. However, the impact of the time-lock by which Belly Dance remains encapsulated could be a contributing factor of spectre of authenticity, one that is predicated on the first and third world economic differences and values. Still, due to an Egyptian ownership of Belly Dance an English practitioner experiences personal, commercial and artistic crisis based on this very question of authenticity and cultural and ethnic identity. The irony is there remains a question over the origins of Belly Dance, and the impossibility of locating an origin persists.

1.3 Origins of Belly Dance

Belly Dance has an interesting and complex post-colonial narrative, one that includes a wealthy Egyptian female entrepreneur/actress, her encounter with Parisian entertainment of the turn of the twentieth century and a desire to attract Egyptians and British ex-patriots to her new nightclub, Casino Opera. Badia Masabni is a well known name associated with the inception of Belly Dance (in Egypt too⁴), one that is a useful departure point for this research. Her creation of the Belly Dance solo dance theatre emerged through a mixture of musical styling, movement fusion and the colonial intricacies of appealing and attracting two politically opposed audiences (Egyptian and British ex-patriots) to one venue. Belly Dance is an invented tradition, one drawing from the social dances of Egypt (Raqs el Baladi) and Latino dances in Masabni's earlier Casino Opera shows (circa 1926) and the heightened political tension of its era. Roushdy (2010) suggests that the Egyptian Belly Dancer embodies the tension between a distant glorious Egyptian past and a resistance to an unknowable post-independence (1922) Egypt. The lone female performer presenting herself, her Egyptian identity, her body and her solo dance in public, embodies the "betwixt" (Roushdy 2010) condition, a tension found between the traditional and modern Egyptian society represented in Belly Dance, even before she begins to dance (see Nieuwkerke 1995 and Franken 2003).

Already, it appears that Belly Dance has several component parts from European social and dance theatre, Egyptian social dance forms, a fusion of Egyptian folk instrumentation with Western symphonic composition and the interesting inclusion of fantasised Latino dance forms

4 A very famous 1970s film depicting the rise and fall of Badia Masabni in Egypt portrays a woman lost to the world of vice, sex and drugs who deserved her final demise from fame and fortune (not an accurate depiction of her life, but one that was officially approved as the best portrayal of her "bad" life).

(using the veil for extra mystery). The compositional strategies of fusion, *mise-en-scene*⁵ and bricolage indicate the various social and political forces impacting on the Egyptian Belly Dancing body including the use of fantasy by the exotic Latino dancers. When positioned alongside other entertainers, mainly men with speaking roles, it is notable that the female performers use their body to talk in place of their voices and words, a way of bypassing the regulations initially set down by colonial rule and continued by patriarchal governance post-independence. Female performers embellished the movement with props, gesture, mouthing the words of the song and the use of satire and audience interaction. With the advent of new technologies, including television and film, these Belly Dancers gained new middle class and working class audiences (Dougherty 2005). The syncretic and mercurial character of Egyptian Belly Dance, that borrowed from Arab and European dance and theatre traditions, could adapt easily to these changing market forces and technological innovation. Due to its unfixed and ever changing character, which partially illustrates the working conditions and unplanned opportunities Belly Dance artists chased in order to build their fortunes and avoid powerful clerical interference, Belly Dance - even today - continues to reinvent itself. Reinvention is a key component of Belly Dance, a mercurial and capricious quality that confounds Western followers of the dance and scholars alike.

It remains that Western dance fascination and privileging of choreographic practice has overlooked the improvisational standard of Belly Dance practice, a difficult skill and approach to dance teaching several practitioners have admitted they avoid in their class schedule. In Egypt

⁵ *Mise-en-scene* is a theatrical device adopted by Masabni and other nightclub entrepreneurs were influenced by the theatrical diorama's and "exotic" display of different cultures in Europe. As the French in the phrase suggests, "to put into a scene", the emphasis was on simulation rather than realism in performance; fantasy and artifice dominated the display of dancing bodies and entertainment in the Egyptian nightclub environment.

there is an emphasis on the aural elements of the dance, a symbiotic element that contextualises the dancing and signifies the cultural locus of the dance. Improvisation itself demands extensive musical knowledge and cultural contextualisation of that musical knowledge. Improvisation, performing in the moment, maintains a semblance of structure rooted in emotional content rather than intellectual content. A key reason for starting and continuing a Belly Dance practice given by informants has been the music and the opportunity to “be” themselves in the dancing. The self, the soloing self, is a foremost concern for Belly Dancers, and again Belly Dance provides the skill set and the opportunity in performance to “reveal” the self. Where Dox suggests that this reveal is at its root an American theatrical device, practitioners training in Egypt suggest that the excesses found in the soloist Belly Dancer who continually refers to herself, herself and her audience, herself and her musicians and herself and her emotions, is the ultimate female narcissist’s antidote to the dominance of patriarchal modes of representing women as the second sex.

1.4 English Belly Dancers

During the initial research stage in which I approached Belly Dance practitioners to become case studies it became clear that these practitioners were not only referencing a distant and imaginary Middle East (Dox 2006, Sellers-Young 2005 and Shay and Sellers-Young 2003), but they were also trained by a specific group of previous Belly Dance practitioners⁶ based in the English community of shared practice (Wenger 1991 & 1996). This earlier English Belly Dance tradition itself brought into focus key themes and notions of the construction of authenticity and its

⁶ I am referring specifically to Suraya Hilal and Wendy Buonaventura, in fact there were earlier Belly Dance instructors and performers based in London and other regions of England, most notably Tina Hobin.

references to both the Middle and Near East, America and an Orientalist mythos (see Dox 2006). Authenticity was a significant issue during the earlier period of Belly Dance in England, in which practitioners sought a blood-line narrative to associate themselves and their Belly Dance practice directly with the Middle East. The forming of their practices and audiences meant that a form of natal inheritance and validity took priority over “interpretation” of another culture’s dance form.

The groundwork of earlier English Belly Dance practitioners was to develop into establishing a recognisable English Belly Dance tradition; thus, enabling inheritors of this tradition the possibility to avoid having to identify or claim direct natal links to the Middle East. Instead they formed lineages aligned to specific earlier English Belly Dance practitioners, thereby creating a specific and identifiable English Belly Dance tradition. Belly Dance over a period of thirty years⁷ located itself in England, over the last decade current practitioners and inheritors of earlier tradition(s) have attempted to relocate their Belly Dance origins to Egypt as a method of recycling and remembering its Egyptian heritage.

In terms of the Anglo-Egyptian Belly Dance exchange of the last decade the research examines the processes with which current practitioners develop a sense of personal agency within the social, cultural and political contexts past English and modern Egyptian Belly Dance practices. The research draws from reflexive ethnographic modes of inquiry and social science methodologies and methods of identifying individual agency. The result of this research shift in focus, from what to where and whom, demonstrates the legacy, political dynamic and the

⁷ I referring specifically to Hilal and Buonaventura’s era from the early 1980s, through the 1990s and into the early 2000s dominated the English Belly Dance scene producing dance theatre work, dance intensive training weekends, published notable texts and delivered teacher training programmes. Prior to the 1980s there were dance teachers and performers of note, specifically Tina Hobin. Still it remains significant that Hilal and Buonaventura were instrumental in the development, coalescence and codification of the Belly Dance community in England.

continuing influences of past Belly Dance traditions, in addition to the impact of frequent travel and dance training in Egypt, has had on current English Belly Dance practices. In order to determine how current English Belly Dance practitioners construct their practice, adopting both a retrospective and a progressive method of identifying key social and political changes over time, in line with Buckland's (1999 & 2006) and Desmond's (1997) concern for a holistic approach to dance research, is appropriate.

Key components of the English Belly Dance tradition are the Belly Dance *Discourse* and *Conversation* (Gee, 1999), chief components and sources of material for narrative case study research. Again the notion of "authenticity" is found in continual circulation within Belly Dance discourse. Authenticity is a perennial issue, one that researchers in the field have quickly disposed of (Bacon 2003, McDonald 2010). I assert that authenticity is in fact the locus around which all Belly Dance scholarship is situated; it is a dominant discourse in the field that cannot be ignored. I argue that the various narratives of authenticity enunciated by practitioners from whatever location can be identified as the processes by which Belly Dance practitioners gain authenticity in performance locally, nationally and internationally. Rather than dismiss the authenticity issue, a post-structuralist perspective of authenticity in which narratives of authenticity can be seen as a functional exponent describing how authenticity is claimed and authorised is valuable. In reality, due to the high population of non-Middle Eastern practitioners in the English Belly Dance community, narratives of authenticity serve to describe and illustrate the complex relationship practitioners have towards performing another cultural tradition. Consequently, authenticity acts as a functional exponent that adds or subtracts cultural currency (Bourdieu, 1986) in Belly Dance discourse.

Anthropologist Turner (1969 & 1987), post colonial commentator Bhabha (1994), and cultural theorist Appadurai (1996) agree there are in existence sites and identities in which cross-cultural translation is identifiable and measurable. They variously identify sites in which acts of performed resistance occur, subverting social and cultural norms (Turner, 1969). The existence and formation of hybrid identities which traverse both relational and cultural contexts (Bhabha, 1994), and the presence of global/local sites in which spatial and scalar concerns do not apply, most notably via the internet, result in the production of *ethnoscapes* of shared identity-in-practice (Appadurai, 1996, 48-66). I argue that Belly Dance resides in a liminal context in which participants create new and imagined identities. These sites and identities further complicate the notion of a heterogeneous western narration of a singular and uncomplicated nation-state identity (1996: 4). How Belly Dance practitioners in England construct a sense of self-identity, social-identity and identity-in-practice in a border-crossing Belly Dance ethnoscape is of interest for this research. I refer to Holland et al's (2001) notion of *figured worlds* to aid closer examination of the actual heuristic processes and identity-formations the practitioners employ within their Belly Dance figured worlds. Figured worlds according to Holland et al are sites where "People's identities and agency are formed dialectically and dialogically in these "as if" worlds" (2001, 49).

1.5 Definitions of key terms

Authentic is a troubled term, one that is foregrounded in this research for a reason. The reason is there the word and concept of "authentic" can be seen frequently discussed in trade magazines, in workshops, performance publicities and online debating forums. Where previous Belly Dance researchers have discarded the term due to the persuasive post modernist argument that there is no authentic referent, I revisit the word and argue that by observing and analysing how it is used,

rather than what it means, a researcher can find insights into how Belly Dancers construct their performance work. Therefore, I am suggesting that the term authentic is used as a form of currency and cultural capital between practitioners, rather than it relating to a notion of origin(s). By identifying the cultural exchange of the term “authenticity” it is possible to recognize how and why a Belly Dance performance becomes labelled authentic. It remains that the modernist fixation with an illuminating, single, grand narrative to describe what is authentic continues to be dislodged by this research project, although differently compared with my predecessors. However, the findings in the research suggest that the “authentic,” used as a functional exponent in the form of “narratives of authenticity,” highlights the cultural, economic, social and educational values found in any given Belly Dance practice. Therefore, the authentic, seen in this light, offers a discursive function within global, national and local communities of shared Belly Dance practice. I argue that these “narratives of authenticity” can lead a researcher towards the ideological and aesthetic foundation of a Belly Dance performance.

Community of practice is a term coined by cognitive anthropologists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger to describe a group of people who share a craft, an interest, and or a profession which holds common interests, language, and knowledge. It is through the process of sharing information and experiences with the group that the members learn from each other, and have an opportunity to develop themselves personally and professionally (Lave & Wenger 1991).

Dance is used in this research to describe a movement practice like Belly Dance, in which movements are executed rhythmically to music, sometimes following a set sequence of steps to form choreography.

Ethnicity relates to ethnic traits, racial background and the classification of ethnic groups with racial, religious, linguistic and other traits in common. In terms of researching Belly Dance, the ethnicity of the dance form, especially when working with the term “authentic”, suggests a derivation of a cultural tradition from a specific group of people. Belly Dance, itself, has a troubled ethnicity. It is commonly classified as "ethnic", "traditional" and “world” dance, with the attributing emphases on the cultural roots and contextualisation of a performance. In the case of Belly Dance it is a colonial hybrid of dance, theatre and music. It is a cross-cultural dance caught between the modernisation project of Egypt, the European influences in the early twentieth century and the representation of "contemporary" urban life for the female dancers performing it (Roushdy 2010). Therefore the classification of ethnic dance is not sufficient to describe the complex cross-cultural, political and gender politics found in a Belly Dance practice. However, ethnicity and a direct relationship between practitioner and Egypt continue to be a key discursive point within and outside the Belly Dance community. For example the Arts Council England rarely offers funding to a non-Egyptian or non-Arabic Belly Dance practitioner’s work.

Narratives is a useful noun and adjective used to describe a spoken or written account of connected events; a story. With reference to “narratives of authenticity” narratives are concerned with narrating the sense and claim to authentication by a Belly Dance practitioner. A narrative is a retelling, often in words (though it is possible to mime/dance a story), of something that took place. Narrative is not the story itself; it is the telling of the story. A story can be just a series of events; a narrative recounts those events, invariably omitting occurrences in favour of a particular perspective and the emphasizing of critical incidents. Narrative as an aesthetic structure contains identifiable beginnings, middles and ends. It can also contain exposition,

development, a climax and a denouement, with important inciting incidents (Bruner, 1981).

There can be a strong focus on temporality which includes the retention of the past, attention to present action and the prediction of future consequences. Therefore, narratives can shape history, and from a psychological perspective a personal narrative can recount a sense of personal or cultural identity. It could be seen to be the fundamental nature of the formation of the Self. From a social science perspective narratives identify how human beings understand events in order to manage a coherent story explaining how they believe the event occurred. Sociologists Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (2000) have developed a methodology with a constructionist approach to analysing narrative(s) in sociology. Holland et al have continued this work by proposing a constructivist and culturalist continuum as an updated method of understanding the narrative construction and meaning in case study analysis, which in turn formulates their notion of a “figured world” (2001).

Self is used as a noun in this project to describe a person's essential being that distinguishes them from others. It is considered as the object of introspection or reflexive action. Pollner (2000, 407) argues that there needs to be a response to the claim of a sense of “postmodern disarray”, which suggests that stories of the Self are being threatened by decentring, saturation and dissolution. In place of Decarte’s “transcendental Self”, Pollner suggests that pragmatists and constructivists are presenting the case for an “experientially accessible, socially constituted and circumstantially realised Self” (Ibid, 407) found in a postmodern society. With this in mind, I am suggesting that Belly Dance practice offers artists a mode of experientially and socially constructing a sense of Self, an amplified sense of self as a performance artist, in postmodern English society. From a feminist perspective Daly (1984) argues that it is imperative women discover and re-member a sense of Self, since the methods and tools for BE-coming and BE-ing

more of one-Self have been stolen, hidden or broken by patriarchy. The philosophy of Self defines the essential qualities that make one person distinct from all others, and in this case, one Belly Dancing-Self from another distinctive Belly Dancing-Self.

Tradition as mentioned in terms of ethnicity is a contested term, and one used in this project to describe the transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation, or knowledge being passed on in this way. However, I am not referring to a long-established custom or belief that has been passed between and within one ethnic group of people and nation state. In fact Belly Dance tradition and knowledge has been transmitted across the globe, through the internet, DVDs, theatre performances and magazines, in addition to workshops, local classes and performances. I am referencing a post-modernist interpretation of the concept of tradition, in which shared knowledge is not fixed but mutable through the act of re-interpreted and constant re-formulation. In some sense the act of transmission is more relevant than the content of what is in the process of being transmitted. Again, my notion of “narratives of authenticity” offers a method to analyse and identify specific Belly Dance tradition(s) in time, and trace the changing ideological and aesthetic components as they are transmitted between practitioners, practitioners from differing traditions, and practitioners from different cultural, economic and social geographies. I refer to “tradition” as a regularly repeated set of values, principles and knowledge that is not fixed and that is actively changing through the process of exchange.

1.6 Contribution to knowledge

In terms of contribution to knowledge the research reveals different kinds of Belly Dancer identities, but not an exhaustive list and categorization. The research is a detailed study of the processes through which English Belly Dancers construct an ‘authentic’ Belly Dance identity. In

doing so it makes explicit an “Egyptian” model currently circulating in the English Belly Dancing community of practice. English Belly Dancers are using this narrative of authenticity to navigate and increase their economic value in a widening and increasingly global Belly Dance ethnoscape. The practitioners’ narratives of authenticity have to become flexible and renegotiated over time, in order to negotiate local and global contexts and traditions which differ and compete for primacy. A significant contribution to knowledge is the academic identification and documentation of an English Belly Dance tradition. I also show that authenticity in a dance from another culture is achievable. This research work will have implications for the practice of English Belly Dance at both local and global levels and for wider dance scholarship.

The objectives of the research are to unpack the narrative of an English Belly Dance past and present. It is to describe the *narratives of authenticity* of Belly Dancers who have been successful in making the transition from a proscribed English Belly Dance past towards a new English Belly Dancing present. Finally, the aim of the research is to consider implications for future Belly Dance performance practice in England and the further constructions of “authenticity”.

1.7 Thesis chapters

The following paragraph lists the subsequent chapters in summary and the relationship they have to the research question(s). Chapter two consists of two parts: part one the methodologies and part two the literature survey. It presents a detailed description of the critical framework and methods used to construct the research project, specific details of the critical incidents extracted from the data and the measures employed to contain post-hoc rationalisation of the research results. It also presents the field of Belly Dance studies as the contextual background from

which this research develops and to which it contributes. Chapter three presents the practices of two significant contributors to the English Belly Dance community during the 1980s onwards: Hilal and Buonaventura. Reading this chapter the reader can begin to comprehend the emergent themes of narratives of authenticity used in order to promote, react and then resist previous incarnations of Belly Dance, in order then to promote new narratives of an English Belly Dance tradition. Chapter three provides a contextual reading of a Belly Dancing past which frames the case studies for the next chapter. Chapter four considers the cultural capital of English Belly Dance compared with that found in Egyptian Belly Dance, American Belly Dance and Orientalist Belly Dance, further developing the notion that there is a distinctive and distinguishing character to English Belly Dance. Chapter four contextualises the practices of current English Belly Dance in the larger global flows and ethnoscape of Belly Dance that have emerged during the last decade. It also highlights the low economic status of Belly Dance in England, which has seen several practitioners travel, to borrow from or even move permanently to Egypt in order to raise their cultural capital. Chapter five provides a detailed examination of primary data sources concerning three narrative case studies of current English Belly Dance practitioners. It extracts the coda from the critical incidents and presents an analysis and distinctive configuration of a Belly Dancing-Self for each practitioner. Chapter six verifies the initial analysis formulated in chapter five, by cross-referencing teaching and performance material offered by each practitioner. This chapter further develops the findings from chapter five, providing further proof and elaborating on key themes found in the initial analysis to construct a more concise Belly Dancing-Self description for each practitioner. With this in mind, chapter seven starts to assert a development found within the English Belly Dance community that attempts to dis-identify with the dominant Orientalist mythos that ideologically and aesthetically underpins Belly Dance

practice globally. The gender-specific characteristics of this strategy to resist or at least subvert the undergirding patriarchal constructs of Belly Dance are an emergent theme in the post-Hilal and Buonaventura era. Chapter eight returns to the central research question and argument that suggests it is possible to construct an authentic Belly Dance performance in England, and wrestles with some of the more complex outcomes in the research.

Chapter 2: Part 1**2. Methodologies**

Designing a methodological approach to investigate how an authentic Belly Dance performance can be achieved by an English practitioner (such as myself) must draw from reflexivity as a mode of ethnographic inquiry (Buckland 2006, 17) and social theories of education and identity formation (Holland et al 2001). The concept of identity is central to this investigation. In order to support my argument that it is possible for an English practitioner to achieve an authentic Belly Dance performance it is necessary to examine current English Belly Dance practices. It is not enough to know that a Belly Dance performance is authentic but how it is authentic. English Belly Dance identity is located in the teaching and performing practices found in England and its relationship to the dance found in Egypt. English Belly Dance culture is a shared community of practice (Wenger 1998), one predicated on an underlying Orientalist paradigm (Dox 2006, Bacon 2003 and McDonald 2010). The research project requires a methodological approach that can describe and write about participatory experience in the field, to present data that can then be compared with observations and the life histories of practitioners.

Dance has a visual component. It is also described by Daly as “fundamentally a kinesthetic art” (1992, 243) Belly Dance is an invented dance tradition (O’Shea 2006, 125) one that relies on visual, kinesthetic and constructed myths and cultural memories of the Middle East (Dox 2006 and Maira 2008). Dance ethnography considers dance as a form of cultural knowledge, but in the case of the cultural knowledge found in Belly Dancing the issue of whose cultural knowledge embodied in the movement is problematised. The ethnographic interpretative tradition in which the socially negotiated conventions found in a dance genre and the people participating is limited

in this case. As Desmond points out dance as social action can be ambiguous (1994). In fact, the sociopolitical dimensions of an English Belly Dance practice are invoked when we consider the bodily theories (Foster 1995, 8) of globalization, transmigration, de- and re-contextualisation (Sklar 2000, 70). All of which are present in the wider Belly Dance ethnoscape⁸, and are pertinent to the challenges found in this search for the authentic Belly Dance performance in England. The blurred boundaries between what is danced as authentic, and who creates that authentic dance dominate the choice of research methodology and critical framework.

English Belly Dance practice is a shared community of practice (McDonald 2010, Bacon 2003, Paul 1998), one that produces self-organisation through creating communal functions and shared identities within which individual participants' own heuristic and creative processes form recognizable Belly Dance identities (see Holland et al 2001 and Wenger 1998). Due to the unfolding nature of the informants' Belly Dance identities it is important to consider the *act* and "heightened sense of kinaesthesia" of becoming a Belly Dancer. The phenomenological and kinesthetic approach is a growing area of dance and cultural studies (Jackson, 2001) and one other researchers have used (Hahn 2007, Potter 2008 and Skinner 2010), but for this project the "socially constructed nature of human movement" (Reed 1998, 503) is more suited to the search in which the "complex and circuitous relationships between past and present are then inseparably constituted in present discourse and biography" (Buckland 2006, 17).

⁸ I refer to Appadurai's notion of ethnoscape in his text (1996) *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press describes communities of shared practice as ethnoscares which traverse and exist beyond national borders and boundaries. The global communities of shared Belly Dance practice consist of different social, ethnic and cultural groups of practitioners all of which are engaged in the cultural exchange of Belly Dance (McDonald 2010, 2012).

With reference to O’Shea’s text *Dancing through History and Ethnography: Indian Classical Dance and the Performance of the Past* (2006, 123-153)⁹, a similar past and present dichotomy is found in the English Belly Dance community. Buckland’s diachronic and synchronic ethnographic methods of articulating dance histories and their relationship to present practice offers a historical process of unfolding “between the practice of the structure and structure of the practice” (Sahlins 1981, 72). It is apparent when the majority of Belly Dance scholarship identifies an imagined Belly Dance past (Sellers-Young & Shay 2003 and Dox 2006) that current practitioners make use of several historical and aesthetic reference points when pursuing dance training and authority. However, present English practitioners have realigned their training and aesthetic compass towards modern Belly Dance practices encountered in Egypt. It remains that an historical and reflexive ethnographic mode of inquiry allows for the multiple histories, locations, cultural situatednesses. As Sklar points out an ethnographer is best suited to “peer beyond dance towards all aspects of life and perceive dance in the contextual web of social relationships, environment, religion, aesthetics, politics, economics and history” (1991, 6).

In conjunction with reflexive ethnography, Holland et al’s¹⁰ (2001) notion of identity formation (figured worlds) with which they locate an individual’s changing identities over time on a constructivist and culturalist continuum, permits a closer examination of the internal psychological and external socio-political influences with which a Belly Dance identity is

9 O’Shea (2006) presents a written account of both past and present bharat natyam dance practice as active reference points for current bharat natyam practitioners’ identity formation.

10 Holland et al (2001) *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* USA: Harvard University Press

engaged¹¹. A shifting perspective of what constitutes the self in the predominantly soloist dancing practice of Belly Dance is the unit for analysis. The methodological approach of reflexive ethnography in conjunction with the critical framework outlining the Self in Belly Dance from Holland et al's cultural models theory allow for the constant shifting contexts and personal agency a Belly Dance practitioner encounters in relationship with several disparate Belly Dance mythic and cultural memory sources.

2.1 The sample

The selection of the final sample of dancers for the case studies began with grounded research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I retrieved lists of practitioners indexed in trade magazines, on internet websites and from conversations with informants. Other significant resources included Keyna Paul's (1998, Surrey University) survey of Belly Dance community dance practices in Greater London, and my own Master's Degree survey, *Professional Opportunities and Training for Belly Dance Practitioners in the UK* (Cooper, 2005b). Both surveys documented dynamic Belly Dance communities of shared practice (Wenger 1996, Wenger and Lave 1998). By comparing Keyna's (1998) findings with my survey (2005) it was possible to measure and identify, over a period of seven years, the movements of teacher populations, the rise of festivals and regional events, and distinctive sole trader enterprises which capitalized on travel to Egypt and Egyptian Belly Dance. In effect the two surveys demonstrate changes within the community in terms of named teachers, changing alliances between practitioners, the dissolution of Hilal and

¹¹ Belly Dancers engage in several processes of identity formation including training, teaching, internet forum discussion, publishing articles in trade magazines, creating home websites, facebook.com pages and a diverse range of performance styles and contexts in which they present their performance practices.

Buonaventura related dance companies in favour of new emergent forms of British Belly Dance and other projects.

The survey I conducted for my Master's Degree *Professional Opportunities and Training for Belly Dancers in the UK* (Cooper, 2005) revealed a growing population of Belly Dance practitioners in the United Kingdom travelling to Egypt in search of professional training. The encounter with Egyptian Belly Dance reported in the survey highlighted a rising anxiety among British practitioners concerning the experience of encountering a culturally different embodied form of Belly Dance. The difference compounded a desire among British practitioners to seek reassurance in their original Belly Dance training, and a desire to articulate their form of Belly Dance even when there is an identifiable cultural difference between British and Egyptian Belly Dance.

The survey also indicated an exponential rise in travel by British practitioners to Egypt from early 2000 onwards. The survey described an escalating number of Belly Dance tourism enterprises guiding groups of Belly Dance students in Egypt. In summary, the survey findings concluded that the mix of i) culture shock¹² ii) anxiety concerning issues of ownership and iii) the subsequent rise in Belly Dance tourism enterprises represented a shift among British Belly Dance practitioners from being Belly Dance teaching experts, towards becoming expert tour guides of Egyptian Belly Dance by taking their students out to Egypt.

Another development from the above survey included legal challenges made to the University by an informant. Questions concerning my partiality as an established practitioner in the field and

12 The culture shock experienced by informants includes their encounter with different customs, food, hot weather etc. It also includes their encounter with a new performance context for Belly Dance and new training movement techniques used by Egyptian Belly Dancers unseen before by English Belly Dancers.

the validity of my research methods and tact were raised. In light of this issue of partiality this incident focused the definition of the project and my insider-knowledge as a practitioner-researcher (Aull Davies 2008 and Coffey 1999). In fact, my response has been to become a case study. Again, the reflexive mode of ethnographic inquiry, a method evolved by Novack (1990), Savigliano (1995) and Sklar (1991, 2000), following the critiques of Marcus and Clifford in the 1980s, was confirmed as appropriate. In reference to Hahn's (2007) study *Sensational Knowledge: Embodying Culture through Japanese Dance* as a German/Japanese performer there is a need for Hahn to "write this ethnography with a reflexive voice because my body physically [psychologically, culturally and socially] experiences and informs my perspective on transmission, and ignoring this embodied voice would have been disingenuous" (Ibid, 5). This also describes Hahn's cross-cultural situatedness in her own development as a dancer through training, teaching and performing. The scholarly advantages of becoming one of the case studies enable the process of disseminating my own search for authenticity in Belly Dance performance. Interestingly some of it is related to my academic work, which also poses specific ethical questions, one of which is the need for a researcher-participant reciprocal feedback-loop with which my critics can examine my own *situatedness*. The fact remains I am an active member of the English Belly Dance community of shared practice and this is further made explicit by my participation as one of the case studies of this research.

2.1.1 Selecting five case studies

In addition to regular visits to Egypt (2005, 2006), in 2006 I guided a group of students to Egypt to generate a pilot study of English Belly Dance encounters with Egyptian Belly Dance and observe aspects like the culture-shock referred to in the earlier survey (2005). From this initial pilot research scheme given the breadth of research training and finances required to conduct

another project in Egypt, I refocused the research scope to English Belly Dance practitioners located in England, and not students. There were two main reasons for this scope. i) Practitioners living and working in England, whether they travelled regularly to Egypt or not, provide a more detailed examination of the development of a Belly Dance identity. A practitioner who teaches, performs and continues training presents the ideal scope for determining the search and attainment of authenticity in a Belly Dance performance. By comparison, a Belly Dance student – by definition – attends classes and workshops in the process of beginning to be a Belly Dancer i.e. in order to produce a performance and teaching practice. ii) The scope was reduced to a group of seven practitioners, all of whom are prominent practitioners in England, enabling deeper and contained study over a longer period of time.

The final sample of seven Belly Dance practitioners was selected initially to represent different regions of the United Kingdom. The sample was further reduced to English regions. A contributing factor for this choice included the need to identify prominent artists in the field (all of whom are located in England)¹³ and the need to maintain a field site in which all practitioners were engaged in national and regional activities to enable a continuity of shared identity and search for authenticity in performance. Eventually the choice of informants was divided into two groups: historical and current practitioners. The sample was tested using the methodological approach and methods of analysis and the sample was further reduced to two historical practitioners plus three current practitioners. The lack of a written historical narrative concerning English Belly Dance's past informed the choice for two historical practitioners. The

13 A search for prominent artists in Scotland, Ireland and Wales revealed only one artist – Lorna Gow – as a leading practitioner in the field willing to engage in the research. Lorna also moved to Egypt and was a permanent resident by 2006 which made regular contact increasingly difficult to sustain.

choice of three current practitioners was determined by selecting practitioners who inherit and continue those past English Belly Dance practices with new aesthetic and ideological development.

2.1.2 Searching for diversity

The issues of sustained access to the practitioners became a significant factor. Access to workshops, teaching work and performances was important in order to “attempt to return bodily experience as a form of consciousness and understanding to a central place within the discipline of ethnographic inquiry” (Ness, 1992, 239). To follow personal heuristic processes of Belly Dance instruction and identity construction, a sustained engagement with each case study was necessary. I needed to attend workshops, interview students, attend training workshops and classes the informant also attended, observe performances and film and record interviews and discussions with other prominent artists in the field. All of this primary data took time and regular engagement over a four year period. Gaining access to and receiving the confidence of practitioners was a paramount negotiation of the research work. Inevitably, earlier informants and possible case studies living permanently in Egypt were discarded.

It also became apparent that practitioners owned extensive archives and other documents for the research. It became obvious that the practitioners living and working in Egypt were only available in England once a year. Another prominent artist cancelled previously arranged meetings five times over four years; by the fifth cancellation I dropped this particular informant. Therefore the case studies offering sufficient detail and access to personal archived documents lent themselves to the development of embedded narrative case study design (Coffey 1999 and Abu Lughod 2001).

My own practice became an important feature of the ethnographic processes of immersion within the community. In effect, I was already immersed in the community. The difference was my researcher-practitioner identity, differed from a purely practitioner identity. The difference noted by my peers were my actions of sitting “out” and observing classes, taking notes, asking questions, attending events and not performing. By extracting my full involvement as a practitioner I attracted curiosity and in some cases suspicion. I was accused of attempting to “take secrets” by one practitioner, and by another I was accused of being “unprofessional.” The centrality of my own identity as a Belly Dancer and the heuristic processes of conducting this research led to the inclusion of myself as a case study. McDonald in her ethnographic study of English and American Belly Dancers in Cairo encountered similar reactions to her research project. She is a student-participant of Belly Dance and her main role is as a researcher not researcher-practitioner. Her student status and interest in Belly Dance – she attended classes, performances as a curious student/researcher – meant she was able to sustain communication with a wider sample of informants from several countries living and competing for Belly Dance contracts in Cairo over a longer period of time than I think I would have been able to. Interestingly, McDonald’s sample included a majority of English informants rather than American informants, which might have something to do with her American nationality and not being perceived as a potential “American Belly Dance” threat (2010 and 2012). As outlined earlier in a survey I conducted in 2005 Belly Dance in a national context, and arguably a global context (McDonald 2010), is largely an enterprise-based community of shared practice in which competition and protectionism are key characteristics.

The final three case studies also represent the diversity in the field with regard to Egypt. Caroline travels twice a year in Egypt, has an apartment in Cairo and is married to an Egyptian. Anne has

never been to Egypt and I have travelled to Egypt on several occasions (1999-2006). The diversity presented in relationship to Egypt is a key factor to consider when answering the main research question. With a reduction from seven to five case studies the issue arose concerning the reliability of a small sample. It is not the aim of the research to produce an exhaustive representation of the English Belly Dance past and present. The three key case studies selected are specifically valid because they inherit the tradition of Hilal and Buonaventura, which has become a key focus of the research.

2.1.3 Case studies

There are two forms of case study methodology employed in the research:

The first case study methodology is a literature based case study of two dominant English Belly Dance practitioners: Hilal and Buonaventura. In reference to Buckland's *Dancing from Past to Present* (2006) initial field work presented two significant findings i) the existence of a longer past trajectory of Belly Dance practice in England ii) continuing reference to that specific English Belly Dance past in current English Belly Dancing. To answer the research enquiry concerning how an English Belly Dancer can perform Belly Dance authentically, already findings have problematised the notion of one originating source of what can be termed an authenticating referent for Belly Dance.

Identifying a tradition was not the initial aim of the research question, but the fieldwork presented various *narratives* of “authenticity”¹⁴ an English Belly Dancer can achieve. One of

14 With regard to *narratives of authenticity*, I will further explain this concept in the literature survey to establish my theory concerning the narration of authenticity in English Belly Dance tradition and subsequent use in current English Belly Dance practices.

these narratives includes a coherent past Belly Dance practice, with an attributing ideological and aesthetic basis, which continues to inform and operate in present day English Belly Dance practice. The names of Hilal and Buonaventura repeatedly appear in interviews and discussions with English Belly Dance practitioners. Subsequent interviews conducted with Hilal (2008) and with Buonaventura (2009) revealed two complementary and disparate narratives of authenticity, which both complicated the notion of a single English Belly Dance tradition, and expanded our belief of what could be considered a cultural memory and past in an authentic Belly Dance performance (see Buckland 2006).

The second case study methodology is based on ethnographic research in the field. This empirical case study is an emergent¹⁵ approach in which the creative vision or Belly Dancing-Self of each practitioner is revealed. The processes of data collection through action research and ethnographic fieldwork, and the organization of the primary data into units of analysis from which narratives of authenticity are extracted, represent a bottom-up¹⁶ approach. With the Hilal and Buonaventura top-down approach the creative vision/Belly Dancing-Self of each practitioner could easily be identified before their narratives of authenticity, but with the bottom-up approach, the task at hand is to identify narrative strands of authenticity in order to determine each Belly Dancing-Self.

15 An emergent approach identifies developing trends and practices in the field, which is to say these practitioners are in the *process* of defining their Belly Dance identities and practices which in turn will form the next generation of English Belly Dance artists.

16 A bottom-up approach by contrast with a top-down approach implies a hierarchy within the community of practice and subsequent authority. The power relations within the field site and its impact on the “authenticating” of a Belly Dance performance will be made evident in later chapters. For now, a bottom-up approach indicates a method of determining the Belly Dance performance practices of establishing artists in the field. By contrast Hilal and Buonaventura have produced over three decades of performance work and generated substantial written and published material from which the data analysis has come.

Starting with the construction of detailed narrative case studies of each practitioner, Yin's (2009, 40) model of an embedded case study design lends itself to the extraction of what Bruner (1996) describes as critical incidents or incidents of "trouble". Webster and Mertova (2007) label these as critical events, denoting a heightened moment of change and transformation found during the processes of identity formation: in this case the development of a Belly Dance identity. These critical incidents are extracted from data and then categorized using an identity coda describing different identity perceptions of each case study's Belly Dancing-Self. From this identity coda, themes and narrative strands are extracted using discourse analysis (Gee, 1999) and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2000). This analysis strategy identifies shared social, aesthetic and cultural components of English Belly Dance identities and illuminates unique and different Belly Dancing-Selves from which the narrative threads of authenticity of each case study lead.

2.1.3.1 What is the case?

The case is the *narrative* of identity change found in the formation of a Belly Dancing-Self¹⁷. I am using an embedded multiple case study model (Yin, 2009) for three case studies: Anne White, Caroline Afifi and Siouxsie Cooper. The multiple case study approach enables the triangulation of three case studies in order to search for narratives of authenticity concerning ethnicity, gender, class and other "historical and cultural baggage that inevitably accompanies a linguistic representation of the bodily experiences of another culture" (Ness, 1992, 238).

The three narrative case studies of three current Belly Dance practitioners working in England represent the development of the tradition embodied by Hilal and Buonaventura (chapter three).

17 The term Belly Dancing-Self is used to illustrate the centrality of identity/Self in the formation and search for authenticity in Belly Dance performance. Biographical and interview data present a continuous cycle of training and research practitioners undertake in order to formulate a distinctive and recognisable Belly Dancing logo centre.

An extensive grounded research survey and interviews were conducted nationwide covering various high and medium profile practitioners. Caroline Afifi, Anne White and I presented a relevant and ideal sample of the continuation of the Hilal or Buonaventura tradition. Afifi, White and myself sustained long working relationships and attended extensive training programmes with either practitioner. The sample also presented changing practices in line with current trends and patterns in the wider community. Each current case study also represented over fifteen years' working experience in the community. They also have national and international presence as Belly Dance performer, event organiser and academic. In presenting professional Belly Dance career profiles and a commitment to the development of distinctive Belly Dance identities, they are suitable for the further narrative case study analysis of the professional Belly Dance scene in England.

The ethnographic interviews also lent themselves to the establishment of a multiple case study methodology. The identification of a diversity of informants (initially over thirty informants reduced to a manageable five) highlighted different and contrasting approaches to Belly Dance and the dance found in Egypt. Each interviewee placed her heuristic processes of Belly Dance identity formation with her perception of herself as a Belly Dancer. In effect, the comparing and contrasting of different case studies represents an inductive method of formulating theory from the particular – in this case critical incidents embedded in the case study – to the general (the Belly Dancing-Self), generating complementary narratives of authenticity for each practitioner (a bottom-up and emergent approach). The critical incidents narrate the Belly Dance education and identity formation found in the case studies (Webster & Mertova, 2007), producing identifiable narratives of authenticity, and help determine where on the culturalist and constructivist continuum each Belly Dance-Self is located (Holland et al 2001).

2.1.3.2 The unit of analysis: the critical incident

The units of analysis are critical incidents (see Webster & Mertova, 2007 and Bruner, 1996) found in the narrative case studies and represent key developmental stages which practitioners identify as crucial in becoming an 'authentic' Belly Dancer. The narrative case study approach, commonly used within social sciences and educational research, has a holistic approach to complexity, multiplicity of perspectives and human-centredness that lends itself to the narrations of Belly Dance identities for this study. As described by Webster & Mertova's text *Using Narrative Inquiry as a Research Method* (2007), critical event(s) or incidents (see Bruner 1996) within a given narrative provide the researcher with key "mechanisms by which the most important occurrences are transmitted" (2007, 72). The critical aspect of these incidents is best defined by Woods as the "right mix of ingredients at the right time and in the right context" (1993, 357), allowing researchers to pinpoint changes and transformations occurring during the formation of a specific identity.

Most dance ethnography is written without this overlay. I have found that the large amount of primary data produced during the research process lends itself to this type of organization, however. An important aspect of the research is to discover the moment, the critical moment(s) of change, resistance to past English Belly dance practices, and the development of new English Belly Dance identities in response to external stimulus, creative insight and in some cases fashions and trends within the community. During the process of conducting interviews practitioner's interchangeably describe their personal development and their development in Belly Dance practice in the form of insightful moments and or new perspectives they have drawn from training, new instructors, experiences in the field, travels to Egypt and so on, it would appear that the sense of "beginning to find out or discover the 'truth'" underlines the search for

authenticity in Belly Dance performance. Bruner's critical incident (1986) model provides the most coherent and accessible method of data organization and locating as accurately as possible the incidents of personal and professional Belly Dance transformation.

2.2 Methods

Methods of observation and generating primary data

Initially seven case studies were formally interviewed using a structured interview script for a period of three hours. These interviews were recorded and transcribed long hand. Interviews were conducted over a two-year period, which provided further and usually more detailed and nuanced material from which initial data could be verified and drawn out to reveal additional changes of perspective over time. The interviewing process began in 2008 and was completed in 2011. My own formal interview was conducted by Adam Dalton¹⁸, over a four-hour period following the structured interview script used for all practitioners. Further material that I generated on Belly Dance internet discussion sites provided secondary material with which to compare and contrast my formal interview.

One of the main components of the research is dance; each practitioner was filmed executing movements during the interview. The purpose of the filming was to capture each practitioner's Belly Dance teaching, detailing how they moved, how they described the movement and how they taught movement units found in the Belly Dance lexicon. Other information appeared during the filming, including comparison with older material. For example Caroline Afifi demonstrated a previously taught method of producing a camel and more recent methods – learnt in Egypt – to produce the same movement. Filming dancers proved to be a valuable source of

¹⁸ A J Dalton is a published fantasy novelist and used to be an EFEL teacher and product designer for the British Council.

material, especially when informants seemed to be more familiar with being filmed than they were with sound recording instruments.

Two workshops from each of the three practitioners have been selected in order to cross-reference findings and notes taken during both workshops. Initially, when attending workshops I only observed and took notes. This changed to a more participatory involvement in each selected workshop. For example when observing Anne's Baladi workshop at MADE (2008) she continually referred to me as an observer. This interfered with both the observation and the flow of the workshop the only option was to participate fully. An extra benefit of this was that it allowed me to access better my kinesthetic intelligence as a dancer, rather than privileging inadequately written explanatory notes and descriptions of the workshop process. By immersing myself in the experience of learning from each practitioner the dance-object and the teaching processes and techniques offered became a primary data source. This posed difficulties when approaching my own workshop material. The solution adopted was to ask for written and verbal feedback from students and hosts (teachers who had invited me to give a workshop) and for selected students in the workshop process to repeat a movement and verbal instruction for me to measure the effectiveness of the taught material and gain insight into how a student processes the material on offer. It was not an entirely satisfactory method and filming my workshops presented another solution. Still there is no fail safe method of observing your own work in the field (Coffey 1999 and Aull Davies 2008), only innovations on a theme.

One unexpected advantage of selecting Anne White was her extensive archive of collected documents, one that includes newspaper clips, filmed interviews, filmed performances, academic texts concerning earlier Belly Dance research in the field and other resources. Caroline Afifi did not produce an archive in hard copy form, although her regular presence on internet Belly Dance

discussion sites and subsequent posting of material from her previous performance work assisted in the collection of relevant data. My own practice archive, including research texts, published articles and filmed performances, is included as primary source material. Initially interviews and performance work were considered the only data available, but it is clear the internet has provided new sites for practitioner interaction and these constitute primary data source sites and in some cases discursive sites in which researchers can approach case studies directly (Aull Davies 2008).

A sustained involvement at various levels within the Egyptian and English communities of Belly Dance practice including students, audience members and traders, has provided notes and documents concerning peer review, student observations and commentary of individual case studies and broader community concerns. The material presented from other conversations, interviews and forum-based debates have provided further verification of the primary data and presented new angles of approach. Again collecting data and opinion in reference to my work created suspicion and or flattery. An indirect method employed was to ask trusted colleagues to elicit information on my behalf – again there are specific ethical issues concerning this method – these outweighed the benefits, and because the subject was myself I felt it was a valuable tool and valid method of extracting social perspectives on my Belly Dancing in the community.

Chapter 2: Part 2**2.3 Literature Survey****2.3.1 Research Question(s)**

Identity is a key concept and issue when posing a research question that asks how an English Belly Dancer can attain authenticity in performance. It also presents several issues regarding terminology and the concepts of what constitutes tradition, authenticity, dance and performance of another culture's dance form in a different cultural context. For the inquiry another concern is why Belly Dance presents an ideal ethnographic research subject over other dance cultures and genres. The research is practice-led and examines the work of current practitioners in the field, inevitably bringing to the fore and problematising the identity issue further, by introducing the notion of personal agency beyond our notion of what constitutes the dance-object. To support my claim that Belly Dance can be performed authentically in England and that it is possible within a Belly Dance performance to dis-identify with the Orientalist paradigm this chapter presents the case with reference to the Belly Dance field of research. It will also consider relevant areas of interest with regard to the wider dance studies field and other scholarly fields including performance studies, gender studies, and post-colonial studies in order to provide a "background to and justification for the research undertaken" (Bruce 1994, 218) and its contribution to knowledge.

The socio-geographic focus of the research is Belly Dance found in England, omitting Wales, Ireland and Scotland. Initially, the term British was used but the reduction of the research scope to practitioners based in England presented a different Belly Dance ethnoscape (Appadurai 1996). British identity and Britishness is related to appellations related to the membership of a United Kingdom. The recent devolution process dividing the United Kingdom into Scotland,

Northern Ireland and Wales represents a range of British identities including Englishness. Likewise practitioners interviewed for the research questioned my use of British and referred to themselves variously as Scottish, Welsh, English and Northern Irish. With reference to the complex notion of locality and nation-state enunciated in the term British and to Appadurai's statement that "For the project of the nation-state, neighbourhoods present a perennial source of entropy and slippage" (Ibid, 190). I have settled on the term English Belly Dance, which invariably partakes in Appadurai's entropy and slippage, for example between the borders of Scotland and England. I use the term England not to deny this slippage, but to disclose the socio-geographical location a practitioner identifies as part of their identity. In addition, the only ethnographic study of Belly Dance in Britain is by Bacon (2003), who identifies an urban English landscape, not a British landscape or United Kingdom landscape. In this research landscape has been replaced with *ethnoscape* (referring to the people and their transitory situatedness¹⁹) and to maintain continuity with Bacon's research in the English field of Belly Dance. In addition the majority of Belly Dance related texts refer to both Egyptian or American Belly Dance practitioners and culture. Already the limited supply of research associated with English Belly Dance indicates a gap in the body of knowledge and the unique contribution this project offers.

19 Appadurai defines ethnoscape by suggesting that "the landscapes of identity – the ethnoscapas – around the world are no longer tightly territorialised, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogenous" (1996, 48). He also suggests that this repositioning of our disciplinary conventions in anthropology and ethnography offer a method of identifying the cultural dimensions of globalisation and its profoundly interactive characteristic.

2.3.2 Belly Dance research

Recent additions

The Belly Dance field of research is a growing area of scholarship. The research available concerning English Belly Dance is limited (Bacon, 2003, Paul, 1998 and McDonald, 2010) compared with the numerous research papers and literature available concerning American and Egyptian Belly Dance (Monty, 1986, Shay & Woods, 1976, Sellers-Young & Shay, 2003, 2005). Bacon's text *Unveiling Arabic Dance in the Urban English Landscape* (2003) is an ethnographic study of a group of Belly Dance students and their teacher in Northampton. Bacon's research considers the community dance qualities and characteristics of Belly Dance in the Northampton fieldsite and develops a methodology with which to analyse the movement and performance work of the practitioners. Bacon considers the notion of authenticity in another cultural form in a different cultural context and suggests that the main focus of the dance for the research informants is the reflexive dance practice that heightens gendered awareness and even a sense of feminine spirituality. However, Bacon's case studies do present a narrative through which they articulate their sense of what constitutes authenticity in Belly Dance. As shown in chapter four Bacon omits the growing interest and practice of travelling to Egypt in the early 2000s, opting to concentrate on the movement itself, the meaning found in the practice by her informants and analysing the community dance characteristic Belly Dance brings to the English landscape.

A recent addition to the body of research work concerning Belly Dance practice in England is the work of McDonald's doctorate thesis (2010) *Belly Dance and Glocalisation: constructing Gender in Egypt and on the Global Stage*. Despite the title and McDonald's American nationality, which provides something of an American perspective, a significant amount of the

research is conducted in England. Although a number of the case studies used are English practitioners they are not the case studies used in this project, even though they are related. McDonald's thesis is a noteworthy inclusion of this literature survey. McDonald seeks a method to describe the social and cultural exchange of Belly Dance. She offers valuable case study material which highlights the search for authenticity in Belly Dance performance by non-Egyptian Belly Dance nationals working in Cairo. However, McDonald considers the search for the authentic in Belly Dance to be a problematic one, she posits:

This facet of conflict [concerning issues of ownership and authenticity], 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. (2010, 111)

I would argue that the construction of gender in Belly Dance is both a narrative thread relating to the construction of authenticity and also the reiteration of a fundamental concept in the Orientalist paradigm.

McDonald maintains that “essentialism and positivism create untenable positions concerning authenticity and ‘ownership’” (Ibid, 108) an opinion we share, but our positioning of the concept of ‘authenticity’ within our respective research projects differ. McDonald seeks to examine the connections groups of Belly Dancers maintain internationally through technology and travel to Egypt in order to provide insights into how such networks grow (Ibid, 6). My research considers the practice of artists in the English Belly Dance community, the aesthetic and ideological strategies they employ, and the direct or indirect relationship they maintain with Egyptian Belly Dance to determine how they construct authenticity in performance. In reality, McDonald's research, I would argue, does provide several key narratives of authenticity relating to the significance of gender in a Belly Dance performance (Ibid, 99-111). However, she does not

acknowledge them as such and effectively dismisses the search for the “authentic” in the Anglo-Egyptian Belly Dance exchange. By contrast, this research considers gender to be one of the various conflicting narratives of authenticity practitioners use to create a Belly Dance performance.

Other significant Belly Dance texts

The research conducted in Egypt - most notably Karin Van Nieuwkerke’s seminal text *A Trade like Any Other* (1996) was produced at the American University of Cairo (AUC) - brings into sharp relief issues concerning the ownership and authentication of Belly Dance knowledge within the Western sphere of academia (see Said 1999). More recently Roushdy (2010) has produced field research and polemic, at the AUC, but from the perspective of an Egyptian scholar working in the cabaret nightclub performance field. Nieuwkerke’s widely read and acknowledged research considers the historical progression, the colonial influences, the various social dance forms and the social stigma a dancer confronts living and working in Egypt. This epic social study considers the nightclub dancers and discusses their predicament from a historical and social perspective. Roushdy’s new contribution to the field considers the performance of Belly Dance found in the nightclubs, specifically the role and performative qualities found in the performance of Baladi, a style of dance and music within the Belly Dance nightclub repertoire (2010, 71-99), which concurs with Lorus’s impressionistic research findings in the Egyptian nightclub dance field (1996, 513-523). Her research and perspective adds to and concurs with my own field research conducted in Egypt concerning the role and the ontological status of Belly Dance in Egypt. Roushdy’s attention to the nightclub dance-object, and the performative qualities found therein, also correlates with my attention to the Belly Dance performances found in England. McDonald’s texts (2010, 2012) view the social and cultural

borders crossed by non-Egyptians finding professional dance work in Egypt. She considers the complex social and cultural paradigms negotiated by the import of Belly Dance talent to Egypt and the differences encountered. Roushdy (2010) and McDonald's (2010) research socially and culturally frame this research in terms of the practice found in Egypt and its relationship to the practitioners located in England.

During the life-span of this research two significant texts have been published concerning the “transnational” status of Belly Dance, with contributors from Cyprus (Karayanni, 2005) to America (Shay and Sellers-Young, 2005) offering insight and primary research data regarding the development of different national forms of Belly Dance, including the urban dance genre Egyptian Belly Dance (Adra 2005). Since their publication new theses and published texts have emerged. These texts have discussed the rising status of fusion dance forms emerging from America and practised in Europe (Frühauf, 2009), the cross-fertilisation of New Zealand ethnic identities with Middle Eastern dance (Kelly, 2008) and the representation of the Belly Dancer in novels and imagery (Keft-Kennedy, 2005) in Australia. There are more examples of work emerging in the field. The above list represents the diversity and, more significantly, the search for a common or, in some cases, a unique hybridisation of nationhood with the use or alteration of the Belly Dance form. Previous work in the field discussed and described the arrival and the community value of Belly Dance practice, with little examination of the aesthetic and ideological underpinnings and changes “imposed” on the dance genre (discussed in Dox's text *Dancing Around Orientalism* 2006). These earlier texts attempted to acknowledge the presence of Belly Dance in Western locations (Monty 1986, Bacon 2003, Carlton 1994, Shay & Woods 1976), and or the disputed social and cultural status of Belly Dance in Egypt (Nieuwkerke 1996). Over the last decade the identity of the “host” nation and the personal agency either a New Zealander,

American, Australian, German, Finnish or English practitioner brings to the dance genre has come to the fore.

Later work emerges, including Bock (2005 & 2011), Dox (2006), Maira (2008), Jamarkani (2006), Sellers-Young (1998, 2003, 2005), Zuhur (1998) Shay (1999, 2003, 2005), Forner (1998) and Carlton (1994). This later work not only demonstrates a continuing interest in the subject of Belly Dance found in academia, but it also describes changing cultural and feminist appraisals concerning the “appropriation” and the representation of Belly Dance within the geographical limits of America and beyond. Earlier work in the field focused on marking the map and establishing a historical context and methodology for Belly Dance research (Saleh 1979, Monty 1986, Shay & Woods 1976 and Franken 2002). This work was based in the dance ethnology and anthropology disciplines. The methodologies employed framed the social and cultural dance-object; with Saleh’s (1979) depiction and annotation of the social dances of Egypt; Fahmy’s recollections as a folk dancer in the Reda Troupe (2001); and Shay and Woods’ (1976) discussion of the social and political dynamics of the practitioners based in America²⁰. Later work by Dox (2006) and Maira (2008) highlight the political inequity and Western construction of the Orient found within the American rendition of the dance. Maira takes this perspective further, suggesting that the American Belly Dancer is an extension of the United States’ imperialist project in the Middle East (2008, 317-345). Already a shift away from categorising and cataloguing a chronological encounter and appropriation of the dance into the American

²⁰ It is interesting to note that Morocco conducted research in North Africa for over thirty years and preferred to publish articles on her website than present a written research thesis. Eventually – after a ten year sabbatical – she completed her large text *You Asked Auntie Rocky* (2011). Where her fellow American practitioners and scholars describe the development of an “American” version of the dance, with attributing issues concerning the Arab Diaspora in America, Morocco presents a more cross-cultural perspective of Belly Dance and other social dance forms she has practised in the USA and across the globe for over fifty years.

entertainment industry and social dance practices has been eclipsed by the need to examine the power relations found in the ideological and aesthetic underpinnings of the practice in the States. Dox unapologetically exposes the invented foundations upon which American participants claim to know the East through the dance. In fact she suggests that this dance has more to do with exposing the gender and social inequities found in America than it has anything to do with the Middle East (2006, 53-54).

These above texts differ from the work conducted by Bock (2006) and Forner (1998), whose Master's theses attempt to reposition American Belly Dance as a unique form of Belly Dance with its own identity and narratives of authenticity (although they do not use these terms; rather, they present an identity and related narratives). Both researchers examine the practice of practitioners in the field and from this primary research they present evidence of an American Belly Dance identity. Kelly (2003) similarly presents and extracts a pseudo Maori-New Zealand identity found within the New Zealand form of Belly Dancing. Tofik-Karam (2010) highlights the Brazilian multi-ethnic project in which multiple diaspora communities engage in cultural practices, in this case Brazilian Belly Dancers performing for male Lebanese nightclub attendees. The troublesome question of authenticity and ownership of the dance has refocused Belly Dance research to incorporate ethnographic research and case studies of participants and practitioners in the field.

Documents and texts found outside academia offer similarly contrasting and concurring perspectives. There are notable non-academic bodies of ethnographic research conducted in the field, including by A'isha Ali (www.aishaali.com) and Morocco (www.casbahdance.com). They offer filmed events, performances and documents that detail their firsthand experiences in the Middle East and also their experiences in the American Belly Dance community. There is very

little divide between the two locations and the dance each produces, although both researchers present a conservationist perspective – similar to that expressed by Said (1999) and Dox (2006) – in which they claim that the dance traditions found in Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia etc are the loci from which a practitioner sources in order to produce a bona fide Belly Dance performance. This conservationist perspective, Said insists, reinforces the “museum” like attitude to the Middle East and perpetuates the Orientalist mythos. Morocco and Ali would argue that in fact the dance is transportable through the context of the music. The dance does not necessarily reside in the landscape and bodies of the Middle East – it can be transmissible through their own endeavours to embody the “authentic” through their own fieldwork investigations in the Middle East. Nonetheless the growing number of these available is providing new perspectives on both the subject and the methods of conducting research.

Three American commentators present different perspectives on the notion of authenticity in American Belly Dance practice. Dox’s text (2006) *Dancing around Orientalism*, Deagon’s text (1999) *Origins of the Dance: Real History, Or Fragments of Ourselves?* and Maira’s text (2008) *Belly Dancing: Arab-Face, Orientalist Feminism and U.S. Empire* present an alternative notion of what can be perceived as authentic and the origins of Belly Dance. All three commentators refer to American Belly Dance traditions and practice, and question whether the American Belly Dance tradition contains any reference to the practice found in the Middle East. Dox is adamant that American Belly Dance references a post-1970s feminist re-interpretation of the Orientalist mythos in which the revealing of one’s lost femininity is unveiled. Maira on the other hand is suspicious of any reference to the Middle East in American Belly Dance, suggesting that there is only a representation of an American imperialist political agenda in the performance of a “sanitised” and knowable *Arabness* in American Belly Dance. Deagon’s (1999) account, first

published in the respected American Belly Dance trade journal *Habibi*, offers a classicist interpretation of the search for an origin. In effect Deagon uncovers the function of narrative to establish a cohesive image and rationale for Belly Dance practice in America she recounts narratives of female archetypes, narratives of a feminine spiritualism, narratives of an ancient Egyptian past and other narrates. Where Dox and Maira are insistence that an authentic Belly Dance performance by an American Belly Dance is impossible: Deagon recalibrates the origin myth toward narratives of origin, describing a process of constructing through narrative various social, political and cultural perspectives of Belly Dance.

Internet based research

One important change for a researcher is the use of the internet to build discussion forums. Two main sites have emerged for the Belly Dance community in the form of “bhuz.com” and “orientaldancer.com”. Another two smaller forums, “1970s Belly Dance” (on facebook.com) and the recently defunct site “masr360.com”, have been other international Belly Dance discursive sites available for a researcher to measure and engage in Belly Dance discourse. With reference to Aull Davies (2011), for research purposes, these new virtual spaces are sites in which a researcher can build relationships with participants. It is also a treacherous virtual space with many aliases and in some cases fantastical personal information that need to be handled with caution and respect. I experienced a public “outing” by a disgruntled participant who suggested to the wider bhuz.com community that my questions posted on various discussion threads were in fact a ruse to provoke debate and quotations I would later use in my official research. After an informal consultation with the site mediators and a sample pool of concerned participants, it was suggested that I make a formal request to quote a participant’s post, if needed, and that my researcher bias was actively welcomed. With these ethical issues in mind I have

decided to use these forums as an informal method of measuring the relevance and validity of Discourses and Conversations (Gee, 2001) presented in this thesis. I have decided not to source or quote directly from the sites' discussion threads. Instead the forums provide a method of verifying the research undertaken. They are not a primary data source.

Practitioner-researcher texts

Another newly published text available for researchers is the long awaited semi-autobiographic, historical, factual and fictional account of Morocco's life and work in the American Belly Dance industry and her long term research work in rural and urban Morocco. The text's title provides a clear indication of who the authority on all things Belly Dance is: *You Asked Aunt Rocky: Answers and Advice about Raqs Sharqi and Raqs Shaabi* (2011, Morocco is also known as Carolina Varga Dinicu). Morocco's text represents the continuation of the practitioner/expert tradition in Belly Dance literature. Wendy Buonaventura's text *Serpent of the Nile* (1989, 2011) is one of the most well known and well read, and a recently republished text (available in 21 languages worldwide). In the case of Morocco, an active international exponent of Belly Dance, she dispels various myths that have circulated during the rise of internet forum debate and accumulated mis-information which she humorously refers to as "fakelore". She also provides additional writing concerning her own lengthy research projects in the field, specifically amongst the Berber communities in Morocco, providing insight into her versions of what constitutes authenticity and origins of Belly Dance. Morocco's version includes regional variations in line with Dox's analysis (2006, 62). According to Dox, Morocco represents the post-9/11 era of American Belly Dancers who brought to the fore the relationship between the generic American cabaret style of Belly Dance practice and the cultures and different peoples of the Middle East and North Africa, in an attempt to counter fear-mongering and abuse towards the Belly Dance

culture found in the States. She also, as Said remonstrates, in her own practice²¹ takes a conservationist/traditionalist perspective when approaching the subject of correct or valid cultural practices and sources of material used by practitioners.

In particular, Morocco's website (www.casbahdance.com) offers field notes and polemic concerning several issues related to authenticity and the origins of movements. She clearly describes witnessing a birthing rite in which the women of a village surrounded the birthing mother and together coaxed the woman with undulation movements performed en masse; in effect a group effort to entice the baby through the birth canal²². Morocco suggests that these movements and their everyday application in the woman-centred activity of birthing provides a form of certifiable evidence and explanation for the characteristic undulations found in North African and Middle Eastern dance. This somatic investigation into the phenomenological function and purpose of the undulation movements may have some foundation, but it does not explain the social and cultural foundations of Belly Dance, particularly the urban nightclub theatre dance found across the Middle East.

In her most recent research offering (2011,14) Morocco clearly demarcates what constitutes Raqs Baladi from Raqs Sha'abi. She also acknowledges the significance of the 1920s *Casino Opera* nightclub enterprise of Badia Masabni. Her findings concur with my own, which date the modern Middle Eastern nightclub dance theatre form Raqs Sharqi to this era. Consequently, Raqs Sharqi, Oriental dance or Belly Dance is a relatively modern invention, not an ancient one,

21 I attended Morocco's workshops at Celebrating Dance in Devon (2005 & 2006) and she presented recordings of live music played in Morocco and gave lengthy and detailed accounts of the movements, their meaning and application in the Schikhatt traditional dances of Morocco.

22 See www.cabahdance.com for further reading.

and references both Egyptian social dances and European dance theatre practices. Even Buonaventura relays a similar narrative concerning Badia Masabni (1989, 149). Helland's (2001, 128-136) text *The Belly Dance: Ancient Ritual to Cabaret Performance* identifies *Casino Opera* to be one of the various links between ancient Egyptian and modern Egyptian dance forms found in Dils and Cooper-Albright's *Moving History/Dancing Cultures: a dance history reader*. In addition several interviews I have conducted in the field have confirmed similar findings (Afifi 2009, Amrani 2010, Farouk 2010, Yasmina 2005, Pender 2008 & White 2010).

The invention of an Egyptian-European urban dance performance genre

With these findings in mind, it remains the case that several discussions on forums have turned to the consideration of what the origins or the points of departure are with which we can discuss the roots of modern Belly Dance. Without doubt this is a significant issue, and one that does contribute to this literature survey, perhaps more than it does to the main body of the thesis in which the narratives of authenticity concerning English Belly Dance are a priority. I would suggest the roots are the year 1926, the location the Egyptian nightclub²³ *Casino Opera* (now the site of the Sheraton Hotel in Dokki, Cairo) and the entrepreneur Badia Masabni²⁴ (already highlighted in chapter one).

23 Caroline Afifi has presented several seminars concerning her research into the different social and dance cultures of Egypt. According to Afifi Egyptian nightclubs are separate to Tourist nightclubs and the dancing found within are similarly different in character. The Egyptian nightclub is characterised by the clientele, the majority of which are Egyptian not Westerners, and the transient nature of the enterprise. It is common to find that an Egyptian nightclub has changed venue due to external economic and social pressures. The Egyptian nightclub, according to Afifi, is one of the few cultural hubs in Egyptian life that was not directly affected by the recent revolution, whereas the majority of the Tourist nightclubs were burnt to the ground. (NADA AGM, Liverpool, 2010)

24 My own investigations incorporate several "narratives", including attending the Scholars of Dance History Society (SDHS, 2010) conference in which Prof Buckland presented a paper on the European masked balls – in particular her discussion of the masked balls found in Paris, France. I suggested to Prof Buckland that Badia Masabni – the founder of modern dance theatre Belly Dance – had witnessed these extravagant and commercially viable masked balls in Paris, with which she incorporated her

Masabni's *Casino Opera* catered for Egyptians and British ex-pats and consisted of a variety of entertainment acts, including magicians, comedians and dance. The main dance attraction was the Latin dancers, not the Egyptian dancers (soon to become the Raqs Sharqi dancers or we will refer to them as Egyptian Belly Dancers). The Egyptian dancers were there to perform a theatrical version of Raqs el Baladi commonly found in various Egyptian domestic situations and celebrations (Adra, 2005). It was only later that key dancers – including the well known and loved Tahiya Carioca²⁵ – began to make their names as talented Egyptian theatrical dancers at the expense of other dance forms originally reviewed at *Casino Opera*.

An example of the syncretic (Dox, 2006) character of Masabni's theatrical rendition of the urban dances of Egypt is the incorporation of the veil. The veil was initially a dance accessory used by the Latin dancers to provide mystery and exoticism during their performances. Again it is a question of the relative measure of which dance from which country is considered exotic according to any particular audience member. The Egyptians found the South Americans and their dance exotic; the British ex-pats found the Egyptians so.

Belly Dance moved into other arts and media. As the Anglo-Egyptian film industry developed (Dougherty 2005, 145-169) the Egyptian Belly Dancer became the emblem of social and cultural transformation in the film's narrative (Ibid, 167). Consequently, this new Belly Dance performance context brought new social meaning, resulting in the heightened notoriety of both the dance and the dancers in Egyptian society. In effect, the nightclub dance moved into a new

own version in the new nightclub enterprise *Casino Opera* 1926. Prof Shay was present and commented that my observations were in fact very probable.

25 Tahiya Carioca, an oft eulogised Belly Dance artist from the 1930s (Said, 1999), began her dance career as a Latin dancer at *Casino Opera*. She moved into television and film work as an actress and popular dancer. In fact, her stage name Carioca incorporates her Latin dance heritage.

context and to a wider audience via these films, resulting in performers like Tahiya Carioca becoming a household name over night (Said, 1999). Badia's syncretic theatre dance form (there are several examples of the dancers available on youtube.com) was not only a mixture of Egyptian dance and European theatrical practices, it also began to reach wider audiences through new entertainment mediums and contexts. Belly Dance was in fact a mobile and malleable dance theatre practice, one that was able to mix mediums, transform practitioner's identities and adapt to different cultural contexts and forces.

2.3.3 English Belly Dance research

Belly Dance is generally a small area of interest within the comparatively undersized discipline of dance scholarship. The textual and material elements of dance studies are common characteristics shared with other research fields in which practice-based and practice-led investigations are a valid form of research, including theatre, performance studies and visual art (Carson 2000 and Murray 2009). This research brings literature based research together with practice-led research in the field. The Belly Dance work of current practitioners in the field represents a significant unit for analysis alongside other textual sources. The first thesis on English Belly Dance by Bacon (2003) similarly utilises a case study and ethnographic method of studying the actual dance practice taking place within the English community. This research project builds on Bacon's findings but it differs from Bacon's sole community dance focus. This research incorporates the practices of key English Belly Dance practitioners, which also constitute a form of dance in the community. It also examines the performance profiles, exchange work in Egypt and other non-community dance-based activities which contribute towards and define their Belly Dance practices in England.

Bacon details analysis and examination of a group of dancers in Northampton and alludes to the internal politics and shared knowledge practices found in a community dance practice. The shared practice refers to the results of an examination of one style of Belly Dance movement and teaching methodology; whereas this research project considers multiple versions of Belly Dance movement and teaching practices within the English field site. Bacon does contextualise her project by mentioning key practitioners on the national Belly Dance circuit, and her use of the name “Arabic Dance” confirms the Buonaventura tradition that her case study inherited (Ibid, 72-73). Yet, Bacon does not explain or examine the work of a similar group working within the Hilal tradition. Bacon’s field work reveals limitations in ethnographic work, focusing on the micro-levels of practice and omitting the macro-levels of aesthetic influence and ideological underpinning (Desmond, 1997). “Belly Dance” is not a neutral term and its complex relationship with other forms of Belly Dance outside England cannot be omitted either.

The culmination of Bacon’s research is a discussion of the meaning participants find when performing Belly Dance movement, group choreography and the attributing female-only social activities. In particular, this research considers the construction and masquerade of “femininity” in a Belly Dance performance. A significant aspect of the “authentic” in a Belly Dance performance is some form of identification with the Orientalist mythos and in some cases an active subversion of it (Pêcheux 1982). The research correlates the performance strategies adopted by English practitioners with those found in other locations, particularly in Egypt, as a measure of how and what English practitioners are identifying within the underlying patriarchal construct of the harem fantasy. The research examines the creative strategies and personal mythos each practitioner pursues in their teaching and performance practice in order to identify how they produce an “authentic” performance. The selection of research-participants includes

practitioners who travel and work in Egypt in addition to working as a Belly Dancer in England. It also includes those who have no such direct relationship with Egypt. I argue that the Middle East, specifically Egypt, is an ideological and aesthetic fulcrum upon which an English Belly Dancer's practice is validated and authenticated. It therefore stands, with reference to Bacon's thesis, that considering a Belly Dance practice in England taken in isolation from the practice and cultural exchanges taking place with practitioners and the wider Belly Dance *ethnoscape* (Appadurai, 1996) restricts our knowledge and understanding of Belly Dance practice in England.

McDonald (2010) suggests that various Belly Dance practices, whether located in England, America, or Egypt, all share and continue to reaffirm codes and conventions²⁶ concerning the validity and identity of their Belly Dance practice. The mechanism for this sharing includes the use of the internet and, more recently, high profile international festivals hosting "Egyptian" Belly Dance stars. I argue that again Egypt continues to be the fulcrum upon which non-Egyptian Belly Dancers narrate their involvement through these activities which reinforce their dance training, their cultural encounters, their experiences of working with professional Egyptian Belly dancers and other "Egyptian Belly Dance" related activities. Dox argues (2006, 54) that the Salome temptress figure represents the symbolic underpinning of a Belly Dance practice in the West. By contrast the dance training found in Egypt and taught by Egyptian practitioners provide a differing "socially encrusted" (Cowan 1990, 130) way of being in the dancing. It would follow that there exists a split between what is represented as Belly Dance on the Western stage and what is physically taught in the Egyptian studio.

²⁶ These codes and conventions related specifically to Dox's notion of the Orientalist paradigm, one in which a fantastical all female harem, bedroom or secluded "private" space is conjured, the dancer is scantily clad and the female performer presents seductive body movements – specifically the use of the pelvis – with attributing sexual connotations and promise.

This research examines the current English Belly Dance ethnoscape and its relationship to Egypt and other communities of shared practice. The focus is the English community of shared Belly Dance practice and, correspondingly, this ethnoscape consists of a variety of practitioners and practices (McDonald 2010 and Paul 1998). McDonald's research highlights the ex-pat population of English Belly Dance artists working in Cairo. The interviews found in McDonald's thesis comprise of practitioners seeking professional dance employment and other practitioners playing support roles and or developing Belly Dance-related enterprises in Cairo, England and America (2010 & 2012, 239-285). McDonald's research highlights the discrepancies between what is perceived, conceived and performed as Belly Dance in England compared to that found in Egypt. Lorna Gow, one of her research-participants, and also a practitioner interviewed for this research paper, discusses the complexities of audiences' demands in Egypt compared with those found in England. Gow (2011), in an interview, candidly expressed her loathing when returning to England to perform: "I feel the pressure to make choreography, to make it refined and sharp, so that people get wowed by the technical aspects of my dancing. In Egypt they want to feel you. You have to be emotional and you have to show them the emotions or they walk out" (interview Leeds, 2011). McDonald's thesis and subsequent publication *Global Moves: Belly Dance as an Extra/Ordinary Space to Explore Social Paradigms in Egypt and around the World* (2012) indeed offers a slice of the cultural and social contradictions encountered by English Belly Dance practitioners abroad. It does not, however, explore how these contradictions are assimilated, reconfigured and manifested in performance and in the studio back in England.

2.3.4 Belly Dance in the wider dance study field

The people content and research focus requires ethnographic field work methods (Buckland 2006, Coffey 1999, Amit 2000 and Aull Davies 2011). The ethnographic work of the pioneering, post-1990s dance ethnographic approaches, in which the researcher is firmly positioned at the centre of a practitioner-informant matrix, is an approach that informs the design of this project (Ness 1992, Cowan 1990, Savigliano 1995, and Browning 1995). Since the 1990s dance ethnography has focused on the researcher becoming an active agent in the research process by becoming a practitioner-informant. It is possible both to be a case study and study my own construction of my Belly Dancing-Self. It also complicates the processes of fieldwork (Coffey 1999, Denzin 2000, Clifford 1986, 1988 and Van Maanen 2011) and particular points concerning “self-ethnography” (Coffey 1999, 115-135). The role of an English Belly Dance practitioner, a case study and the researcher continually erupt and present them selves throughout the research process. Already in the methodology part of this chapter, I have covered techniques and methods used to verify and validate findings with specific concerns addressing my “partiality”. Belly Dance would ordinarily be considered an ethnic dance form in the anthropological field of study. This taxonomy has been replaced with the world dance category although within the Belly Dance field the words cross-cultural, global, glocal and transnational are in more common use (Sellers-Young 2005, McDonald 2012). By positioning my practice in the research sample I am continuing the researcher-informant tradition. In this case my practice emerges from an English Belly Dance tradition, with reference to the practice found in Egypt, but also as a practitioner with an identifiable Belly Dancing identity and contribution to the English community of shared Belly Dance practice.

The fact that the English practitioners study a non-English dance form presents a troubling epistemology and ontology concerning the naming of the dance-object and the social and cultural characteristics presented by the case studies. Cross-cultural study is a new area in dance scholarship, which heightens the awareness needed when we examine the work of non-Middle Eastern practitioners dancing in a Middle Eastern “cultural” way (Ness 2004, 123-145). As Ness suggests, there is a complex matrix of social, cultural, corporeal and political issues and concepts concerning ownership, the dancer’s body and the dance as a specific and locatable cultural dance-object. The post-colonial and intercultural dimensions of world dance studies are of particular interest when considering the concept of “authenticity” and “origin” of a given non-Western dance genre. Related research conducted in the world dance genres includes Skinner’s (2008) research concerning the Salsa dance community in Northern Ireland. Therefore a choice was made to adopt an interdisciplinary research approach borrowing from dance ethnography, social theories of education and identity formation, literary criticism, film studies, linguistics, dance studies and performance studies.

Performance studies also has a bearing; it is a field of study conventionally separated from the dance studies field, although this has significantly changed with the work of Le Pecki (2008, 2009) and other contributors to the field (Cooper-Albright 2001 and Dixon-Gottschild, 1996). The “pure” dance status of Belly Dance is questioned as this research project progresses. The name Belly Dance, by default, denotes “dance”, whereas research has shown that the dance element of Belly Dance is in question not because practitioners consider their skill and knowledge to be dance-orientated, but because the performance and “performative”²⁷ qualities of

27 I am referring to Schechner’s notion of the performative (2002, 123).

their work present non-*dancerly* aspects to their practice not readily discussed in other research papers. These performative aspects have, in some cases, presented solutions and new perspectives on the knowledge of what Belly Dance is.

2.3.5 Orientalist discourse

The Orientalist paradigm is the dominant cultural currency (Said 1978 and Bourdieu 1986) found in the global Belly Dance market (Maira 2008, Dox 2006 and Sellers-Young & Shay 2003); one which is shared by other world dances and arguably by other non-Western and even Western dance genres (Savigliano 1995, Ness 1992, Cowan, 1990, Stearns & Stearns 1979, Buckland 1999, Keali'inohomoku 1969 and Leigh-Foster 2010). The gender politics within the Orientalist paradigm are of significant interest because a) the practitioner case studies are all female and b) gender issues dominate Belly Dance discourse. There is a need within the search for and identification of the authentic Belly Dance performance to relate it to the gender specific issues of what constitutes “femininity,” the female body on display, and the sexual body politics found in a Belly Dance performance (Dox, 2006, Nieuwkerke 1996, Lorius 1996, Karayanni 2005, Sellers-young & Shay 2003). This research’s ambition is not only to discover and describe the practice found in England, and previous Belly Dance work that has informed current practice, but also to consider how the Orientalist paradigm, undergirding the practice, continues to be a source of dispute concerning the codes and conventions that produce authenticity with an alleged authentic “feminine” expression of the dance.

The initial search for publications on Belly Dance led to several publications found in America. Within the last decade a ground swell of research on Belly Dance has occurred, bringing with it an Anglo-American perspective, one which does not necessarily correspond with research

conducted in Egypt (Roushdy, 2010). The fascination with the dance both as a practice and an academic subject of study is heavily weighted towards a Western and Anglo-American bias (see Maira, 2008), one in which undergirding Orientalist imagined histories, past and present, represent a Belly Dance reality and narrative dominated by Western constructs of Eastern alterity (Dox, 2006). It is a perspective about which leading Islamic feminists Nawal El Sadawi (1980), Fatme Mernissi (1978, 2001), Fatme El Guindi (1999), Abu Lughod (1988, 1990, 1993, 1998, 2002), and Sebbar (1981, 1982) have written a variety of ethnographic texts, fictions, non-fictions and polemics demonstrating the complex realities of religion, feminist action and politics found in the Middle East. These texts are sourced as counter-narratives to the Western constructs of the Middle East found in Anglo-American research texts, and are used to verify and validate fieldwork conducted in both Egypt and England.

Consequently, this is an interdisciplinary research project, one that draws on a variety of critical theories and social science methodologies. Not only is Belly Dance itself a “syncretic” dance-object (Dox, 2006, 53), but the methods and contextual framing found in this literature survey are equally dependent on syncretism.

Authenticity and tradition

The notion of authenticity is a key concept posed in the research question, one that has been highlighted in the introduction (chapter one). This research posits the notion that authenticity can be conceived as a *narrative*. This notion of authenticity as a narrative refers to both Barthes (1957) and Foucauldian theory (1973). I describe a narrative of authenticity as a functional exponent with the purpose and role of narrating events and retelling these events in the form of discourses as a prominent mode of cultural reproduction and, in this case, an originating

narrative that validates a Belly Dance practice. In particular I am proposing that these narratives reinforce any pre-existing power relations found within a given Belly Dance community of shared practice (Wenger, 1991) and also allow for the creation of other bodies of knowledge, such as the creation of an English Belly Dance tradition. In this case a *narrative of authenticity* represents a form of constructed authenticity. With reference to Barthes (1957), when we consider the large number of contradiction, supposition and creation narratives of myth found in the Belly Dance discourse concerning the origins of Belly Dance, his post-modern perspective on cultural reproduction which postulates that there is no authentic referent is relevant. The originating myths and narratives are linked to the Orientalist paradigm that is commonly referred to by all Belly Dance scholars but rarely expanded in debate. Dox (2006) clearly describes the Western construct that underpins the Orientalist mythos of Western Belly Dance practice. Foucauldian deconstruction and neo-historicist perspective (1972) represents a method of theorising how different originating myths and narratives produce meaning and power/knowledge of what constitutes an “authentic” Belly Dance performance. The function of the author in this case is to produce narratives (not singular), all of which lead towards an understanding and the construction of a Belly Dance tradition, one that has specific and repeatable narratives of origin, place, identity, culture, social process and ownership.

A common occurrence in the Belly Dance community and the subsequent Belly Dance discourse is the reference to a past, location, people, culture and events. The narrative function is, according to Foucauldian “tradition,” a discursive field, one in which external and internal social, historical, cultural and economic forces create knowledge and political positioning of the agents involved in any given social activity. Foucault describes the techniques of “discipline” that are developed, corollaries of which in the Belly Dance community are the techniques of physical

education and movement instruction found in Belly Dance classrooms, in festivals, on performance platforms and through social and professional networks, all of which produce meaning and the cultural context for a Belly Dance performance in England. These institutional mechanisms for containing and reproducing knowledge and power in effect subsume and dictate the lives, bodies and roles of the Belly Dancer within society. “[I]t is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising of a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, application [and] targets....And it may be taken over...by ‘specialised’ institutions” (1975, 215). The research aim is to describe and examine the narratives of authenticity found in English Belly Dance practice. These constructions of authenticity describe the social context, the political and cross-cultural values, the social processes required within the community of shared practice and the external forces found within a non-Middle Eastern dance context to produce a recognisable Belly Dance performance in England.

There is specific reference made concerning “docile” bodies in Foucault’s power/knowledge complex (1975). The body is the site for social and cultural inscription and in the case of women, specifically women in performance, the body is the site of “contestible categories” (Butler 1990, 14-15). Beyond Marxist economic reductionism and in line with Nietzsche (1989, 2002, 2005) and Gramsci (1971), Foucault (1975) narrates the social mechanisms through which ideologies are formed, sustained and inscribed on the body. These ideological inscriptions on the body relate directly to the use and impact of the Orientalist mythos underpinning a Belly Dance performance in England. Dox (2006) posits the notion that the harem fantasy is in fact a metaphor representing either an ideal or a reality for Western women more than “it has anything to do with Eastern alterity” (Ibid, 56). Daly (1978) is more strident in her description of the use of myth and fantasy not only to contain and restrict women but also to serve as an ultimate

expression of the patriarchal procession of necrophilia which in the final analysis represents women-hatred (Ibid, 107-109). Both feminist readings of Belly Dance and of the outcome of the patriarchal containment of women and their bodies suggest that Belly Dance in effect contributes to and reaffirms the status quo. Consequently, we can read the form of docility women perform with their ornamented bodies in Belly Dance as anything but empowering. I am suggesting that there is a case to be made when considering the “freedom of expression” found when reading several texts concerning Belly Dance discourse. Belly Dance presents a female moving body which is partially exposed and ornamented and that to some extent amplifies the issue of the containment of the female body in Western culture (Foucault, 1984, Adair 1992, Keft-Kennedy 2005, Cooper-Albright 1997). With this in mind, Belly Dance is an ideal site in which subversion of the heterosexual normative within performance is possible (MacKendrick 2004, Esteban Muñoz 2001, Pêcheux 1982).

It has to be noted that Foucault’s lack of assertion concerning for whom and for what purpose power is used to create knowledge is an issue when referencing his theories. This has been a concern for researchers, and feminist theorists utilise Foucauldian theory of the docile body and the power/knowledge complex successfully to describe and identify the cultural and social mechanism constraining and impacting on the female body, mind and spirit (Bordo 1999, Daly 1978, and Grosz 1989, 1994), the pressure exerted by the heterosexual normative in Western culture (Rich 1980, Irigary 1974, Cixious 1976, and Butler 1990, 1993). In this case the social practice of Belly Dance amongst English women, specifically artists in the field who produce Belly Dance performances and teach related dance activity, is the “idealised” and “fantasised” notion of a reference point for the authentic rendition of a Belly Dance performance. In this instance, the narratives of authenticity from past concepts and practice of Belly Dance in

England are posited alongside new narratives of authenticity relating to new conceptions and activities within the English Belly Dance community.

Described as a narrative, authenticity is conceived to be a process of reaffirming, retelling and crafting threads of a story over time, bringing them together to form a new, updated or more relevant one(s). There is an inherent renewal process at the core of a narrative of authenticity. Paradoxically, innovation is the lifeblood of a tradition, which ordinarily contradicts the notion of tradition as something fixed, stable and permanent. The fact remains that the narration of a practitioner's authenticity/validity as a Belly Dancer, which forms the main constituent dialectic that brings a Belly Dance practice and Belly Dancing identity into being. The narration of a tradition, a training tradition, an aesthetic choice and a performance identity is itself a narrative. One of the prominent characteristics of a Western Belly Dancer's practice is the role of narrating the past, her past, an Egyptian past, a past that includes key figures within her community and achievements, events and other aspects of her dancing life that figure and present a Belly Dancing identity.

The "performative" (Schechner 2002) is embedded in the construction of a narrative of authenticity. The act of recounting a story, the narration and repetition of events, people and networks with which a Belly Dancer engages, in addition to the performance work completed, present an unmistakable badge of membership to a given community of Belly Dance. It also represents the changing, morphing and social interaction that undergirds the creation of a dance practice that is not "initially" identifiable as a common cultural practice and shared culture of music, dress, language and movement. All of these have to be learnt by the institutions and "experts" within the community of shared practice (Wenger, 1991, 1996). All contribute to

larger narratives of authenticity in addition to distinguishing, individual and separate narratives of authenticity.

In fact, there remains a tension between what was known to be Belly Dance as a dance-object and what is aspired to in terms of becoming a Belly Dance identity. When referring to practising individuals working in the English Belly Dance community it is noteworthy that the tension between the Belly Dance-object and the objective to become a Belly Dancer is framed in the concept of a narrative of authenticity. The reason has to do with the Orientalist mythos which undergirds our perception of what constitutes Belly Dance and Belly Dancing (Dox, 2006).

The function of being and representing “authenticity” in a Belly Dance performance holds currency and is ever present in Belly Dance discourse. McDonald suggests that “‘authenticity’ can be reformulated in ways that are less protectionist in their attempts to control influences on its cultural development” (2010, 34). She also suggests that authenticity does not have to influence the perceived “purity” of the dance in order to create a unified image of the dance’s past and present. I agree with McDonald’s insistence that Belly Dance in the west is constructed, and that “hybridisation” is a key characteristic of contemporary cultures (Ibid, 35). Belly Dance itself was a modern invented dance theatre form which emerged in Egypt during the 1920s, drawing from European theatrical traditions and the social dances of urban Cairo (see chapter one): consequently, hybridisation and adaption to different cultural contexts are the foundations of modern Belly Dance performance. I would add that Egypt is a contemporary culture, as McDonald’s (2011, 2012) own research in Egypt asserts, and that the method of constructing the “authenticity” itself is a prime marker for comprehending the cultural models and identity construction of any given Belly Dancer in any given location.

The narrative function of authenticity reflects this research's critical framework which refers to Holland et al (2000), Wenger (1991, 1996, 1998) and Gee (1999, 2000), all of whom endorse a cultural models theory in which it is argued that people make sense of their experiences by applying largely tacit "theories" or cultural models to their social and cultural practices, like dance (Gee 2000, 181). The ambition of this research project is to understand and frame the work and methods of producing an authentic Belly Dance performance by current practitioners in England and their relationship or not to the Belly Dance performed and found in Egypt. A cultural models theory (see methodologies section of chapter two) allows for the research to isolate and examine the construction of Belly Dancing identities by recognising the significance of practice-informed choices and the attributing *narratives of authenticity* as significant units for qualitative research.

Narrative is also a key feature of ethnographic research methods, one in which the narratives of the people being studied narrate their lives – in this case their Belly Dancing lives – and the re-narration by the researcher re-presenting these collections of narrative (Coffey, 1999) has currency in this project. I have already touched on the social science perspective of narrative case studies. Clifford, in his seminal text *On Ethnographic Allegory* (1984, 98-122) offers a revised perspective on the ethnographic experience of narration. He states: "Allegory draws special attention to the narrative character of cultural representations, to the stories built into the representational process" (Ibid, 100). Narrative is a core mechanism within the ethnographic discipline and therefore remains a central concern for both the research methods and the theoretical framing of the research outcomes.

By adopting a very specific social science critical framework that offers both a constructivist and culturalist perspective, it is possible to follow the narrative case studies constructed in interview,

which provides evidence and the possibility to identify the “culturally normative rules, schemas, ways of relating to people, activities and ways of being” (Williams, Black, Hernandez-Martinez, Davies, Hutcheson, Nicholson, Pampaka & Wake 2007, 1607). By examining these narrative constructs, which represent Holland et al’s (2001) notion of the “figured worlds” of an informant, it is possible to demonstrate and distinguish the construction of a Belly Dancing identity. It also stands that Wenger (1991, 1996, 1998) and Gee’s (1999, 2001) work provides a framework in which “theories (which are embedded not just in the heads, but in the social practices, texts, and other media) guide action, inform judgements of self and other, and shape ways of talking and writing” (Gee, 2000, 181). The narrative function of authenticity also highlights the “en-cultured” aspect of a Belly Dance practice, one that is not only “constructed” but also negotiated within a larger shared community of Belly Dance practice.

2.3.6 Conclusion

My search for narratives of *authenticity* in Belly Dance when probing Belly Dance research texts has identified a trend in research to describe, examine and debate “imagined” Belly Dance histories (Sellers-Young and Shay, 2003). These “imagined” histories are based on the same Orientalist mythos undergirding the Belly Dance practice found in various locations (Dox 2006). However, a key concern for this project is the material aspect of Belly Dancing, not just the textual. The research is concentrated on English Belly Dance history and tradition, one that has been in evidence in England since the 1960s. Still there is no reference to this history and tradition in academic work. Bacon identifies Hilal and Buonaventura in the initial chapters of her thesis (2003, 52-53). She even discusses her use of “Arabic Dance” in her title, which she confirms is the name used by her case study, a group of Belly Dancers in Northampton, but omits the fact that Arabic Dance denotes a specific Buonaventura English Belly Dance tradition (this is

discussed in chapter three). It is striking that Bacon's, Paul's and to some extent McDonald's projects omit the significant contribution of previous practitioners whom I argue have established a Belly Dance tradition in England. This tradition has a global lineage stretching to America and the Middle East, but is also one that generated a very specific ideological and aesthetic foundation during the 1980s and 1990s. I suggest here that the lack of a chronicled English Belly Dancing past, beyond notions of an imagined English "Orientalist" Belly Dance past, omits important existing and changing characteristics of Belly Dance found in England. These past Belly Dance traditions found in locations like America, Egypt, France, Germany and, in this case, England demonstrate a sophisticated past, one which refers to both an imagined Belly Dancing past and an active and exchanging Belly Dancing present.

Buckland's edited text *Dancing Past and Present* (2006) contains a series of contributions by practitioners and academics in the dance field articulating complex narratives concerning their dance disciplines past and present. The text describes the assumptions made, especially from a Western academic perspective (see Said, 1999), in which dance traditions are expected to be untroubled, static and based on an originating certainty. O'Shea's contribution in particular holds interest for this thesis. O'Shea describes the "invented" tradition of bharata natyam (2006, 123-153) by comparing and contrasting the work of two leading figures in the field; O'Shea's chapter is the inspiration and method used to examine the work of Hilal and Buonaventura in chapter three. It also brings to the fore the material aspects of the dancing itself alongside textual and, in this case, historical concerns.

To answer the research question how authenticity, in the performance of Belly Dance can be achieved by English Belly dance practitioners, and to answer the sub questions concerning how we define the English Belly Dance tradition and what narratives of authenticity began with this

tradition, it is important to understand how the English Belly Dance tradition proscribes current narratives of ‘authenticity’ amongst English Belly Dancers. With this in mind, how can a dancer’s self-identity and performance of Belly Dance transition from an earlier English Belly Dance tradition to another emerging Belly Dance tradition? Finally, within these narrated traditions, how can an English female Belly dancer gain competence, artistic autonomy, expertise and most importantly “authenticity” in a dance form originating from a different culture, and how are these identities gendered, classed, and ethnically situated?

Implicitly, answering such questions requires us to analyze what constitutes “authenticity.” What kinds of identities-in-practice do Belly Dancers construct in order to authenticate their performance? Why is “authenticity” a significant factor in the establishment of a professional Belly Dancing practice? I would refer to Barthes’s (1957) notion of the authentic in his seminal text *Death of the Author*, which reverses the power relationship between author and reader. Barthes confirms the post-modern ontological position that there is no authentic referent, undermining modernist convention that upholds the notion that an origin, original, and a grand narrative exist.

Chapter 3

3. Quintessentially English Belly Dance

3.1 In search of an English Belly Dance²⁸ tradition

There are different versions of Belly Dance “history”,²⁹ most of which describe narratives of the development and impact of Belly Dance in America (Sellers-Young 2005, Shay & Woods 1976, Carlton 1994, Monty 1986, Franken 2003 and Dox 2006). Efforts abound to describe the genesis and relationship of Belly Dance to ancient and modern Egypt (Helland 2001 & Buonaventura 1989), presenting selective, anecdotal and anachronistic versions of a Belly Dance past. These narratives describe Belly Dance performance and styles as different cultural embodiments and codifications of their own histories, economic value and socio-politics. It is important to point out that as much as different Belly Dance performance and styles may be seen as complementary and sharing something essential, they are also in constant economic and cultural competition with each other. Therefore, each style claims authority and authenticity of some sort, and implicitly asserts a different version of history, rejecting and reacting against the claims of other styles: consequently they are not just pieces of the same jigsaw puzzle. For

28 I use and capitalise the term *Belly Dance* in place of any other method of spelling and presenting the name of the dance. For example Bacon uses the term *Arabic Dance* (2003), because it represents the most well recognised generic name for the dance genre found in her case study. By using a capitalised noun and western name for the dance I am announcing the complex neo-colonial issues concerning England’s specific colonial past with Egypt.

29 I reference Amy Koritz’s “*Re/Moving Boundaries: From Dance History to Cultural Studies*” in *Moving Words, Re-writing Dance*, ed. Gay Morris (London: Routledge, 1996) and a collection of cultural and the historical texts concerned with dance found in *Moving History/Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*, ed. Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), all of which are dedicated to the “cultural turn” in dance history during the turn of the twenty first century, exposing previous hierarchical evaluations of the past in favour of a more plural and narrative driven continuum of both past and present practices.

example, Dox's (2006)³⁰ well-known article offers a narrative of Belly Dance in American popular culture as a complex interweaving of commercial, artistic, contextual readings and narratives of the dance within a relatively short time frame:

Belly Dancing's history and popularity in the United States can be traced to the late 19th century. For the 1893 Chicago World's Fair Midway Plaisance, Sol Bloom promoted versions of Egyptian, Persian, Moroccan and Tunisian dances, which gave rise to the then-scandalous *danse de ventre* performed in vaudeville houses, burlesque shows, and on film. By the 1920s, variations of Middle Eastern social and folk dances, with the addition of veils, had entered the private sphere of Western salons as a form of exotic artistry and self-expression, a vision reinforced by stage performers such as Ruth St Denis and Maud Allen. (2006: 53)

The above is a global picture but one that is also played out in a location like England. There is no single narrative published that recounts the development of “English” Belly Dance, yet there has been an identifiable community of practice in England since the late 1970s, which by definition has required (and created) its own claims to authenticity, ownership, form and tradition: in short, its own narrative(s). Indeed, there are key publications and bodies of work that have been influential and defining in England from the 1980s until the present. They are Suraya Hilal's school of Raqs Sharqi (established c.1985 and now the *Hilal Dance* international trademark and training programme 2001) and Wendy Buonaventura's internationally popular text *Serpent of the Nile* (1989, reprinted 2011, translated into 21 languages). Both Hilal and Buonaventura assert their own versions of Belly Dance history, and implicitly the authenticity and value of their own work. They creatively select, reject and react against other narratives of

³⁰ Dox's text (2006) “*Dancing around Orientalism*” is a key reference for this chapter, one that critically assesses American Belly Dance past and present practices, exposing the ideological and aesthetic undergirding principles which have formulated the Western Orientalist mythic construction of Belly Dance exported worldwide.

Belly Dance history. They compete against each other in an almost binary fashion, but immanently Hilal and Buonaventura establish the English Belly Dance tradition. Our question, however, is how to describe that tradition and to understand how it helps define and authenticate current English Belly Dance, including its relationship to “global” forms of Belly Dance.

Belly Dance in England is a *community* that shares an *international* practice which helps form a specific or *local* identity-in-practice (see Holland et al: 2001). To begin to understand that identity and its tradition, as per Appadurai’s (1996) *ethnoscapes* concept, it would be useful to consider the community’s identity and tradition in terms of the “changing social [and economic], territorial and cultural reproduction of group identity” (Ibid: 48). Also, Wenger’s (1991 & 1996) community of practice model offers key developmental and heuristic processes detailing a community member’s transition from peripheral (see Lave and Wenger: 1998) to core membership, building a sense of self-in-practice and self in relation to a community of shared practice. Thus, by considering the social and cultural milieu of the 1980s against which Hilal and Buonaventura reacted but from which they emerged, their narratives of authenticity, their personal heuristic processes, the creative tension of their perhaps necessary and binary opposition, and considering how they sustained an impact for over twenty years, we will be able to identify the key characteristics that constitute a continuing English Belly Dance identity locally and on a global stage.

Hilal and Buonaventura emerged as leading artists in England when cultural diversity policies and multi-cultural issues dominated the political and arts landscape of Thatcher’s Britain. During this Thatcher era and in the changing cultural landscape, Hilal and Buonaventura’s prominence in the English Belly Dance community signals a formalisation and codification of Belly Dance teaching and performance practices, which in turn trained a new generation of Belly Dance

performers, artists and instructors. I argue that Hilal and Buonaventura's ambition to present the "art" in Belly Dance whilst also resisting the "exotic" associations of the dance genre produced a new paradigm operating in the community which still persists. Both practitioners were more often than not in competition with each other, and their activities and profiles raise questions about the role of individual ideological, political and economic proclivities during the emergent years of Belly Dance in England. Each dancer also expressed a different politics of representation through her understanding of the form, offering competing opinions on Orientalism, nationalism, class, and gender identity. How Hilal and Buonaventura portrayed their choices discursively held as much significance to this inquiry as the choreographic decisions themselves. As such, their public representation of such points and how they had approached them in a teaching context factored into the investigation more than how they thought about them privately.

3.2 The social and cultural context for the emergence of Hilal and Buonaventura

Early publications of dance biographies, historiographies published on the internet, trade magazines and interviews I have conducted in the field reveal the presence of a vibrant Belly Dance culture in London during the 1960s and 1970s (Selford 2012³¹). The majority of activity reported London as the central location of Belly Dance activities in England (although there were notable regional exceptions). The reason for this was two fold: the relocation of Arab nightclubs to London during the Lebanese civil war (1975); and the arrival of American Cabaret Belly Dancers in search of new teaching and performance opportunities (see Waldie: 2006).

³¹Cathy Selford, also known as Vashti, has written several accounts of the early London Arabic nightclub scene. In a recent account, written for the national Belly Dance trade magazine MOSAIC (summer, 2012), Selford describes the different venues, the live music and dancing opportunities available during the 1960s and 1970s.

Clearly, there was a Belly Dance “scene” in London pre-Hilal and Buonaventura. It was not specifically a coalesced (English) community of practice, but, as I will describe, it was a background that inevitably informed the early work of Hilal and Buonaventura, partially excluded them and was the catalyst for their creative response and reaction. It was the cultural diversity policies (see Rowell 2000, 188-205) of the Labour government in the pre-Thatcher era, I would argue, that really stimulated cultural integration in the London dance community. These earlier policies, in conjunction with the subsequent rising to power of a woman like Thatcher, helped facilitate assertiveness from female Belly Dance practitioners, encouraged their entrepreneurship and inspired them to take their practice out of male-owned clubs with the ambition to reach a wider public (Buonaventura interview 2009).

The exclusive Arab night clubs of the 1970s catered for the international Arab elite, offering a new cultural environment while still simulating the night clubs found in Lebanon, Cairo and other Middle Eastern countries (a good source of where these nightclubs were located is Asmahan’s tour of Arab London on youtube.com³²). The clubs were sites for eating, smoking and socialising, with a designated space for live entertainment. The primary focus of the entertainment was live Middle Eastern music, and then a Belly Dance display would be presented as a secondary focus close to the end of the night.

According to English Belly Dancer Sarah Ward³³, Belly Dancing also appeared in a rising number of Greek night clubs and tavernas, for example the *Rendevous* in Bayswater and

32 Gilded Serpent (international Belly Dance e-repository for articles and advertisement for Belly Dance) presents “London’s Arabic Clubs of the 70s and 80s with Asmahan” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kd1Zfnjkwqc> [last accessed 21/10/12]. In this filmed interview Asmahan takes the interviewer and camera man to different sites across London describing the Arabic nightclub, the dancers and clientele of each venue.

33 According to English Belly Dancer Sarah Ward (2011), who worked in the London Arab Clubs in the early to late 1980s, *Pars Persian* was a particular “a hotbed of talent” hosting dance artists like Safa Yusry and musicians like Wadir al Safi. Mona Said,

Cleopatra's, in north London, Turkish restaurants and bars like *Gallipoli*³⁴, and in the well known Iranian restaurant *Pars Persian* in Earls Court (June 2011). In each dancing context the dancer was an accompaniment to food. Her dancing was not the primary focal point, arguably, except for those interested in learning the dance.

As a direct result of the dance's secondary position within the nightclub environment, Hilal and Buonaventura sought alternative performance contexts that would prioritise the dance over the music and "socializing" activity. Their other aim was to raise the status of the female Belly Dancer from "late-night, adults-only" entertainment to artist, for both personal and ideological reasons. In a recent interview I conducted, Buonaventura presents her choices:

"I think it [Belly Dance] is presented in lots of different places which I wouldn't, personally, be interested in performing in, because you are then compromised. I mean, there is a whole cabaret, restaurant and night club scene, which, I am sure, is very compromising for dancers, but then again you have a choice whether or not to work in these contexts" (Buonaventura, 2009).

Hilal states, in an interview for a Channel Four *Rear View* documentary³⁵:

"I was shocked [...] It was not the same dance I learnt as a young girl in Egypt. There's too much about the "erotic" and not enough on the "art" in the dance. I want people to see the beauty in the dancing." (1991)

another famous Belly Dancer, used to work at *Gallipoli* and her presence encouraged more Egyptian Belly Dancers to London. Previously the majority of dancers were Syrian and Lebanese.

34 Asmahan, another significant Belly Dancer during the Arab nightclub heyday in London, has presented a very interesting youtube.com interview with Gilded Serpent, guiding the interviewer around London, spotting old nightclub locations and narrating stories of that time, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kd1Zfnjkwqc> [last accessed April 2012]

35 Hilal was highlighting her recent Raqs Sharqi *The Beloved* (1991) debut at the Sadler's Wells for the Channel Four documentary.

Walk like an Egyptian

In a filmed interview³⁶ Charlotte Desorgher (2011) describes a burgeoning London Belly Dance community in the 1980s, with students – like herself – encountering for the first time Arab Belly Dancers (chiefly Syrian and Lebanese) dancing to live music. She contrasts this new experience with her own initial attempts to train in Belly Dance by using a handful of Arabic music audiotapes and one VHS tape of a Belly Dancer. These new night clubs provided a new method of training and an expanded musical and movement repertoire sought by Desorgher and her contemporaries. When asked about training with the Arab Belly Dancers, Desorgher replied: “This was difficult, and they usually didn’t know how to teach it or didn’t want to teach you” (Ibid: 2011). By contrast, Anne White³⁷ remembers: “I learnt to dance from the [male] musicians; they helped me with the songs, taught me the words and the moves to go with them, telling me what to do with the audience and what this or that meant” (White, 2010). The secondary status given to Belly Dance in the Arab night club culture and the reluctance to pursue teaching and instructional work by dancers outside night club hours produced a “gap” in the market. As a result, the burgeoning non-Arab English Belly Dance student population had to seek tuition elsewhere. In interview Desorgher describes the arrival and storm surrounding Hilal’s classes and performances and ends her description by stating Hilal “professionalized it [Belly Dance teaching]” (Desorgher: 2011).

Recently, archive material and filmed footage of Mona el Said (performing in the 1970s) has been made available on youtube.com. A recurrent Buonaventura narrative concerning her first

36 Charlotte Desorgher (interviewed by American based Gilded Serpent e-magazine: 2011) is an English Belly Dancer based in south London who began her Belly Dance career in the early 1980s.

37 Anne White (2010). Anne was originally taught by Suraya Hilal and studied the music and dance under the tutelage of Arab musicians (at her insistence) in the early 1980s. She is a key practitioner based in North London, and has developed Planet Egypt, a monthly international Belly Dance showcase in London for over 8 years.

Walk like an Egyptian

encounter with Belly Dance is located in those “seedy” Arab nightclubs: “But when I watched these women perform I saw something that inspired me” (2010, 209). The filming of a Mona el Said performance at the Omr Khayyam nightclub³⁸ documents a typical performance Buonaventura would have seen. These nightclubs were in fact a melting-pot of Belly Dance styles and nationalities, with Egyptian, Syrian, Lebanese, and American Belly Dancers performing on the same billing. Even though they represented the wide diversity of Belly Dance in London, they also presented a creative, confusing and inconsistent mix of styling, choreography and movement to would be exponents of the dance.

To give an idea of the breadth of Belly Dance performance witnessed at the clubs, I will briefly describe a Mona el Said performance and an Asmahan performance from that era. Both performers performed on the dance floor, at audience height, with musicians on the stage behind framing the performance. Mona wore a tight full length costume (no exposed midriff) with metal embellishment and sewn coins and a head scarf. Mona maintained an upright position throughout and presented contained hip, shoulder and abdominal movement, parading in the dance space on the balls of her feet, with cane twirling at her right side throughout her cane dance³⁹. The movement varied from a forward and back step, to energetic jumps from left to right, a small shoulder movement, a side to side step with hip shimmy, and fast twisting of the

38 See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1iDBS-xSlw> [last accessed April 2012]. Mona El Said was a well known Belly Dancer from Egypt who featured on films and television in addition to regular performances in Cairo nightclubs. She was well known for her fluidity of movement and technical ability in conjunction with her “wild woman” performance incorporating the Zarr trance dance, strong shimmy and body vibrations and the fast small circles of the hip. Some reported that Mona was sidelined for more lighter-skinned Belly Dancers like Nagwa Fuad and Fifi Abdou, which might also explain her departure from Cairo to the London nightclubs during the 1970s.

39 A cane is a small stick with a hooked handle. In interview (2005) Carolina Varga Dinicu (also known as Morocco) reports that the cane was not originally an Egyptian “prop”. It was the stick used by Egyptian dancers to signify the British colonial rule and the women performed with it as a method of silent but still visible mockery of their imperialist rulers.

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hips. She also performed an unusual shooting-a-gun gesture with appropriate drum accompaniment and finally speedy hip circles and full body turns to complete the performance. American Belly Dancer Asmahan wore the ubiquitous *bedleh*, a two-piece sequined costume, and performed a sword dance (not seen in Egypt) by balancing a sword on her head whilst performing deep back bends and acrobatic movements. Asmahan highlighted intricate undulations of her abdominals and used expansive arm movements, turns and hip slides to punctuate the rhythms. Buonaventura would have witnessed a bricolage of Belly Dance acts under one roof, many of which used theatrical props.

Hilal reports sightings of American Belly Dancers when studying in America during the 1970s: “To my mind it was not Middle Eastern dance, it was all about eroticism” (1991). Where Buonaventura embraced the Oriental and Middle Eastern dance eclecticism found in the London nightclubs, Hilal reacted to the Belly Dance fusion and “misrepresentation” of her Yemini/Egyptian homeland found in American Cabaret style Belly Dance.

Buonaventura’s first Belly Dance teacher was the American Gail Smedley⁴⁰. Within a year Gail returned to America. She gave an astonished Buonaventura her class, stating: “You’ve got the gift for it” (Buonaventura: 2009), in so doing installing Buonaventura as a Belly Dance teacher. In the relatively short period of time in which she taught Buonaventura, it is probable she impressed upon her the American Cabaret Style Belly Dance basics (in interview Buonaventura does not discuss her early teachers).

40 Gail Smedley represents the continuation of the practice of several American Belly Dancers arriving in England and teaching their form of Belly Dance for a limited period of time before returning to the States.

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There are several examples of American Belly Dancers moving to and transiting through London on their way to Egypt. For example, Asmahan⁴¹ travelled to England from the States, then to Cairo, and then back to England. She continues to teach Belly Dance at London Pineapple Studios. According to Shay and Sellers-Young's (2003,18) article *Belly Dance: Orientalism – Exoticism – Self-Exoticism* American Belly Dance possessed its own distinct characteristics and imagery, to the extent that it influenced the dance culture in Egypt, creating a cultural exchange between both countries via their respective Belly Dance traditions. Waldie⁴² (2006) narrates a chronological account of the development of the American Cabaret Style Belly Dance (AmCab)⁴³ in *Belly Dance History-An American Odyssey: A History of Modern US Belly Dance History*, detailing the use of props like the sword and the theatrical representation of a harem fantasy as key characteristics of the style. Both articles acknowledge the explosion in Belly Dance activity in America during the 1970s, one which Waldie points out witnessed such a rise in the population of dancers that they outnumbered the performance and teaching opportunities available.

Today American Style Cabaret Belly Dance has gained a renewed interest. Aziza, a well known Canadian performer, lists vintage American style Cabaret Belly Dance as one of the performance styles in her repertoire. A recognizable past in styling, movement lexicon and past Belly Dance stars represent the American Cabaret style Belly Dancing past. The 1970s Belly Dance

41 See www.asmahan.co.uk [last accessed January 2012]

42 Waldie, H. (2006) *Belly Dance History-An American Odyssey: A History of Modern US Belly Dance History* www.bellydancer.org/articles/bellydance_history.html [last accessed 20/09/09]

43 It has been argued that Jamila Salimpour, an Armenian-American immigrant, was the originator of the American Cabaret Style Belly Dance. In fact there were two distinctive schools of Belly Dance tuition found in America during the 1950s and 1960s, one on the west coast led by Jamila Salimpour and Bert Balladine and another on the east coast led by Carolina Varga Dinicu (also known as Morocco) and Bobby Farrah (see Dox, 2006 and Shay & Sellers-Young 2003).

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facebook.com page attracts regular discussion and performers from this era, the posts reveal a thriving performance and teaching circuit across the States supporting Waldie's (2006) claims. The facebook.com discussion site presents past Belly Dance images, narrates star performers, working conditions and Belly Dance styles from this era. For short hand, Belly Dancers refer to American Cabaret style Belly Dance as "AmCab" (a term I will be using for the rest of this chapter). In effect, the shortened term AmCab, the facebook.com presence and the narrating of an AmCab past declares the arrival of a recognisable American Belly Dance tradition and identity; one that has had a strong influence on English Belly Dance pre-Hilal and Buonaventura, during their era and post their era. Arguably, AmCab continues to have a presence due to the numbers of American Belly Dance experts teaching at regional and national festivals on and dance programmes across England – in some cases the cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986) of AmCab, in some instances, outdoes that of Egyptian Belly Dance.

AmCab's characteristic "unveiling" of the mysteries of the "Eastern other" (Dox, 2006) in performance was founded in the London Arab nightclubs by a transient population of American Belly Dance artists. Alongside Egyptian Belly Dance artists like Mona el Said, American artists like Asmahan – well known for her sword dance – competed for dance contracts. Hilal's response to the American representation of the dance whilst studying in America in the 1970s was "shock" (Hilal in interview for a Channel Four *Rearview Window* documentary, 1991). Where Hilal actively rejected AmCab's infiltration into the Belly Dance market, AmCab influenced Buonaventura's experimentation with the Orientalist theme, Western theatrical devices and the use of props. It would later transpire that Hilal's training in Modern American

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dance technique⁴⁴ would be the inspiration for the Raqs Sharqi movement creation. By comparison Buonaventura borrows extensively from the AmCab tradition and indicates, in a recent rewrite of her text *Serpent of the Nile* (2010), that purity of form was not a major concern of her emerging Belly Dance practice:

The concept of ‘purity of form’ is a relative one. This is especially true of Egyptian Sharqi, which has borrowed heavily from both Asia and the West. Authenticity does not serve to animate an entertainment, nor determine whether or not a [dance] piece gives pleasure to an audience.” (Buonaventura 2010, 205)

In effect, the limited contact for dance tuition with the Arab night club dancers allowed outside dancers, in this case American Cabaret style Belly Dancers, to initiate teaching within a relatively short time period after starting to learn themselves. Many teachers were learning on the job. Hilal and Buonaventura’s swift rise to teacher status indicates the relatively early stages of the development of the community. At the same time, this afforded Hilal and Buonaventura freedom and room for experimentation and invention. The English Belly Dance community, with more active and visionary community members, now had the potential to “coalesce” (see Wenger: 1996). Hilal’s natal links to Egypt and vision for the dance ensured an unquestioned leadership role. At the same time, the relatively small population of teachers and the expanding opportunities to present the “art” in the dances of the Middle East meant that the implied need for Buonaventura then to identify her personal relationship to the Middle East could be deferred. To summarise, the early 1970s Belly Dance community in London formulated a unique Arab-American configuration of a *translocated* (Appadurai 1996) dancing context and dance expertise.

44 Hilal trained in contemporary dance in America during her Masters Degree studies in Psychology (during the late 1970s). She was especially influenced by the dance pedagogy of Doris Humphrey and the contract and release work from Graham Technique.

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For a brief fifteen years the Arab clubs and Eastern Mediterranean restaurants⁴⁵ provided performance opportunities to encounter the dance and cultures of the Middle East. These simulations, however, were invariably context-generative due to the *translocated* clientele, which in time diminished and moved elsewhere. The reasons given for the demise of the Arab nightclubs are complex, but one significant explanation was the rise in London rent prices by comparison to the favorable economic and climatic conditions found in new and emerging Mediterranean Sea resorts. Nonetheless, this context attracted American Cabaret Style Belly Dance talent, who offered dance tuition to subsidise their income. The mix of Anglo-Arab socio-cultures and performance contexts, together with an American ideological and aesthetic underpinning, were the backdrop, starting point and creative foil to Hilal and Buonaventura's emergent English style of Belly Dance. They took the hybridised, *translocated* dance genre and context and reconfigured and re-represented it for English theatre contexts. The coalescing focus of the English Belly Dance community was the acquisition, exploration and sharing of dance skill and knowledge rather than the nexus and socialising activities of the Arab nightclub culture. This in turn led to the foundation of their emerging ideological and aesthetic configuration for the "art" beyond the exotic and erotic in English Belly Dance and its community.

45 The Turkish, Greek, Levant and Egyptian influences both broadened the cultural experience of the dance and music in addition to limiting access to dance instruction. By the time English Sarah Ward worked as a Belly Dancer at the old Turkish bath house of Gallipoli, around 1988, Mona Said was no longer there. Sarah reports: "Its glory days were long gone. It was still a beautiful place, it reeked of faded grandeur, but it was rarely busy. Owner, Joseph Mourat, used to tell me about the old days and the stars. There were wonderful black and white photos on the wall of the rich and famous that frequented the place in those days." (June 2011).

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3.3 The authentic naming of English Belly Dance

The name Belly Dance has a troubled etymological past, which has allowed the West⁴⁶ to create and pose an Orientalist fantasy, complete with harem imagery and reference, as Belly Dance's "historical" narrative of origin and authenticity. Hilal and Buonaventura of course needed to reclaim and rename the art and narrative of Belly Dance in order to empower themselves and realise the value of their own work.

Hilal's arrival in England saw the earliest use of the Arabic words *El Raqs* and *El Sharqi* to form a replacement for "Belly Dance": '*Raqs Sharqi*'. Its literal translation is "Dance of the East/Orient". Remarkably the Orient is still referenced in this new name. The reference may not be visible or heard by those who do not know Arabic, but essentially Orientalism as a concept (Said: 1978) is present even in the Egyptian Arabic word for the dance. The reasons for it were similarly paradoxical: Hilal had to borrow a degree of authenticity from the accepted norm and authority of the Belly Dance that came before her, at the same time as reacting against and reforming it. Hilal's use of the Arabic rather than its Anglo-French⁴⁷ terminology shifts our focus from an American vaudeville past to that of an Egyptian social dance heritage.

Buonaventura experienced the same paradox in trying to rename the dance. Her first publication was *Belly Dancing: The Serpent and the Sphinx* (1983). Six years later, the text was renamed as *Serpent of the Nile: Women and Dance in the Arabic World* (1989), and "Belly Dance" was replaced as a term by "Arabic Dance". However, in expanding the socio-geographical scope of

46 Belly Dance names include: Oriental Dance, La Danse du Ventre, Egyptian Dance, Arabic Dance, Hoochie Koochie, Middle Eastern Dance, Baladi Dance, Sharqi Dance, to name a few.

47 Allegedly a term originally coined by Sol Bloom the international impresario importing Moroccan and Middle Eastern dancers for the 1893 Chicago Great Exhibition. See Shay & Woods *La Danse du Ventre* (1976) for further reference.

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the dance (from “Egyptian” to “North African”, “Persian” and “Middle Eastern”) Buonaventura needed to reference a greater amount of Orientalist text and imagery in the revised publication.

Both practitioners ended up destabilising the dominant narrative that preceded them, in order to assert their own chosen narratives. In doing so, they began to set out their unique visions and personal credentials, signaled their intention with regard to practice and refocused the community on the “art” of the dance genre. By way of example, in being individually synonymous with the narratives and dance styles they were promoting, Hilal could only focus on an “Egyptian” origin and authenticity for the dance, when she was of Yemeni-Egyptian origin, and Buonaventura focused on a “pan-Arabic” origin and authenticity for the dance, when she was of Sicilian-Libyan ancestry. The authenticity of their “bloodline narrative” operated when naming their new dance form.

When it comes to Hilal’s narrative for Raqs Sharqi, it is clear from early interviews, written manifestos and television documentaries about her work that Hilal looks back to a pan-Egyptian Raqs Sharqi dance culture, aligning it with both high (Classical Sharqi) and low (Sha’abi) dance culture rooted in the rhythmic language of Egyptian music and tradition. Specifically, she makes reference to (1) the Golden Era Raqs Sharqi aesthetic and dance praxis from the 1930s and 1940s Egyptian films (which portrayed Cairo dance stars like Tayyeha Carioca and Namia Akef), (2) old Baladi compositions (the Tet and Awadi improvised musical forms of the dance) and (3) the Anglo-Egyptian classical orchestrations composed by Abdel Al Wahab and others... as the authentic and original Raqs Sharqi. At the same time, however, the paradox remains, for Hilal still uses modern American dance technique and choreographic practice in her classroom.

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For Buonaventura⁴⁸, by contrast, Arabic Dance derived from literary, religious and ancient documents she sourced in both the Middle East and in England. She located sources for Arabic Dance in Orientalist paintings, travel writings, her own travel writing from visits to Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco, images and writing from the Great Exhibitions (Paris, London, Chicago), Hollywood film and modern Arab Dancers found in Cairo and further afield including America. Nonetheless, she acknowledged parallels with pan-Egyptian Raqs Sharqi sources such as the Golden Era Belly Dancers (named above) and the social dances of rural and urban Egypt, and even Hilal's incorporation of American modern dance pedagogy to formalise Arabic Dance training. Buonaventura rejected attempts to "purify" Arabic Dance by aligning it with only Egyptian theatre and aesthetics, however. The dance form, she maintains, finds its proponents all around the world and part of its hereditary community is the European theatre tradition adopted by Egyptian entrepreneur Badia Masabni in 1926 (Buonaventura 1989: 112, Franken 2003: 97, van Nieuwkerke 1996: 41).

In Buonaventura's timeline of Arabic Dance, she traces an unbroken chain from ancient Egypt, through the Awalim culture of the 19th century, to present day Belly Dancers found in Cairene nightclubs. For Buonaventura, attempts in the 1980s and 90s to improve or modernise Arabic Dance offered new ways to build a reputable profile for a dance form previously confined to restaurants, nightclubs and parochial venues. It also offered permission to expand on Arabic Dance traditions beyond Middle Eastern aesthetics and towards a transnational dance theatre inspired by Arabic Dance but not necessarily contingent upon it. A profound sense of Anglo-

48 In reference to O'Shea's chapter found in Buckland's text *Dancing from Past to Present* (2006), O'Shea offers an analogous example of two primary bharat natyam pioneers in competition with each other (pp123-153)

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Arab hybridity accompanied her version of history, which in turn privileged an Oriental mythos (see Dox: 2006).

Hilal thus eschewed the Orientalist past that Buonaventura celebrated. Hilal located Raqs Sharqi's authenticating history not in nightclub enterprises found in downtown Cairo in the late 1920s, but in 19th century court traditions, the educated female Awalim tradition (see Van Nieuwkerk: 1996), and the social dance traditions of regional Egypt, the values of which she still sees as current. For Hilal, the 1920s dancers of Cairo were subject to a colonial system that restricted and degraded them, a context that compromised the "art" of the dance. She thus maintained that the twentieth century later became a time of rejuvenation and a post-colonial re-viewing of the past.

Together, Hilal and Buonaventura displaced the dominant configuration of Belly Dance in England. In effect, by destabilising the term Belly Dance they also afforded a destabilisation of its normative structures in order to pursue their own emergent processes of creation. The initial strategy towards Raqs Sharqi and Arabic Dance would both identify a common aim to prioritise the "art" in the dance while simultaneously allowing for their divergent and emergent practices. The core aesthetic and ideological characteristics of Hilal and Buonaventura's practice describes both the formation of present day English Belly Dance identity but also infers deep rooted opposing values concerning ownership and the creative processes of contemporisation that often struggles with an Anglo-Egyptian colonial past.

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3.4 The teaching and movement vocabulary of English Belly Dance

By affiliating their practices with those of the Middle East, both Hilal and Buonaventura were raising questions about their own identity in a culturally diverse and *sensitive*⁴⁹ political landscape in England. The nature of the identity and narrative each artist represented was played out in the content of their teaching, their approach to teaching, the movement vocabularies they adopted and their technical construction of their performances. Having successfully displaced the dominant and preceding configuration of the dance, as individuals these artists could then only define themselves as having valuable difference by reacting against each other's work.

Increasingly, they adopted a binary opposition to each other. The binary opposition was a one of coexistence, difference and complementarity, rather than a competition of similarity.

Beginning with the content of their teaching, Hilal's pan-Raqs Sharqi dance specifically promoted different Egyptian styles, namely Sha'abi, Baladi and Classical Sharqi. Buonaventura's content, like the research for her book, deliberately looked beyond Egypt. Her pan-Arabic dance specifically promoted Tunisian, Moroccan, Oriental Cabaret, Saaidi, Persian and Moorish styles.

To substantiate these findings the following paragraphs illustrate in detail the contents of workshops given by both practitioners (Buonaventura's workshops held between 1997-2003 and Hilal's two-day workshop in 2008). I trained with Buonaventura in the 1990s. After 2001 I only attended a performance master class workshop held at Majma, Glastonbury in 2003. From the early 2000s I consistently trained with the Raqs Sharqi Society, who promoted a pre-1997

⁴⁹ See *Europe Dancing: perspectives on theatre dance and cultural identity*, eds. Andree Grau and Stephanie Jordan (London: Routledge, 2000) detailing the impact of cultural diversity policy in 1980s Britain. Jordan describes the growing acknowledgement of cultural appropriate practice including the use of contexts, terminology and supporting ethnic minorities in cultural production during the decade championed by non-governmental agencies like the Arts Council of England.

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version of Hilal's practice, incorporating the core movement's pendulum, scissors and spirals.

My own experiences together with accounts provided by case studies, other practitioners, students and other sources inform the following description and analysis. My own narratives of authenticity cohere with Buonaventura's in the majority although there are elements of Hilal present.

Students attending a Buonaventura workshop wore an eclectic uniform of coin belts (admittedly the use of coin belts is not encouraged by Buonaventura due to the constant noise), full skirts, trousers, scarves, veils and full cover or midriff-exposing upper body wear. Buonaventura's workshop content included a simple warm up leading to the practice of a variety of themed movements, for a choreography or specific style of dance e.g. Tunisian folk dance. All movements were demonstrated in a stationary position and then developed into travelling formation, leading to choreography or suggested movement phrases for improvisation.

Buonaventura would correct individuals (preferring regular students from new attendees) whom she addresses by name while demonstrating on her body the correction for them to follow visually. The main focus of the workshop was towards experimentation with the form and musical accompaniment, for attendees to find their own mastery and a new expression of Arabic Dance. The mix and matching of movement under themes and choreography provides permission for experimentation and fusion, a key characteristic of Buonaventura's Belly Dancing identity.

Within the diversity of movement and technique, key signature Buonaventura-style movements appeared. Buonaventura is less than 5ft tall and wears very long skirts that require dancing on the balls of the feet. She also produces large movements, including a signature sideways lunge from right to left, followed by hip undulations or a vertical figure of eight with florid arm

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movement and variation of levels from balls of the feet to flat foot. Another movement is the “the panther,” a backward step rising from flat feet to the balls of the feet whilst undulating the abdomen, before launching forwards. She used the imagery of her domestic cat to portray her wild cat analogy. Both movements have a Hilal Raqs Sharqi movement lexicon imprint. For example Buonaventura uses spirals by centrifugally enlarging small hip circles into large hip circles, allowing the upper torso to follow the spiral through the spine, a common movement configuration in the Hilal Raqs Sharqi lexicon. In addition, Buonaventura made alterations including florid arm movements, stillness and facial expressions which differed from the basic Hilal lexicon. The movements taught by Buonaventura were not only due to her own physical capabilities; they cohered with a Buonaventura-styled experimentation and expression to explore and amplify the movement vocabulary and create new choreography. The underpinning teaching ideology found in Buonaventura’s instruction emphasizes the democratic and the individualist characteristics of Buonaventura’s narratives of authenticity, above concerns for both cultural and physical accuracy.

Hilal’s workshops were populated by attendees in similar uniforms: long skirt, long tunic with long sleeves, and head scarf. A distinguishing feature was the common use of two skirts and a characteristic tuck in the waist band of the circular skirt so that it kept tidy. By contrast to Buonaventura’s simple five-minute warm-up, Hilal’s warm-up extends over a full hour, incorporating floor work, Pilates core strengthening techniques, Yoga stretches and dynamic breath work, a similar technique to that found in Qi Gong martial arts practice (Hilal experimented with a variety of physical training including jogging, martial arts and yoga and incorporated these into her practice to emphasize the physicality and endurance of Raqs Sharqi

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dance⁵⁰). The sustained attention given to the body continues throughout the workshop by the repetition of one movement – for example the pendulum – for the duration of the workshop. She places her hands on students’ bodies, sweats alongside them during the hours of repetition and selects an individual who has attained the movement to demonstrate to the class. The repetition and rigor expected from her students, who were measured on merit not favoritism, formalized the contemporisation of the dance into a scholarly and kinesthetic practice, one that demands full commitment and describes Hilal’s narrative of the active contemporisation of the art in Egyptian dance through her own and other dancing bodies.

The pendulum is a rocking movement of the hips, with a held stillness in the upper body, replicating the sideways swing of a clock pendulum. Hilal varies the instruction by placing emphasis on the shifting of the weight from side to side, and on the recoil of the foot from the floor to produce a more dynamic swing in the hips. Hilal explains that teaching is “another way of learning new movement” and that the movement work:

...insights have come with experimenting through my body and what it makes. There is a process of finding the shapes and from the body come the ideas.....Stepping down creates an upward movement, breathing and central gravity of the abdomen. We stylize and refine by using the ball of the foot, it activates the feet and the dynamism in the body. (Hilal 2008)⁵¹

Throughout the class Hilal repeatedly demonstrates a phrase. For example she steps slowly forward, executing a deep pendulum for the count of eight, and retreats with a quick shallow

50 I reference several published articles in Hilal’s newsletters post-1997 in which Hilal describes jogging with her friend and dance colleague Anne Ashcroft as a method of regularly practising and becoming accustomed to the subtle weight exchange from right to left and a method of building flight and lightness on her feet for dance purposes (2001).

51 In 2008 I attended a two day Hilal Dance workshop on Ashra Baladi in Bethnal Green. Hilal offered a short interview in which she discussed her work, brief history and future plans. Later follow up interviews were declined.

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pendulum step backward for a count of four, side steps to the right, pausing and holding the pendulum to one side for two counts, and then turns three hundred and sixty degrees, moving the pendulum into a tight spiral movement. She repeats the same phrase, moving towards the left the second time around. Throughout the workshop Hilal's teaching emphasis is placed on repetitive imitation with limited visual and verbal instruction. The result produces a uniformity and regular visual and kinesthetic representation of a recognizable contemporary Raqs Sharqi-Self.

Hilal's limited and geographically specific narrative for the dance meant that the movement vocabulary was similarly limited. She focused her students on learning these movements precisely, inevitably using a by rote teaching style. By contrast, Buonaventura mixed movements from different styles, lyrically and fluidly combining them into new phrases. Her focus was not on technical precision of movement, but upon experimentation for wider expression. It is reported by several sources⁵² that when Buonaventura attended one of Hilal's more advanced classes in the early 1980s, Hilal recommended Buonaventura join the "beginners" class.

Hilal's content and approach lent itself to classes labelled "beginners", "improvers", and "teacher trainers", a student's "level" decided by technical merit and Hilal's personal assessment.

Buonaventura's approach and content, by contrast, lent itself to "open" classes, where students could join at any time, as long as they had dance basics, and there was no required "attainment" level. In the early 1980s, there was a point when both artists were running classes in the same

52 Several interviews in the field are illustrative of the point, not evidence for the point, that Buonaventura and Hilal met. Hilal taught Buonaventura and Buonaventura illustrated her *Belly Dancing* (1983) text with images of Suraya Hilal (the known as Selwa Raj).

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building on the same night – it was made explicit to both sets of students that if they attended one teacher’s class, they could not attend the class of the other teacher⁵³.

The rigor of Hilal’s teaching methods and her tightly choreographed group performances saw detractors label Raqs Sharqi as “Raqs Starchy”. On stage, her dancers were dressed uniformly (e.g. the Sha’abi dancer’s costume consisted of a full length circle skirt, tunic covering the midriff, hip belt, bolero jacket and head scarf; the Urban Baladi dancer wore a galabeya⁵⁴ made of assuite⁵⁵ material, hip belt and large chiffon head dress; the Classical Sharqi costume full length circle skirt, hip belt, bodice with long chiffon sleeves; there were variations on length, material used and the use of head wear but essentially these costumes – conceived by Hilal’s artistic director Jennifer Carmen⁵⁶ until 1997 – were largely adhered to), their movements were contained, minimalistic and precise, and their facial expressions had a certain sincerity. It was only when a dancer had reached Hilal’s level of dance competence that they might then begin to perform with more improvisation, as indeed Hilal herself did in her solo performances. By contrast, Buonventura’s approach saw her dance-collaborators dressed in a variety of character-specific and themed costumes, their movements were embellished, expansive (highly suited to

53 Again field notes and interviews are illustrative of the point, not evidence for the point.

54 Galabeya is a floor length tunic or loose dress regularly worn in Egypt as both daily wear and domestic wear. The galabeya is usually tightly fitted around the trunk of the body with slits either side to allow freer leg movement for the dancer.

55 Assuite material is gauze with silver and nickel metal folded into patterns creating a woven carpet-like detail and decorations. Motifs of camels, candelabras, people and papyrus were commonly found. The metal weighted patterns created a heavy shimmering opaque material. The assuite galabeya is usually two galabeyas, one made from cotton with the opaque patterned assuite over the top. Hilal dyed the performer’s galabeyas in bright hues: red, pink, blue and purple.

56 Jennifer Carmen was instrumental in attaining core funding from the Arts Council England for Hilal over a period of five years in which £80,000 was awarded. She also designed the costumes to suit Hilal’s athletic “boy-ish” figure, resourcing images and designs found in the Victoria and Albert museum, especially 1920 and 1930 designs which featured long lines, low waist-lines, the use of chiffon and extravagant materials to produce drape effect and flowing movement.

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the theatre stage) and fluidic. Buonaventura asked her collaborators to bring something individualistic and beyond her teaching to the stage, to create a richer whole.

Where Buonaventura themed her workshop on the subjects of different dance forms from North Africa to Central Asia, Hilal adhered to a Raqs Sharqi triptych of styles. Buonaventura labelled movements, including animal, everyday movements and an eclectic mix of styles such as “The African dip”⁵⁷, “The Fifi Shimmy” and “the big wheel”. Hilal used the terms “pendulum”, “scissor” and “spiral,” stripping the movement vocabulary of ornament in favour of kinesthetic imagery and function. On the subject of the three movements, Hilal explains:

I have discovered core movements with the Middle Eastern and Egyptian dance movement vocabulary. They complement each other and are profound concepts of movement shapes within them. There are all possibilities. (Interview 2008)

While Hilal pares down the movement vocabulary to the essentials, Buonaventura embellishes the narrative of movement origins by referring to Egyptian characters, distant African origins and visual imagery related to her travels and research in the Middle East. Hilal presents a contemporary version with attributing Eastern and Western application. The mix and match of styles, movement and costuming found in the Buonaventura workshop engendered individual interpretation and permission to experiment. The uniformity and repetition of Hilal’s instruction demanded compliance and order. The dance content and instruction styles differed considerably and attracted similarly opposing favorites and devotees from within the Belly Dance community in London. It has been reported that a palpable antagonism between both groups of students in London saw the departure of Buonaventura to Bristol. The authority and almost guru-status

⁵⁷ “African Dip”, “The Fifi Shimmy” terms used to denote specific movements used by Buonaventura and “the pendulum”, “scissors” and other terms used by Hilal are further explained in the glossary found in the appendix A.

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invested in either teacher indicates a community of practice with little if any cultural reference point outside of what Buonaventura or Hilal offered⁵⁸. This all but inevitably promoted acrimony, and in some reports led to painful altercations and what amounted to a fissure in the wider community of practice in England. Hilal's narrative of authenticity as the pioneer of a new form of contemporary Egyptian dance competed with Buonaventura's narrative as a pioneer of Anglo-Arab dance theatre. As shown above, each artist configured English Belly Dance based on her own identity, beliefs, constructed narrative and practices. When Hilal started running weekend dance intensives (workshops) in the early 1990s, she was the main teacher supported by Suraya Hilal School of Raqs Sharqi trainees – the dance and the dancers were made in her own image. When Buonaventura set up weekend dance intensives in the mid-90s, she invited in regional dancers and, later, international artists (like Leila Haddad from Tunisia/Paris and Amel Tafsout from Algeria/London) – a democracy of dance based upon her selection.

For all their opposition to each other, Hilal and Buonaventura helped define each other, and the “art” at the heart of English Belly Dance. For all that they reacted against the dominant American Belly Dance teaching scene that came before them, that teaching still paradoxically helped to define them. Both artists borrowed from an American dance tradition: Hilal used modern American dance pedagogic practices to develop her movement lexicon and the teaching of it (e.g. Doris Humphrey and Martha Graham); and Buonaventura used American vaudeville “tricks” (e.g. the use of props like sagats⁵⁹, veils and sticks) for her theatre pieces. So, even

58 Sarah Farouk, a student during this time, rejected both practitioners in favour of Paris-based Tunisian dancer Leila Haddad and then travelled regularly to the Middle East in search of Egyptian dance tutors including Ibrahim Akef. Sarah now lives permanently in Cairo, Egypt in 2000 and offers tuition and dance tours in Egypt (interview 2010).

59 Sagats are four tuned finger cymbals played by both dancers and musicians – other dancing props include Isis wings, the Meleya Lef (cloak), the assay (a large Saaidi stick) and Shamadan - candelabra worn on the head.

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though English Belly Dance, as developed by Hilal and Buonaventura, looked to the Middle East for its technical dance content and historical narrative, it then framed that content and narrative within a context of Western theatrical codes and conventions.

3.5 The artistic ambition of English Belly Dance

Both Hilal and Buonaventura's initial ambitions were to reconfigure past Belly Dance practices by moving them towards a more Middle Eastern present. In line with Wenger's model, I argue that each artist constructed their own narrative to authenticate their individual identities as dance artists and their resulting dance practices. Precisely as their individual identities defined the dance and their dance practices, we can understand their artistic ambitions by considering the progression of their *solo* performances over the decades: the solo performances over time can be read as a narrative of their artistic exploration and assertion of their individual dance identities and beliefs.

Buonaventura's solo performances show an artistic preoccupation with the role of the dancing woman in Biblical society, *Revelations* (1991), in British colonial Egyptian society, *Dancing Girls* (1994), in contemporary European society, *Mimi La Sardine* (1999), and global society, *And God Created Devil Woman* (2004) and *I Put a Spell on You* (2006). The characters portrayed include Salome, Ishtar Priestess, a North African dancer, Kutchem Hanem, a restaurant dancer, a theatre dancer, a self-harming dancer and a mature dancer looking back on her life. The sequence of characters could be read as a female equivalent to Shakespeare's seven stages of a man's life. They could be seen as an individual life story. Indeed, on the front page of the *Revelations* theatre programme, there is a *belle époque* image of a veiled woman surrounded by words

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illustrating the seven “stages” of a woman’s life: virgin, mother, siren, muse, goddess, whore and Amazon.

Given such an arguably personal narrative across these solo performances, it is not surprising that in interview (2009) Buonaventura considered the dance to be the domain of women, and laments the arrival of the economically astute Egyptian male Belly Dance expert, stating: “There is this very, very female movement, which you cannot reproduce it if you are a man.” The “female”, “femininity” and “woman”, specifically the dancing woman, are core to Buonaventura’s art in English Belly Dance, as seen too in her texts.

Hilal’s solo performances are a repeated search and return to some idea of a pure and essential pan-Egyptian dance form: *Return of the Spirit* (1985), *The Nai Taqasim* (1987), *Celebration of the Nile* (1989), *Jewels* (1989), *Divine Rights* (1990), *Colours of Cairo* (1991), *The Beloved* (1991), *Spirit of the Heart* (1997), *Al Janoub* (2002), *Aseel* (2004), and *Oscillations* (2008). The titles of the performances talk about a spirit, a soul, a hidden jewel, a centre around which all revolves. Different terms and metaphors are used for the same concept, the same journey to discover some lost and sacred art.

Just to give one key example of Hilal’s endeavour, I will describe her performance referred to as the *Nai Taqasim* solo⁶⁰ (1987). The *Nai*, an Egyptian flute, is an old reed instrument that produces haunting melodies, is culturally emblematic of the Egyptian musical tradition and is associated with human frailty and mortality. Hilal wears a large gold skirt, a wrap-around halter

⁶⁰ In conversation the *Nai Taqasim* is one of the few early Hilal performance commonly praised for its accomplished composition, presentation of a confident Classical Sharqi style and Hilal’s exceptional physical dexterity. The use of the imagery of the ancient goddess Isis, especially in the second part of the *Nai Taqasim*, was an unusual and never repeated motif that Hilal rejected as she pursued a more “contemporary” Egyptian expression in her later performance work.

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neck top with exposed midriff and a golden veil. Initially, she holds postures reminiscent of Pharonic Egypt (both godly and of the tomb), complete with a golden veil that alludes to images of the ancient Egyptian Goddess Isis. Then, she shifts her weight from side to side, and lowers her body, whilst rocking her hips side to side. She pauses, continues and changes direction with various Pharonic poses in slow motion. She turns away from the audience, centre stage, and with lowered lighting begins arm undulations precisely and continuously. We witness her skill, musculature and the beauty of her-Raqs-Sharqi-dancing-self. The Nai Taqasim, performed at the Arab Women's Council (at the British Commonwealth Institute, London), cleverly repositions images of fantasy and nostalgia whilst simultaneously signalling the arrival of Arab women's creative dancing potential. All of Hilal's solo performances are lengthy and characterised by the use of live Egyptian music, and a display of her physical prowess and improvisational ability. She channels the ancestral memory of a golden age of pan-Egyptian dance.

Where Buonaventura has insisted that Arabic Dance can only be embodied by women, Hilal (2008) remarked in a brief interview that the inclusion of men into her classes was a recent change. Market forces in tandem with changing gender definitions and norms have seen an increase in men engaging in the Belly Dance community as dancers, entrepreneurs and volunteers. Hilal now celebrates a new generation of Raqs Sharqi disciples emerging in the West, maintaining that the dance is rightfully the domain of women and men regardless of class. She therefore draws on the tactics of anti-colonial Arab nationalism through the act of "rescuing the dance from extinction" (Hamilton: 2000)⁶¹ and finding in it the glories of a shared tradition that

61 Hamilton's (2001) article found in a Hilal Dance newsletter (No.3) 'Egyptian Dance in the 21st Century' articulates a brief historical narrative from which the inception and trade marking of Hilal Dance's as a contemporary expression of Egyptian dance emerged. In effect, Hamilton eulogises Hilal's efforts to "rescue" a near and far Egyptian dance past.

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could unite a diverse global Raqs Sharqi ethnoscape. Hilal Dance incorporates male with female exponents of the “contemporary Egyptian dance form”.

3.5.1 Signature performances

Closer examination of each practitioner’s performance work reveals changing narratives of authenticity and identity. Both practitioners have provided an extensive body of work available in film and downloaded onto youtube.com as self-publicity. I have chosen three performances from each practitioner’s repertoire, the three performance tracing significant changes in their practice over a twenty year period. These signature performances illustrate significant technical development concerning the theatrical framing of the dance, choreographic and collective ensemble work, and the narration of a new emerging English Belly Dance identity and tradition.

3. 5.1.1 Wendy Buonaventura

In *Revelations* (1991) Buonaventura embodies numerous female biblical characters including Salome. *Revelations* narrates the rise of Christianity at the expense of women during ancient times. The dance of the seven veils is synonymous with AmCab renditions of the dance performed by the likes of Maud Allen, Rita Hayworth and Clara Bow. Buonaventura presents a Salome without seven diaphanous veils. Instead Buonaventura’s Salome is ethnically dressed in a figure hugging assuete costume. A spot-light frames the dancer and indicates the paternal presence of her uncle King Herod. The narration spoken during the performance indicates Salome’s changing emotional state from coquettish playfulness, to desperation and finally to determination. Buonaventura employs her characteristic “panther” movement, with undulations moving towards and away from her adversary King Herod. She uses arm gestures, including a “cutting” motion across the neck in time with the narrator’s declaration of the price of “a dance

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for Herod”. Falling to the floor in desperation, Salome rolls lasciviously on the floor and then defiantly rises to her feet. She turns her back and violently shimmies her hips, indicating the other type of services available. Buonaventura’s Salome offers emotional intensity and pathos framed by the fusion of haunting music, spoken narration, ethnic clothing and explicit hand gestures, in order to reveal the harsh reality of non-conformist biblical women. Buonaventura’s feminist narrative of authenticity and her ambition to pioneer a new version of Anglo-Arabic dance theatre, in which “bringing the essence of this [Arabic] dance forward into a new milieu and developing it to ‘speak’ to a modern public” (2010, 210), can be found in this new rendition of the dance of the seven veils.

Revelations (1991) and *Dancing Girls* (1994) further established key concepts found in the Buonaventura Anglo-Arab dance theatre style: Orientalist imagery, a female-centre subject, pathos, and a bricolage of different performance vignettes with spoken narration and musical accompaniment. Post *Revelations* and *Dancing Girls* these concepts were elaborated with a larger ensemble of dancers in *Mimi La Sardine* (1999-2001). In *Mimi La Sardine* the narrator shared the stage with the six dancers and Buonaventura. *Mimi La Sardine* narrated the varied life-experiences of a restaurant Belly Dancer turned theatre choreographer – it was a semi-autobiographical account of Buonaventura’s dance career. The narrator articulated economic pressures and the difficulties of working with live musicians and finding theatre venues that would show experimental Arabic dance work. Buonaventura wrote, devised and choreographed the show, her partner funded the endeavour, a local television company filmed a documentary accompanying the show, and critics at the Edinburgh fringe reviewed Buonaventura’s

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choreographic work⁶². The group choreographies were loosely themed from a tableau of writhing bodies and ornamental arm movement depicting *Sirens* (mermaids enticing men into the sea), an Andalusian-inspired group dance and an Iranian-inspired comedy group dance. Buonaventura solos were based on previous work from *Revelations* and *Dancing Girls*. *Mimi La Sardine* attempted to bring Buonaventura's Anglo-Arab dance theatre into the twentieth century: the subject herself and the six dancers her protégés. The criticism levelled at Buonaventura indicated that her previous Anglo-Arab bricolage technique was not a successful formula when approaching more modern and everyday issues concerning herself and other Belly Dancers⁶³. Buonaventura sourced her life and those of her six dancers to appeal to a wider audience, whereas in fact her currency as a “collector” and her Orientalist perspective on Arab dance were exposed.

Later work included a continuing collaboration with Caroline Afifi, Venus Saleh and Hazel Kayes, three original members from the *Mimi La Sardine* venture. During this period Buonaventura reinstated *Dancing Girls* (2002) with Afifi and wrote several new texts, including *Beauty in the East: A Book on Oriental Body Care* (1998) and *I Put a Spell on You: Dancing Women from Salome to Madonna* (2003) (the American version entitled *Something in the Way She Moves*). This was shortly followed by a Radio Four series of programmes (2001)⁶⁴ and another research book covering the life and work of Maud Allen, *Midnight Rose* (2009). In later

62 (1999) The Scotsman and other local Edinburgh newspapers applauded Buonaventura's solo performances in *Mimi La Sardine* but criticised the amateur group choreographies. These choreographies were devised by Buonaventura and her solos were in fact previously acclaimed solos from previous theatre work. It would seem that Buonaventura practice was ideally suited to solo and duet performance not large ensemble choreographic work.

63 2009 in interview Buonaventura maintains that *Mimi La Sardine* was a good piece of dance theatre. The root of its failure, according to Buonaventura, was that some performers were “phoning in” their performance every night at the Edinburgh fringe.

64 Radio Four (2001) in which Buonaventura narrated the stories of Tango dance, Belly Dance and the Viennese Waltz.

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work Buonaventura concentrates on written work more than dance performance. She continued to teach and offer workshops in conjunction with travel companies, offering dance holidays in Spain and North Africa. Buonaventura also worked with Karine Butchart and Lyn Chapman on a successful Middle Eastern and North African dance weekend, *Majma*, in Glattonbury Somerset for several years. She featured as a key performer and showcased her favourite collaborators Venus Saleh, Caroline Afifi, Hazel Kayes and Karine Butchart (2001-2007).

As English arts policy transitioned from cultural diversity to the social inclusion policy of New Labour (1997), funding becoming more available for non-Arabic dancers of Middle Eastern dance. A trend within dance funding was for dance film experimentation. Buonaventura followed this trend by working on the film *And God Created Devil-Woman* (2004) with her regular collaborators. It is perhaps unclear what the aim of this last dance-film is. Long term collaborator Afifi confesses to not understanding the objective of the project (2009).

Buonaventura mixed Baba Koram elements with a Tango dancer, she is seen feeding a ballet dancer pills and injecting her with drugs. Afifi presents a sword dance, alongside Kayes burlesque cartwheel and Buonaventura, Afifi and Kayes repeat a hip joke whilst each performer wears a distinctive female-costume: a wedding dress, a Baba Koram suit and a burlesque corset. Again Buonaventura's experimentation with her Anglo-Arab dance theatre concept continued with female-centred subject matter, and this example included a dance medium beyond the theatre stage.

Where earlier work saw the development of Buonaventura's signature dance theatre bricolage (a selection of dance vignettes, narration from evocative prose and exotic costuming accompanied by a variety of fusion and world music), later Anglo-Arab dance theatre with larger ensemble choreographic practice and the use of film presented new challenges. Arriving in the twenty-

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first century Buonaventura moved away from narrating a fantastical and biblical past. The new methods and medias for compiling her distinctive Anglo-Arab dance theatre work created confusing interference. It would appear that the Buonaventura Anglo-Arab formula required a clearer past, a collection of ancient or historical memories and impressions of the Middle East that suited the bricolage of imagery, story-telling and female bodies in her work. Buonaventura's true narratives of authenticity lay with her abilities to collect, fantasize and retell old stories from a feminist perspective.

3.5.1.2 Suraya Hilal

Colours of Cairo performed at the Sadler's Wells (1991) continued Hilal's contemporisation of her Raqs Sharqi identity. Previous work, including *Return of the Spirit* (1985), *Celebration of the Nile* (1989), *Jewels* (1989) and *Divine Rites* (1990), established the Hilal triptych of Sha'abi, Classical Sharqi and Urban Baladi in performance with live music accompaniment from either the Musicians of the Nile or the Layla el Sharqi Band. A duet from *Colours of Cairo* represents a changing direction from earlier memories of a classical Egyptian past (see *Nai Taqasim solo* in section 3.5 above) to a new form of extending and stretching the Classical Sharqi repertoire literally to incorporate deep plie bends, outstretched arms, held moments within the choreography and a jumping into lyrical hip movement. The duet of Hilal and Anne Ashcroft presents a departure from the more ornate presentations of Classical Sharqi in previous shows. Ashcroft and Hilal mirror each other throughout the duet, wearing dark blue violet costumes with subtle sequin details and long flowing circular skirts. They attack the stage with a dynamic display of upright held torsos and arms whilst striding seamlessly through space, bending, twisting and pausing in tandem. The arm movements pay less attention to an undulating configuration found in earlier work in preference for a stronger, outward and held extension.

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The hip work is tight, vigorous and at times omitted completely for contrast. The effort throughout the performance is placed on the geometry and shapes produced in conjunction with each other. The effect is effortless and subtle and Hilal demonstrates a new direction for her Raqs Sharqi vision, one that incorporates Modern American Abstract Expressionism, whilst framed by Egyptian musicians and flowing costuming.

Leaving England for Italy with partner Alessandro el Bascioni in the 2000s, Hilal replaced long-term artistic director Jennifer Carmen with Swiss co-ordinator Claudia Heinle to develop the distinctive Hilal Dance trademark. The result of an extended field trip to Upper Egypt with Alessandro, Claudia and talented Belgium dancer Marie al Fajr was the dance theatre piece *Al Janoub* (2002), a modern expression of traditional Upper Egyptian folk and social dances. Hilal notes the shift from an all female group to the inclusion of men in Hilal Dance, most notably her partner Alessandro:

Our developments in terms of choreography include the *Al Janoub* (2002), which was special. It was the first burst of creativity with Hilal Dance. We visited Upper Egypt and stayed with the musicians and saw a lot of men dancing. We wanted to see more men on stage and show the progress of us as humans in the dance. Alessandro has been a part of the male softness in the dance. (2008)

In the choreography *Ya Rab Toba*, initially only Hilal and Fajr arrive on stage performing in unison, wearing skull caps and charcoal grey tunics with long skirts. They circle the floor, shuffling in unison, alternating the raising of one arm and then another as they describe the floor space. They jump into repeated sideways hip pendulums, dip into deep hip spiral turns, skip into tight percussive hip drops and travel sideways together in union using a limping action. A loud Saaidi drum calls and Alessandro enters in flowing dark charcoal galabeya, turban, goatee beard and large circular skirt. He turns and joins the females dancing in unison, creating triangle, line,

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circle and solo formations. The choreography continues for nine minutes and within the “traditional” framing of the dance we can identify the Hilal trademark movements. An addition is the inclusion of a vigorous oscillation of the whole body. The striking characteristics of this choreography are the angular lines and attack Hilal and Fajr embody compared to the undulating “softness” Bascioni embodies. Hilal presents a vision of the traditional social dances reconfigured into her own choreographic and movement principles. The inclusion of Bascioni into her repertoire is consistent with her narrative of authenticity, including men into a Raqs Sharqi dancing future.

According to Hilal:

The dance creates itself through me. It is a complex system I have developed, yet so simple and so clear at the same time. We work from the down up. Like Yoga there is a focus on the energetic muscular move up. The Astanga poses stimulate the upper body by stimulating the lower body. The spiral movement goes up by creating a response downward. Stepping down creates an upward movement, breathing and central gravity of the lower abdomen. (2008)

One of her most recent performances, *Oscillations* (2007), brings into reality the “pure” and “simple” originally found in her earlier work. Again, Hilal demonstrates the diversity within the repetition of three movements. She also presents a performance in which elaborate costuming and staging is completely rejected. Sarah Hamilton and Hilal perform a duet in large white costumes where the dancer opens her arms to produce the form of a human sail in the wind (see images in appendix B). The artistic aim of *Oscillations* uses the theme of flying to exemplify the balance and freedom found in the Hilal Dance form:

Bring to light essential elements that realise the point of balance in body, in mind and in life, actualised through the metaphor of flying, the sense of freedom one gains from finding equilibrium. (sourced from

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<http://www.hilaldance.com/suraya-hilal-dance-company/suraya-hilal-productions.php> [last accessed May 2012]

Hilal uses modernist and impressionistic metaphor and abstraction to subtract the dance from its Egyptian roots and present a dance beyond national borders to an international dance audience. The transnational status of Hilal Dance, readily found on danceuk.com and other dance institution websites, has completed its cycle of attachment to past Egyptian dance, to form a contemporary vision and embodiment beyond the label of world dance.

3.6 English Belly Dance and globalised Belly Dance

As shown, there is a unique and recognisable Belly Dance tradition in England. We can describe Belly Dance as being recognisably “English” or not “English”. Particular English Belly Dancers today follow the Hilal tradition, others follow the Buonaventura tradition. There are others still who, even as they are influenced by their predecessors, choose to resist their predecessors, just as their predecessors before them resisted and were influenced by the likes of American modern dance and theatrical tradition. Some borrow from both the Hilal and Buonaventura traditions. The others accept extra influences from outside England (e.g. American Cabaret Style Belly Dance or going out to the Middle East to conduct their own research).

There is an identifiable, wide and vibrant English Belly Dance community of practice: where Hilal and Buonaventura represented a tradition based upon a very binary opposition, there are now more shades of grey, more artistic nuances, more complex social and political allegiances, and more pluralities in the opposition. There are still issues that will always survive in English Belly Dance, some issues quintessentially English such as post-colonial relations with Egypt and some issues that are global but where England will have its own position and form of dance

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expression (e.g. religious themes, economic value, race, class, gender and sexual orientation).

English Belly Dance takes part in the contemporary negotiation of these global issues, and competes for its own *ethnoscape* of international audiences – just as Hilal Dance, with work like *Aseel* (2004) and *Oscillations* (2008), has now become an international brand and contemporary dance expression; and just as *Serpent of the Nile* is now reprinted for twenty one different languages around the world, thereby gaining Buonaventura an increasing number of international book.

Chapter 4

4. English Belly Dance presence in the global Belly Dance market

4.1 Introduction

As shown in chapter three, an English Belly Dancer can inherit or “embody” the authentic, even when performing a dance that is ostensibly of foreign origin, through the establishment or continuation of a more “local” or “English” Belly Dance tradition. Buonaventura and Hilal had to look beyond England for an origin and authenticity to the dance: Buonaventura described a pan-Arabic origin and Hilal described a pan-Egyptian or golden age past. Buonaventura appropriated the authentic through her narratives of authenticity that described her pan-Arabic bloodline, and evidenced her overseas research. Similarly, Hilal used her Yemini/Egyptian bloodline as a narrative of authenticity, and combined that with the narrative of her performances that worked towards an “essential” Egyptian dance (see chapter three, section 3.3).

The research question: how can authenticity in the performance of Belly Dance be achieved by English Belly Dance practitioners? A practitioner can claim authenticity in a dance of seemingly foreign origin, or any other dance form, if they can construct (artificially or otherwise) narratives of authenticity into the following initial finding:

The emergence and crystallisation of a wider sub-community in order to establish or continue a tradition with currency (social, education, cultural and economic), to realise financial value, an audience, and longevity of career with protégés

It is possible for a Belly Dance practitioner in England to present an authenticity in a Belly Dance performance. To further evidence this finding from the research conducted this chapter will show how the styles of Belly Dance around the world use the same approach to claiming

authenticity i.e. they construct, perform and exchange their own narratives of authenticity. Each global style has its own dominant and defining narratives (creating differentiation with other styles) and those narratives are directly related to the value that Belly Dance has within the culture of that style.

English Belly Dance, as shown in chapter three, competes within a larger international Belly Dance *ethnoscape* (Appadurai, 1996). Hilal and Buonaventura's initial aim of representing the "art" in the dance led to successful dance theatre runs at the Edinburgh Fringe Festivals from the late 1980s, followed by European and American tour dates and bookings⁶⁵. Hilal and Buonaventura were not only creating an identifiable English Belly Dance tradition and in the process of gaining recognition nationwide but also they were gaining larger international audiences, substantial Arts Council⁶⁶ funding and prospective international students.

By contrast, their efforts to broaden their appeal in Egypt led to indifference from Egyptian audiences (1991)⁶⁷. However, an increasing number of tour dates occurred in Australasia, North America and Europe. In addition there was a rise in international attendance at weeklong dance intensives with provision made in event publicity highlighting nearest airport, national

65 Hilal claimed in interview that she started her dance career by performing in Edinburgh festival from the mid 1980s. Buonaventura's first show at Edinburgh was Revelations, followed by Dancing Girls which attracted critical acclaim and performance bookings in several European countries. Both practitioners brought their work to the Sadlers Wells theatre, the national institute for dance in England. Hilal and Buonaventura have been the only practitioners in this dance genre to successfully bring their dance theatre work to Sadlers Wells.

66 Hilal received over £80,000 in core funding in the early 1990s from the English Arts Council. This was partly attributed to a key council member who became increasingly interested in Hilal's work and championed their cause when Jennifer Carmen approached the Council for funding.

67 The Channel Four documentary (1991) concerning Hilal's work finished with interview extracts of Egyptian audience responses to her work in Cairo. One theatre practitioner in particular likened Hilal's work to that of a butterfly exhibited under a glass case in a museum. Similarly, efforts made by Buonaventura, mostly informal, to perform in Egypt were greeted with appreciation but no further interest was shown.

transportation network links, accommodation and currency exchange rates⁶⁸. Both Hilal and Buonaventura by the mid-1990s were competing on a larger, more mobile global Belly Dance ethnoscape. Following their international success Hilal and Buonaventura replaced their respective Raqs Sharqi and Arabic Dance brands with their own names: Hilal Dance and Wendy Buonaventura and Co. The Englishness and even the Belly Dance roots of both practices were displaced in favour of their authorship and rising personal profiles. Hilal and Buonaventura's attempt to represent the artist at the centre of their work, as creator of their respective canons of practice represents a new level of ownership, replicating the practice found in the western contemporary dance field⁶⁹. This separatist notion of Belly Dance-inspired dance theatre reflects the Hilal and Buonaventura "art" project, the attempt to resist categorisation with the larger Belly Dance ethnoscape in order to be measured alongside other dance forms on the larger dance market. In reality the re-naming of their dance practices exposed their ambivalence towards Middle Eastern dance, culture and towards the wider Belly Dance community of shared practice. Despite this, the main source of the majority of their students and audiences appear from this group of interested participants. When we analyse their publicity material the primary focus and method of distinguishing their work in the wider dance market is to emphasis their unique connection with Arab and Middle Eastern dance: Hilal Dance as a contemporary Egyptian dance expression and Buonaventura as a modern feminist interpretation of the sensuality of Arabic Dance in performance. Cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) is gained from uniqueness in the

68 Both Hilal and Buonaventura's advertising publicity in the 1990s and still to this day incorporate different languages and airport information were advertised – more recently – payment is taken in Euros or English pounds. Hilal has successfully built networks of accredited practitioners, performance dates and workshops across Europe and Australia. By contrast, Buonaventura has successfully built international Arabic Dance festivals in England, attracting and hiring international artists – especially American Arabic Dance artists.

69 I'm referring to the European and American contemporary dance practice of using the surnames of prominent dance practitioners to name dance styles and brands like Cunningham, Pina Bausch, Graham technique and Alvin Ailey etc.

market, Hilal's and Buonaventura's uniqueness is drawn from Middle Eastern dance forms, yet their affiliation with the people, culture and dance forms from these areas is debatable.

It remains that within the English Belly Dance community the names Hilal and Buonaventura are synonymous with Belly Dance. Further afield, these names are synonymous with either a book (*Serpent of the Nile*, 1989) or, in the case of Hilal, a unique form of fusion/contemporary Belly Dance⁷⁰. In Europe, Hilal's timely move to Italy⁷¹ and concentration on the European and Australian market has reinforced and continued to increase the presence of Hilal Dance as an international, contemporary Egyptian dance brand. By contrast, Buonaventura's new texts and reprints of *Serpent of the Nile* have continued to provide irregular, but continued international bookings. Buonaventura states, "Most of my income and work comes from international gigs, not classes, workshops and even festivals I produce in the UK. The majority of the money is from international work." (2009). The international markets for Hilal's physical and dance theatre (with live music) and the American market's interest in Buonaventura's dance theatre bricolage exposed the different cultural, social and educational proclivities of each market, and represented the growing cultural capital of English Belly Dance expertise and exports, in addition to emphasising the differences and complementarities of various Belly Dance ethnoscapas.

70 A discussion thread on bhuz.com exemplifies the notion that Hilal is not well known in America and Buonaventura's text *The Serpent on the Nile* is more readily known. Deagon participates on the thread, noting that Hilal's work is admirable and very unique compared with other forms and experimentations of the dance. She notes that Hilal's rigor in class is a key aspect that she much admires but notes that increasingly Hilal's aesthetic differs considerably from other Belly Dance practitioners.

71 Hilal states "The funding opportunities in the UK have ceased and I had to move out of my apartment which was an affordable place to live in London" (2008). Money, in the form of funding and indirect support through subsidised rent, had made it possible for Hilal to continue her work. The changing funding climate from Cultural Diversity to Social Inclusion (1997) was one of the deciding factors for the move to Italy. Another was the influence of her long term partner Italian dancer/choreographer Alessandro Bascioni.

Bourdieu (1977) conceives of power relations that infuse all dimensions of social life, the struggle for social distinction being a critical mechanism that stratifies social systems into hierarchical order, allowing for the domination of groups and participants so that the existing dynamic reproduces and persists over time⁷². Bourdieu considers the body to be the site for the construction of an individual's "habitus"⁷³ (social location) and "taste" (taste being measured in degrees of 'refinement' or 'vulgarity' – not evenly or equitably distributed – and referring directly to preferences and mannerisms that signal cultural capital, embodied as physical capital). The second locus for Bourdieu's theory of power relations is found in the ways hegemonic symbolic systems and modes of representation function as instruments of domination. For this chapter I will be unpacking the different categories of value/capital into subgroups i.e. social value, educational value, cultural value and economic value. This will assist in the identification of the different characteristics found in four global styles of Belly Dance – these four do not represent the entirety of global Belly Dance styles, rather they represent the dominant styles that relate directly to English Belly Dance, which are the Egyptian, American, and Oriental⁷⁴ styles. The following material is sourced from literature reviews, internet forums and field research in

72 Bourdieu also suggests that value is attributed by different social groups who themselves possess value within hierarchical systems. There is not one defining value system but multiple variation of values held by different social groups. This would apply to the different social groups found within Belly Dance communities of shared practice, as shown by Bacon (2003) and McDonald (2010) and in chapter three of this thesis.

73 Bourdieu in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977) considers habitus to be an important feature of social life, one that contributes to social reproduction because it is central to generating and regulating the practices that make up social life. For Bourdieu a central aspect of habitus is embodiment: it can be defined as a system of dispositions (schemes of perception, thought and action). It does not only operate at a discursive level. There are internal structures which become embodied and work in a deeper, practical and often pre-reflexive way.

74 American and Egyptian Belly Dance styles are referenced in chapter three and we need to allow for an all pervading Orientalist style of Belly Dance which is found in both American and Egyptian styles in addition to English Belly Dance style.

Egypt, America and England over a period of six years (2002-2007) and action research, including informal and formal surveys (Cooper 2005 and Paul 1998).

4.2 Egyptian Belly Dance narratives and values

4.2.1 Social value

Research in the field has demonstrated the contradictory nature of Belly Dance in Egypt (Franken 2003 and Nieuwkerke 1995, 189-192). It has a social function: Belly Dancers provide entertainment and social commentary at weddings and other special occasions. According to Lorius (1996) Fifi Abdou⁷⁵ was admired for her revelry and outrageous comments during a performance as much as she was for her colourful costuming and dance skill. The dancer presents both the dancing and music for an event as well as gender politics and comedy (Lorius, 1996). Yasmina of Cairo moved to Egypt to pursue a Belly Dance career and notes that the difficulties for English Belly Dancers relate to the extravagant, over-the-top personality required of a dancer: “The Russians and Argentineans and most other nationalities that come to Cairo don’t have an issue with being larger than life and the Diva qualities expected of a Belly Dancer, unfortunately the English do” (interview 2011). Lorna Gow, a recent Scottish addition to the Cairo Belly Dance scene, notes: “I’m learning to be a Diva, it is weird and completely different to my Calvinist upbringing. I am not allowed to carry my bags on the boat, they have to be carried by someone - it is part of the act” (interview, 2010). The contradiction lies in the Egyptian expectation that the Belly Dancer is also available for sex; she is a prostitute

⁷⁵ Fifi Abdou is one of the high profile Belly Dancers in Egypt. She continues to perform for private functions but is rarely seen on the Cairo Belly Dance circuit. Her career spanned over thirty years as one of Egypt’s most famous and wealthiest Belly Dancers. She also became a family favourite appearing in countless movies, television programmes and regular cameo performances in theatre shows.

(*Shamuda*). Caroline in interview confirms that even though a Belly Dancer can command high wages and is complimented on her virtuosity and abilities on stage, “A respectable Egyptian family would never invite a Belly Dancer to dine at their table. She is a social outcast: to become a Belly Dancer is a defiant act” (interview, 2009). A woman’s defiant decision to become a Belly Dancer is one that will follow her for the rest of her life whatever she does, with whomever she marries and even if she decides to cease Belly Dancing. The social stigma of being a Belly Dancer, being married to a Belly Dancer and being the son of a Belly Dancer (a well used slang expression used to insult an adversary) is clearly demonstrated by Nieuwkerke’s table (1995, 189-192) of different social groups of Egyptians and their corresponding opinions concerning the social status of specific role and jobs. A dancer in a nightclub fared the worst, whereas a folk dancer and a female dancer at a wedding wavered between being “mediocre” to “bad”. Each class of Egyptian interviewed consistently identified the nightclub dancer as being “very bad”. Nieuwkerke’s text differentiates between classes and roles of dancers in Egypt, from the Ghawazee⁷⁶ to the folk dancers, and illustrates the complex social relations women have to negotiate in order to become a professional dancer, a role in which she is negotiating not only herself but the reputation of her family. The rise in Egyptian nationalism and interest in choreographed dance display assisted the revitalisation of the Egyptian social dance tradition. With the additional token of government-funded respectability and official acknowledgement,

⁷⁶ Ghawazee are considered to be a tribe of dancers, usually formed in family groups and found in different parts of Egypt – not just Upper Egypt. They perform in public for entertainment, the Saint’s Days and other public occasions (see Nieuwkerke 1995 and Franken 2003). They perform in groups with live musician accompaniment and wear different types of dance clothing, from everyday wear to highly sequined costumes. They are recognised by the fact that they dance in public spaces, whereas other dancers including nightclub dancers and folklore dancers perform in private buildings and institutions like theatres.

Mahmoud Reda's⁷⁷ folk dance troupe "The Reda Troupe" gained a new dance audience and was considered a "respectable profession". Nonetheless, Mahmoud Reda's female protégé and lead dancer, Farida Fahmy, recounts, "I had to get written permission from my father to apply for a folk dancer's licence" (interview, 2007) and she also married Reda's brother Ali to confirm her respectability before becoming "the daughter of Egypt" (Franken, 2001). Nieuwkerke's table confirms the higher status given to a folk dancer⁷⁸ to that of a nightclub dancer (1995, 189-192). It has always been the case that Egyptian bureaucracy has differentiated the administration of the two roles, applying particular legislative and political control to the licences of nightclub dancers,⁷⁹ by contrast to the licenses given to folk dancers. Undoubtedly, the centre of controversy is the fact that a woman dancing in public for money is the problem of respectability in Egyptian society.

In Egypt from institutional administration to state funding, from the higher middle classes to the working classes, a Belly Dancer is considered to be the lowest profession and is aligned with

⁷⁷ Mahmoud Reda was a choreographer and dancer. Unlike many Middle Eastern folklorist dancers, post-independence, he was trained in balletic technique in Eastern Block countries like Romania (see A'isha Ali, 1979). Reda conceived of a larger national folklore dance ensemble with the view to gain public funding and travel around Egypt and the world representing the traditional dances of Egypt (see Shay, 2002 for more details).

⁷⁸ A folk dancer and folk dance in Egypt is a dancer and dance form that is attributed to different regions and peoples of Egypt. The dancer usually performs in group theatre ensemble. They perform in theatres, like the Balloon Theatre, or for tourist in specifically made performance venues like the "Alf Leila Wa Leila" complex in Sharm El-Sheikh, or on restaurant boats like "The Nile Maxim" and other city nightclubs. The groups perform a variety of dance styles including Pharonic (an interpretation of Ancient Egyptian depictions of dances on tomb walls), Alexandrian, Bedouin, Nubian and Saaidi Dances. The costumes are brightly coloured. Included in this programme is a form of "Belly Dance" shown – usually a classical sharqi version not unlike Hilal's interpretation. Also men and women dance alongside each other. I also refer to Shay's definition and research in the field of Middle Eastern and Central Asian folklore dance and choreographic politics (2001).

⁷⁹ Leyla Amir was an American Belly Dancer who worked in Cairo during the 1980s. She recalls the complicated and convoluted bureaucratic system she had to negotiate in order to gain a licence to perform. In a lively debate on bhuz.com Leyla provides information concerning the legal requirements and also the distinction made between folk dancer and nightclub dancer. She states that these laws and licenses have been in place for a long period of time. Some commentators wonder if they have been in place before, during or after the British colonial era.

prostitution. However, there is still ambiguity and ambivalence. When I went to interview the famous Belly Dancer Nagwa Fouad (2003) the hotel staff, hotel owner and even the Egyptian hotel guests were amazed at my ease of access to a woman they considered the “queen” of Belly Dance entertainment, in some way their idol. My experience in the field has shown that an Egyptian can provide platitudes concerning his/her favourite Belly Dancer, but when asked if he/she would allow their daughter to become one the answer is a swift and emphatic “No” (2003-2006). Lorus (1996) and Roushdy (2010) similarly point out the important social function a Belly Dancer enacts on stage, one in which humour, movement and a shared moment of *communitas* (see Turner, 1983) is orchestrated by the solo dancer. Sarah Farouk⁸⁰ describes a Belly Dance performance as a “moment when everyone colludes with the dancer, musicians and nightclub owner to share something you would not ordinarily see in Egyptian society. Behind closed doors with the music playing and the dancer taking centre stage we all enjoy the illicit act of taking pleasure from a woman publicly controlling our attention” (interview, 2006). It would appear that the social function of an Egyptian Belly Dancer is important in addition to being a very precarious one. Caroline notes: “These days young Egyptians are embarrassed by Belly Dancers and you rarely see one at a wedding. They see it as an old tradition. One that they are not really proud of, and [it] has no relevance for them now” (2009). Changing fashions and attitudes impact on the daily routine of a Belly Dancer, one in which she is required to embody the social contradictions her gender is subject to whilst simultaneously being subjected to the flux and flow of government, ecclesiastical and domestic ambivalence and constraint (see Franken 2003 and Roushdy 2010).

80 Sarah Farouk is an English Belly Dancer living and working in Egypt. She visits England every April to perform and give workshops. She is currently working for the Belly Dance atelier Eman Zaki. She also promotes events and new Belly Dance talent from Egypt to other western countries like England.

4.2.2 Educational value

There are no official and licensed⁸¹ Belly Dance training institutions in Egypt. Dance education is sourced with a group, like The Reda Troupe, or individually with dance trainers like Raqia Hassan⁸² and Aida Nour⁸³. These women teach in their own homes, with a studio space provided. Hassan teaches the modern Cairo style, a style of Belly Dance championed by big Belly Dance stars like Dina⁸⁴ and Randa⁸⁵. On an average week day a steady stream of individual dancers can be seen entering Raqia Hassan's apartment in Dokki, Cairo. She teaches Western and Egyptian Belly Dance students for an hourly rate of £15 (150LE Egyptian pounds – the average monthly income is 300LE⁸⁶). Hassan compares teaching the different students by stating, “Egyptians are lazy, [and] they don't want to learn. [By comparison] students from

81 To gain employment or build a business in Egypt you have to seek official licensing and permission. The Mogamma building in central Cairo (recently burnt down during the Arab Spring Revolution, 2011), was the bureaucratic centre of Egyptian working life. Egyptians have to seek written approval by local and regional government officials and agencies to gain employment. The Belly Dancer license to work is notoriously difficult to obtain, for foreign dancers especially. Also the licence to be a Belly Dance has to be renewed annually which increases the complexity of the bureaucratic process in obtaining one.

82 Raqia Hassan is a well established Belly Dance instructor living in Dokki and providing regular Belly Dance tuition for Western Belly Dancers and Egyptian Belly Dancers. She runs an annual Belly Dance festival in Cairo “Ahlan Wa Sahlan”, and she was originally trained by Mahmoud Reda.

83 Aida Nour is another Belly Dance trainer; she was a Belly Dance performer for many years and now runs a successful dance studio and costume atelier. She performed in England with the *Fahra Tour* with Yasmina of Cairo and Dandesh in 2005.

84 Dina is a prominent Belly Dancer currently performing on the Cairo circuit. She came to prominence in the early 1990s and controversially incorporated new and tightly cut costumes, more emotive use of hand gestures and facial expressions and recently took the Haj due to a pornographic film indiscretion.

85 Randa Kamel has been a rising Belly Dance star in Cairo for over a decade. She came to prominence after changing her physique from soft and curvaceous to muscular and stream line. She regularly travels abroad appearing in large international Belly Dance showcases and is famed for her aggressive and fast paced Belly Dance style, featuring locked knees, straight arms and micro-movements.

86 Price and income references date to early and mid 2000s, this will have changed due to inflation and the Arab Spring 2011. I also refer to McClure's (2002) *Egypt Almanac: The Encyclopaedia of Modern Egypt*. Recent reports by Belly Dance tour operators and English dance students suggest that prices to learn with Belly Dance stars like Dina have increased by over 400% in Egypt.

Europe [they] want to learn, they want to learn choreographies and they work hard” (2006).

Raqia Hassan is also the founder of the *Ahlan Wa Sahlan* Belly Dance festival in Cairo, where the Belly Dance stars of Cairo teach students from all over the world. A key figure in the Cairo Belly Dance scene as both a trainer and impresario of potential Belly Dance talent, Hassan has built a teaching enterprise in her own house. It is possible to build a Belly Dance enterprise by teaching Western dancers, but attempts to expand these enterprises has seen direct government intervention⁸⁷. The strength of the political obstacles placed in the way of market forces illustrates the deep rooted anxiety Egyptian society has towards any official approved of a Belly Dance educational institute (see Roushdy 2010).

In conversation Hassan indicates that Egyptian dancers “know the movements”, indicating the intrinsic cultural value of the dance in Egypt, with movements, songs and “dance styles” passed from one generation to another (see Adra 2005). Whilst there is encouragement within the confines of the domestic environment (Ibid, 2005) there are strong social obstacles that deter a potential Egyptian Belly Dancer from learning other dance technique and training from outside the home. Again, this demonstrates the high cultural value of the dance and its low social value in Egypt.

By contrast, training with a government-funded folk dance group like The Reda Troupe is an acceptable reality. Training for the solo Belly Dance hotel contracts is found in private domestic

⁸⁷ There have been regular attempts to promote and establish a Belly Dance school in Cairo. A recent attempt witnessed a strong opposition from the Mubarak government (see Roushdy 2010). Since the *Arab Spring* (2011) new concerns have emerged with the rise of the Islamic Brotherhood (who have officially claimed they are not interested in Belly Dancers and more concerned with feeding the poor). The rise of the Salafist (an extreme fundamentalist Islamic political party) is the main concern for the night club and Belly Dance market in Egypt. In the last year several Belly Dancers have moved to the Gulf States. It has been noted that the majority of tourist night clubs have been destroyed. Also foreign Belly Dancer contracts will not be renewed once they expire. (The sources of this information include published and televised reports by Al Ahram Egyptian daily newspaper, Al Jazeera online website and in NADA Belly Dance trade magazine, UK).

environments with trainers who themselves were either folk dance trained or Belly Dancers. It does not follow that your teacher's name and their dancing pasts are inherited by the Belly Dancer; in fact the individualist nature of Belly Dance encourages separation from traditions in order to break with any suggestion of a coherent Egyptian Belly Dancing tradition. It is more significant where you perform, relatively speaking; a dancer working on the Tourist boats and for the five-star hotels receives higher wages than the dancers found in Egyptian nightclubs. Similarly the style, the costumes, the size of the orchestra and the price of the menu confirm the "status" of the Belly Dancer, moving the low class *Shamuda* (prostitute) Belly Dancer to a talented superstar Belly Dancer who attracts international contracts and, more recently, highly lucrative teaching work abroad.

4.2.3 Cultural value

The cultural value of Belly Dance in Egypt is high even though the social ambivalence shown towards the Belly Dancers could suggest otherwise. The cultural value of Belly Dance in Egypt is high due to the regular occurrences of Belly Dance found at nightclubs, on television and as a part of social events like weddings as shown by Franken (2003), Nieuwkerke (1995), Lorus (1996) and more recently Roushdy (2010). Egypt is the cultural and arts centre of the Arab world (Shay 2002, 126-163 and McClure 2002, 67) and Belly Dance is one of its many cultural exports. A major reason given by western Belly Dancers seeking performance contracts in Egypt is the access to live music (McDonald 2010, 2012). American Belly Dancer Leila Farid states: "You can't beat it, and even when the money is rubbish, the working conditions suck and you really don't know if your licence to dance will continue next year. The best part about all of it, and it always gets me back on the dance floor, is the music. You can't beat dancing to live music. In America you wouldn't get this, you might get the money, but you can't find the same

musicians in America” (interview, 2003). The high cultural value found in Egypt attracts western Belly Dancers and Egyptian Belly Dancers to Cairo. There are other options in the Gulf States, North Africa and Levant region, but still Egypt retains its Belly Dance status globally. Even when Belly Dancers have never been to Egypt the high cultural value of Belly Dance associated with Egypt remains (Bacon 2003 and McDonald 2010).

When asked about the foreign dancers in Cairo Fifi Abdou is reported to have euphemistically said, “You can eat different types of bananas from all over the world, but it is the Egyptian banana which tastes the best.” The highest paid Belly Dancers in Cairo are Egyptian Belly Dancers and, as Shay and Sellers-Young (2003) have pointed out, rather than use Orientalist names like Ishtar and Nefertiti Egyptian Belly Dance stars use chic European names to distinguish themselves e.g. Fifi, Dina, and Lucy. The *self-exoticisation*⁸⁸ of the Egyptian international Belly Dancer holds high cultural currency. Belly Dance festivals held around the world gain cultural currency by billing an Egyptian Belly Dancer. Artists like Dina and Randa attract high fees and large audiences.

At Belly Dance Congress⁸⁹ (2009) the star attraction was Fifi Abdou. In her sixties Fifi commanded extremely large fees and a large back-stage rider, and tickets sales peaked when her booking was confirmed. I attended her cane workshop; the studio was full with over a hundred students in attendance. Fifi took the podium and the workshop began with a ten-minute loud

88 Shay and Sellers-Young (2003) establish that not only are western Belly Dancer’s sourcing Orientalist myth and imagery to construct a fantasy Middle Eastern self. In fact Egyptian and other Middle Eastern nationals who embark on a Belly Dance career also source Orientalist myth as a form of self-exoticisation and a method of gaining higher cultural and economic value on the international and domestic market.

89 Belly Dance Congress was a JWAAD and Farida Dance enterprise. It was a weekend of Belly Dance featuring several English, European and American Belly Dancers alongside Egyptian Belly Dancers including Fifi Abdou and Randa Kamel. The event was the largest of its kind in England attracting over 1,000 attendees and was held in Surrey, England 2009.

ovation which she encouraged for a further ten minutes. The hour-long workshop included simple forward and back movements with twirling cane. Fifi demonstrated the movement and we followed; she injected an impromptu performance, and then returned to teaching by rote. She completed the workshop – ten minutes early – because she was tired. The rest of the workshop included queuing for a photograph and autograph. Fifi’s performance that evening was a repeat of the workshop with the same music (her workshop was a rehearsal for her performance) and the majority of the performance was spent standing and gesturing for more applause. The other Egyptian dancers performing during the evening paid special homage to Fifi’s table, to pay their respects and acknowledge her legendary status.

Yasmina of Cairo states, “You move to Egypt to get the real thing, there is an essence here you cannot get in England. I had to learn from the beginning again. It was crazy” (2011). Over forty years a steady stream of Western dancers moved to Egypt in search of regular Belly Dance work opportunities. Lorna Gow moved to Cairo in 2006 and readily admits to an arduous year of relearning how to Belly Dance. She recollects, “I had to slow it down, be less busy and more emotional. Egyptians appreciate a westerner Belly Dancing but they don’t have time for all the fast choreography. It’s quite a challenge” (2010). Not only are these westerners gaining new dance training, they are also gaining cultural currency which is not so readily available performing and maintaining a practice in England. By travelling, living and working as a Belly Dancer, English practitioners and other western Belly Dancers gain cache with which they can develop a transnational Belly Dance career. Belly Dance may remain a hierarchy with Egyptian

Belly Dancers at the top of the transnational market, but the next best thing is an Egypt-based white Belly Dancer⁹⁰.

4.2.4 Economic value

Alongside the high cultural value of Belly Dance in Egypt the economic value of Belly Dance is high too. A Belly Dancer can build a professional dance career from performance work on its own, compared with the reliance on teaching in other locations around the world⁹¹. Tourism and Belly Dance are seen as compatible, where Egyptians provide Belly Dance entertainment for wealthy Gulf Arabs and westerners. Still, it is rare to find images of Belly Dancers represented on western television to advertise tourism to Egypt, whereas Turkish tourism adverts continue to promote a Belly Dance image. Belly Dance is a cultural export attracting American dollars. Shops in the Khan-el-Khalili⁹² sell a variety of Belly Dance accessories, including the coin belt. The coin belt, according to Belly Dance retailer Mahmoud (2006), was a hip-belt design

90 Mona el Said, an Egyptian Belly Dancer, moved to England in the late 1970s because work opportunities to dance in Egypt were limited. The lack of work was attributed to her darker skin tone compared with other lighter skin toned Belly Dancers of the day including: Fifi Abdou and Sohier Zaki. Skin colour is a key feature of Belly Dance before and since British colonial rule. In the Middle East the lighter European skin tone is preferred; paradoxically the darker skin tone with dark hair is a key feature of the Western Belly Dance fantasy. Belly Dancers in Egypt lighten their skin using peroxide skin creams, western Belly Dancers darken their hair using hair dye.

91 According to several reports, including Yasmina of Cairo, Sara Farouk, Lorna Gow, Raqia Hassan and Kay Taylor (Belly Dance tour operator) the numbers of venues presenting Belly Dance and live music is on the decline. Egyptian Belly Dancers are competing for less and less hotel contracts and to subsidise their incomes these dancers are turning towards Europe, the Americas and Asia in search of highly lucrative teaching and performance opportunities. Today, the majority of Rhanda and Dina's incomes – two prominent Belly Dance stars from Cairo – come from international work. It remains that to be a working Belly Dance artist in Cairo the possibilities for gaining international work is heightened. Recently, more Western Belly Dancers seek employment in Cairo, not for the financial rewards, but the focus is on gaining “experience” and higher cultural capital by association with Egyptian Belly Dance culture.

92 The Khan el Khalili is a famous, old and very large shopping area or souk in the old part of Cairo city. Several Belly Dance ateliers and shops can be found in the small corridors and streets of the Khan.

suggested to him by an American tour guide (Morocco⁹³ in the early 1980s). Morocco demonstrated what she wanted her students to buy, and Mahmoud provided the coin belts. From his early humble beginnings, under the guidance of an American Belly Dancer, Mahmoud expanded from a table-top business to a large scale Belly Dance superstore occupying four floors selling coin belts, dresses, sticks, veils and all types of Belly Dance paraphernalia, catering for the expanding Belly Dance tourism market.

It is also worth noting there is a hierarchy of nightclubs existing in Cairo and other cities. There are nightclubs that cater for wealthy, foreign patronage and the Belly Dancer is an important part of the activity in five-star hotel nightclubs, with advertising in the hotel foyers and the seating arranged around the performance space. The rise in Belly Dance related tourism and patronage has seen Belly Dance stars adopt different fashions and style to accommodate this expanding market. For example, Randa wore a school girl outfit with mini-skirt and pigtails to appeal to her Japanese audience. Dina famously wore an exaggerated black dress with large pins, imitating Elizabeth Hurley's infamous dress in the early 2000s. The five-star hotel nightclub dancers can command large fees, and by association the Belly Dancers gain prestige. It is possible to attend a dance show on the Nile Maxine boat (situated outside the Marriot hotel, Cairo). A group of six to seven musicians accompany a Belly Dancer who performs for an hour and a half. Egyptian Belly Dance stars share the weekly slots with foreign dancers like Asmahan (Argentina), Caroline (Australia), Soraya (Brazil), Johana (Portugal) and Outi (Finland). While there remains a high-value and currency to being Egyptian, by association and in some cases

93 Morocco, also known as Carolina Varga Dinicu, is a New York based North African and Middle East Dance expert and researcher. She has written extensively on her dance research in Morocco and guides annual tours to Cairo, Egypt since the early 1970s. In her own book *You asked Auntie Rocky: Answers and Advice about Raqs Sharqi and Raqs Shaabi* (2011) details her version of events with Mahmoud rise as a superstore atelier owner. She also relayed the same information in an interview given at *Celebrating Dance* Belly Dance festival in Devon (2006).

through self-funding, foreign dancers are able to gain employment at the prestigious nightclubs and Belly Dance venues in Cairo. The high end Belly Dance nightclub attracts both a transnational audience and performer.

The Egyptian nightclubs – which fared better than their tourist counterparts during the Arab Spring 2011⁹⁴ – contrast significantly with the tourist nightclubs. The five-star Belly Dancer performs for one night, presenting her Belly Dance repertoire, a couple of costume changes and even a folklore section within her hour-long repertoire. The Egyptian nightclub features several performers in one night with one costume each; with live or recorded music playing recent popular music hits and the performances are less formal, un-choreographed with more audience interaction. The performers are Egyptian, with very few tourists present in the audience, with some performers as nightclub owners. Caroline comments on one of these performers turned nightclub impresario: “When I first went I was like the local attraction, a western woman sitting with all these Egyptian men coming to see the dancing. The dancers used to laugh at me ... I have met some interesting characters and Tuna is a very interesting woman. She’s old now (in her sixties), but still dances when she wants to. She is a larger than life character and made a lot of money running her own nightclub: she is loaded” (2009).

4.3 American Belly Dance narratives and values

4.3.1 Social value

The social value of Belly Dance in America is high compared with the social value of the dance found in Egypt. Dox (2006), Shay & Sellers-Young (2003) and Jarmakani (2006) identify a

94 Several high profile tourist nightclubs, especially the ones located on the Al Ahrām Street in Giza, were ransacked and burnt to the ground during the Arab Spring 2011. Nearly all of the Egyptian nightclubs continue to operate and have historically weathered all types of social, religious, political and cultural upheavals.

large and established community of dancers, performers and teachers. The social value in the American Belly Dance community is the socialising and “self-transformation” aspect of the dance, especially for female participants. Dox and Sellers-Young agree that the rise in the American Belly Dance population peaked in the 1970s when women were actively seeking a reaffirmation of their “femininity” and an expression for it. In *Dancing Around Orientalism* Dox (2006) is critical of the revealing-of-self commonly found in the American Belly Dance style, one in which the dancer arrives on stage covered by a veil to then open the veil, thus revealing a newly formed femininity. Dox considers this to be a specific American theatrical device, one with no direct reference to the dance found in the Middle East (2006, 54). Maira, in her text *Belly Dancing: Arab-Face, Orientalist Feminism and U.S. Empire* (2008), insists that what Americans present as Middle Eastern culture through Belly Dance is a masquerade concealing American imperialist ambitions in the Middle East. Maira criticises the Arab-American community for hiring American Belly Dancers and attending their classes: the Arab-American community thereby colludes with the larger imperialist project of becoming American with no Arab sentiment or character (Ibid, 340). The social value of American Belly Dance is invested with social values of American gender politics and theatrical aesthetics. Belly Dance in America is therefore a construction of American concepts of femininity and its social function is to be a vehicle for the “search” for it.

4.3.2 Educational value

The dominant narrative for the educational value of Belly Dance in America relates to the health and fitness and the cultural content of the dancing (Maira 2008, Bock 2005, 2011 and Forner 1993). In terms of the health and fitness aspect Belly Dance in America is readily promoted as an alternative fitness system, one that aids the use of different muscles in the body rarely used in

everyday life and in the gym (see Suhaila Salimpour on youtube.com⁹⁵). There are a multitude of DVDs and online access to classes with American Belly Dancers selling Belly Dance “fitness.” Suhaila Salimpour, the inheritor of Jamilia Salimpour’s Belly Dance Empire, produces *Belly Dance and Pilates*, *Belly Dance and Yoga* and *Belly Dance Aerobic* DVDs. A key signature of the *Salimpour* trademarked technique is the distinctive “bun” workout which incorporates sitting legs apart and individually contracting and releasing the gluteus muscles: the end result is “control” of your hip work through the “bun” contraction and release. The Salimpour technique is a sophisticated exercise system inspired by Belly Dance. It locates different parts of the body, in a mechanistic fashion, and promotes repetitious movement until the participant has attained complete mastery. I attended a workshop led by a Salimpour-accredited trainer (April, 2012). We were given different parts of the body to concentrate our efforts. The movements were micro-movements focused on deep muscle contraction, aiming for a larger range of movement. The fitness model used in the Salimpour technique mechanises the movement, allowing the participant to concentrate on their body regardless of the music played and the dance form referred to. The Salimpour technique is an extremely successful trademarked technique, one that is evident and incorporated in the Belly Dance Superstars repertoire⁹⁶ specifically the American Tribal Belly Dancers in the show.

According to Shay and Sellers-Young (2003) the cultural aspect of Belly Dance classes is not a primary educational goal but one that assists in the selling of classes. One reason for this omission relates to the unique status of America as a melting-pot of many Middle Eastern

95 Extracts of the Salimpour Belly Dance fitness workout can be viewed on youtube.com <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wVHQqDRtSow> [last accessed April 2012]

96 *Belly Dance Super Stars* is a Miles Copeland enterprise consisting of a cast of twenty dancers travelling around the world performing a Belly Dance show (2005-2012).

immigrants. American Belly Dancer A'isha Asar comments: "The first Middle Eastern restaurants in San Francisco had live music with Turkish, Armenian, Egyptian, Lebanese and others all making music together. I think this is where the American fusion started" (2010)⁹⁷. I travelled to America in 2005 to attend the *Middle Eastern Dance Camp* in Mendocino, California. The event included many different people of different ethnic origins performing together. It was noticeable that there was a higher volume of Turkish style Belly Dance than the Egyptian style. The culture of mixing and matching movements, costume, music and performance is a common factor in the American Belly Dance. Dox identifies American Cabaret style Belly Dance to be its own form of Belly Dance distinct from that found in the Middle East. Shay and Sellers-Young (2003) identify early imagery and dance pioneers as key exponents of American Belly Dance, referencing the work of modern dance pioneers like Ruth St Denis and the Hollywood film industry. They clearly state that the export of American Cabaret style Belly Dance is as important as the export of Middle Eastern Belly Dance to the west (2003, 18). At the Mendocino camp the teacher population was in favour of American-Arab nationals and American experts in Belly Dance and other related cultural practices more than there were Middle Eastern nationals teaching and performing.

4.3.3. Cultural value

The cultural value of Belly Dance in America is low compared with the high cultural value found in Egypt. Still it remains the case that the Belly Dance culture found in America is highly developed and influential even within the Egyptian Belly Dance community (Monty 1986, Franken 2001, Carlton 1994, Shay & Sellers-Young 2003 and Dox 2006). The exportation of

⁹⁷ A'isha Asar has been teaching Belly Dance for over 30 years, she lives in Spokane and was a prominent member of the masr360.com Belly Dance forum. In one discussion thread A'isha proposed that the originating factor leading to the fusionist American Belly Dance genre was the mixture of music found in live music venues on the west coast.

American Belly Dance experts represents the marketability of an American version of the dance and also indicates the limited cultural context available in America. The search for new audiences, new theatrical contextualisation of the dance and, ultimately, Belly Dance contracts in Egypt and across the Middle East pays testimony to the high level of dance training found in the States. It also indicates the need to seek outside American national borders for some form of cultural value that does not exist within its borders. In England since the early years of Majma (from 2001) and other national Belly Dance festivals, American Belly Dancers have been a key import. American Belly Dance expertise is a common presence in England and across the world, but rarely found in Egypt. The distinctive American Cabaret style Belly Dance (AmCab) brand has a long tradition in England, especially with regards to training Belly Dance students (see chapter three). By contrast, it has been reported by several sources that Suhaila Salimpour's guest performance at Raqia Hassan's *Ahlan Wa Sahlan* festival in Egypt 2007 witnessed an Egyptian audience response of "What is this?" It would appear that AmCab and even a modern version of it in the form of Salimpour may have high profile trainers who find high cultural exchange in other western Belly Dance communities, but the cultural "exchange" with Egypt is negligible.

4.3.4. Economic value

The economic value of American Belly Dance, even with a low cultural value, is high compared with that found in England but lower than that found in Egypt⁹⁸. It has been a long established American export since its early inception at the Great Exhibitions in 1893 (Carlton, 1994), prior

98 Samantha Emmanuel, a Tribal Belly Dance specialist, moved to the US in search of Belly Dance training and professional opportunities unlike Lorna Gow who sought opportunities in Egypt. Samantha trained with Suhaila Salimpour and gained a performance contract with the BDSS touring with their international show for several years. In recent years she travels as an independent American Tribal Belly Dance artists working in Europe, Japan and other locations across the globe www.vagabondprincess.com [last accessed May 2012].

to the development of the nightclub dance in Egypt 1926, and pioneered through the abstract expressionist dance experiments of performers like Ruth St Denis and Maud Allen, further developed by their protégés, as described in Monty's (1986) thesis narrating a century of American Belly Dance history between 1876 to 1976. The narrative of authenticity associated with American ownership and creative development has a long established tradition which is further reinforced by the "melting-pot" adage and Hollywood imagery (Shohat, 1997). In recent years American forums and websites have advertised vintage American Cabaret style Belly Dance (AmCab) expertise, performances and workshops, and AmCab is referred to as its own style separate to that found in the Middle East. A global exponent of this style is Miles Copeland's Belly Dance extravaganza *Belly Dance Super Stars* (BDSS). BDSS has been representing AmCab and American Tribal Style Belly Dance (ATS) for the past five years, presenting shows in Europe, across North America and even in the Gulf states. The Salimpour technique is evident in the mirco-movements of both the AmCab and ATS dancers, who present solo and group performances to high octane Middle Eastern pop-fusion music. The dancers are American-born and trained dancers. Jillina describes the type of Belly Dancer she wants to hire compared with what Miles wishes to hire: "He goes for the looks whereas I'm looking for ballet technique and commitment to learning new steps" (2007). The packaging of American Belly Dance is more dependent on physical attractiveness and western dance training than it has anything to do with Middle Eastern culture and dance knowledge. The economic value of American Belly Dance style relies on the narratives of authenticity that conjure an Orientalist past, on the power of first-world marketing expertise and on the strength of the American dollar to buy air-time.

4.4 Orientalist Belly Dance narratives and values

4.4.1 Social value

The social value of the Orientalist Belly Dance style is high. The dominant social narrative of authenticity of the Orientalist Belly Dance style is related to the reassuring notion of a distant romantic Arabian Night past. It is one in which the heterosexual normative is continuously upheld through imagery of an active-yet-submissive, sensual Middle Eastern woman and her male Sheikh captor. This is a pervasive narrative found in Belly Dance classes throughout England and in other countries. Dox (2006, 52) explains that this narrative of a harem fantasy in the American Belly Dance classroom and in performance allows for an exotic and erotic fantasy of the self when dancing, one which indicates more about the sexual frustrations and fantasy of the Western participant than it does an Eastern other. The same is true of an Egyptian Belly Dancer. Shay and Sellers-Young (2003, 27) illustrate the self-exoticism of Egyptian Belly Dancers and the social reasons for the adoption of a more Orientalist version of the dance:

We suggest that this desire to “clean up,” sanitise, and make respectable a dance form with undeniably sexual and sensual content compels native and western choreographers to create staging that make the dance acceptable to the new middle-class elite, both in the Middle East and in the west.

In both East and West, the Orientalist Belly Dance style therefore has meaning. Shay and Sellers-Young attribute it to the Western educational system kept in place after the Middle Eastern independence from colonial rule and the rising Middle-classes. I think there is also a strong mythical basis to the Orientalist style, one which resides in the mythic content or what Barthes describes as the “mythical speech” which is a “material which has already been worked

on so as to make it suitable for communication” (2000, 110), a point reiterated by Said’s introduction to his text:

The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences. (1978, 1)

As Said (along with Shay and Sellers-Young) notes, even within Egypt the Orientalist imagery and styling of the dance is present within the naming of the dance: in either Arabic as *Raqs el Sharqi* (literal translation *Dance of the East*) or in English as *Oriental dance*. From a semiological point of view the construction of the Oriental myth is so pervasive in each culture due to the pre-loading of meaning, expectation and reception, even before any dance content is offered for an audience’s consideration.

4.4.2 Educational value

There remain a substantial number of texts and resources which detail an Orientalist style of Belly Dance. One of the consistently referenced texts is Buonaventura’s *The Serpent of the Nile* (1989). Hanna used Buonaventura’s text as an authority on the dance (1988, 51-52, 57, 60, 62), when in fact the text is a collection of travel writing, opinion and Orientalist imagery. The text itself can be seen as a form of research-documentation to be read alongside the evolving experimentation and “bricolage” of Buonaventura’s dance theatre work. In the English Belly Dance tradition, dance research and performance have been inextricably linked since the beginning. Today, the majority of English practitioners travel to Egypt to learn and conduct personal research.

4.4.3 Cultural value

The cultural value of the Orientalist Belly Dance style is high; this has been well documented, critiqued and analysed by several Belly Dance historians and scholars (Dox 2006, Shay &

Sellers-Young 2003, Charlton, 1994, Shohat, 2000 and Monty 1996). The imagined history and world of the Belly Dance is a well documented reality, one that Bacon (2003) studied in a Northampton community in England. The value of the form resides in the Oriental mythos and attributing harem fantasy associated with the Western fascination and fetishisation of the Middle East and especially the women of the Middle East. Buonaventura's dance theatre show *Dancing Girls* sourced the texts of Orientalist writers and travellers and their fantastical impressions of dancers. The whole show and her text *The Serpent of the Nile* that accompanies the show illustrate the Middle East with western imagery and text. Dox (2006) points out the ubiquitous use of the veil in Orientalist Belly Dance style dancing found in America. She highlights the simulation and constructed characteristics of the Belly Dance rendition, one that reveals more about a Western woman than it does an Eastern woman. In response to attempting to define a non-Orientalist version of Belly Dance practitioners note that there follows difficulties in selling tickets and convincing audiences that what they were witnessing resembles a more contemporary Egypt. Hilal changed the name of her dance once her audience numbers were secured to Hilal Dance in order to align herself with "contemporary" dance and distance herself from what she considered "the Orientalist fetishisation of my art" (2008). The origin of the Orientalist Belly Dance style resides in the West and dates from the emergence of the *Hoochie Koochie* dancers (Charlton, 1994) from the travelling dance groups of the late nineteenth century, a period of time in which national borders expanded and the rise of the middle-classes placed a new emphasis on establishing who represented civilisation and respectability (Foucault 1972, 1986).

4.4.4 Economic value

The economic value of the Orientalist style of Belly Dance is high too. All values of the Orientalist style of Belly Dance are high, which leads us to the conclusion this is why scholars

approach the subject of Belly Dance from this perspective. The Orientalist style taps into the substantial imagery and “speech” found through historical records, literature, film and television imagery (Keft-Kennedy 2005 and Bernstein & Studlar 1997). According to Said (1978) the widespread reference and use of Orientalism as a concept and theory of “otherness” pervades our everyday lives. It is part of what Bourdieu would term our “habitus” and for Barthes’s myth equation it is the undergirding principle that maintains a high economic value for this specific style. By contrast the American style, English style and even the Egyptian style have to borrow from this comprehensive image, speech and habitus in order to attract audiences and to present within performance a common speech, one in which both the form and the meaning is understood through the “Orientalist” style Belly Dance and the signification of a Belly Dance then takes place. As an example of the use of this “concept” of Orientalism in Belly Dance practice, an original poster for my Belly Dance classes took the form of a hand drawn character from the Arabian Nights: there was no two piece costume; no harem fantasy attached; just a female character from the Arabian Nights (which has its Orientalist latent meaning). The classes were average in size and regularity, but when I changed the image to a female face covered with only the eyes showing the population of my classes grew four-fold within a week of displaying the posters.

4.5 The values and myth origins found in English Belly Dance

While the cultural values found in different styles of Belly Dance around the globe, shown above, confirm the differences between different global styles, it also illustrates how different societies mediate what defines a Belly Dance identity due to specific national notions of social, cultural, education and economic values concerning race, class, gender and sexuality in the Belly Dance. It is significant that English Belly Dance practitioners optimise the cultural difference

and women-led interest in Belly Dance by utilising the high social and educational value of Belly Dance in England. The forming of a wider sub-community of Belly Dancers establishes a practitioner's value in a given community; English practitioners are able to maintain their practice by generating Belly Dance interested audiences, consumers and a student population. The social and educational value in learning Belly Dance in England outweighs its cultural value and economic value, therefore economic value is realised through a complex system of classes, workshops and socialising events which leads to regular earnings and performance opportunities. A significant part of English Belly Dance practice is to construct a continuing narrative of authenticity which provides validation and authorisation of English Belly Dance performances. Therefore, current English Belly dance practitioners need to demonstrate their relationship to an English Belly Dance past tradition as a significant feature of maintaining an identifiable English Belly Dance identity. Another method used to build on the past origin myth associated with the English Belly Dance tradition is to form a distinct Belly Dancing-Self and differentiate that Self from other Belly Dance forms and dancers. I am suggesting here that the three case studies not only react to a past English Belly Dance tradition, but also develop a Self-brand which perpetuates and continues the English Belly Dance identity, and is ultimately attached to the community values concerning Belly Dance and the women performing it. Therefore the earlier finding in this chapter can be divided into three subsections detailing how and what English Belly Dancers do to maintain their sub-communities and English Belly Dancing-Selves, to further this finding and in reference to the material discussed above I would continue this hypothesis by stating:

The emergence and crystallisation of a wider sub-community in order to establish or continue a tradition with currency (social, education, cultural and economic), to

realise financial value, an audience, and longevity of career with protégés which leads to:

- a) **The implicit proposition of an “origin” or means of verification for authenticity/validity of those narratives**
- b) **The manifestation of a distinct Belly Dancing-Self**
- c) **The differentiation from other Belly Dance forms and practitioners.**

4.6 Value-profile of four global Belly Dance styles

The following table summarises the above material and provides an immediate comparison of each differing value-profile of the four Belly Dance styles referred to in this chapter:

Capital/Values	Egypt	England	America	Oriental
Social	Low	High	High	High
Educational	Low	High	High	High
Cultural	High	Low	Low	High
Economic	High	Low	High	High

In the table, “high” represents where a style has a particular value invested in it by its culture. At the same time, it is in areas of high value that myths/narratives of authenticity are constructed. It can easily be seen from the table that the Egyptian and Oriental style have strong narratives in both the cultural and economic value categories, and it is this which allows them to export themselves so successfully within the global Belly Dance community (ethnoscape). Oriental

Belly Dance, in contrast to Egyptian Belly Dance, however, has a high value in all areas. It shares around the world an imagined romantic past so that the Middle Eastern Belly Dancing woman is repetitiously reconfigured through individual figured-worlds and the Belly Dance style of each geographical location.

With high cultural and economic value, Egyptian Belly Dancers are able to secure regular performance work and high wages overseas. By contrast, there is however low social value to the role of a Belly Dancer in Egypt and low educational value for Egyptians in formally acquiring a Belly Dance skill in Egypt. American and English practitioners travel, like other non-Egyptian performers of Belly Dance, to Egypt because of the high cultural and economic value to be found through this location. With the low social and educational value given to Belly Dance in Egypt, however, these itinerant Belly Dancers return to their own countries to teach and realise added value, currency and status.

The educational value in both America and England is high and the cultural value is low. The low cultural value of Belly Dance in America is relatively higher than that found in England, due to the length of its history in America since the 1950s (Waldie, 2006), and according to Maira (2008) the political and economic power exerted by imperialist America in the Middle East. American Cabaret style Belly Dance (AmCab) is exported around the globe, providing performance and teaching expertise in Europe, Australasia, Canada and South America (and new Belly Dance markets are opening up in Japan, the Far East and South-East Asian territories). The expansion of AmCab globally suggests a higher cultural capital to that of English Belly Dance, regardless of the low cultural value given to AmCab within American borders. There is even an origin myth related to the inception and creation of AmCab in America (Waldie, 2006 & Varga Dinicu, 2011), whereas this thesis is the only document narrating an English Belly Dance

tradition. The low cultural value of Belly Dance in both America and England witnesses English and American Belly Dancers seeking tuition and employment outside of their own countries.

Both England and America share a high social value of Belly Dance, where women generate a community of shared practice with attributing political, cultural and economic value. With its history, the economic value of American Belly Dance is relatively high, albeit not as high as the economic value given to Egyptian Belly Dance practitioners, and certainly higher than that found in English Belly Dance practice. In England the low cultural and economic value of Belly Dance emphasises the community-based arts practice of the majority of English Belly Dance practitioners, many of whom have to move to Egypt in order to gain more employment opportunities and increase their cultural capital by association with the Egyptian style of Belly Dance.

4.7 Conclusion

All three practitioners working within the English Belly Dance community may share the commonality of being mediated by English cultural life, but their responses to it differ. In order to establish a sub-community of shared Belly Dance practice there needs to be aspects of a shared Belly Dance point of reference with an established knowledge base from which an “authentic” Belly Dance performance can be constructed. As will be shown these aspects come in the form of narratives of authenticity. In this case, English Belly Dancers not only have an identifiable English Belly Dance tradition from which they position the educational and social value of their work in the community, equally they share a global community of shared practice

with which they exchange cultural meaning and economic value thus producing further narratives of authenticity in relationship to those encountered abroad.

As a consequence, the Orientalist version of Belly Dance provides grand myths and meaning which all global forms of Belly Dance refer to in order to establish cultural and economic value. Undoubtedly, English Belly Dance practitioners reference various imagined pasts and fantastical Belly Dance figures. They also offer variations on the theme, and in some cases (myself) an active attempt to transgress it. With reference to Said (1978) there lies a tension between what has been established over several centuries pertaining to what the Middle East is concerning a fantastical and Western narrated Orient myth and what, in reality, constitutes contemporary life, dance and cultural exchange with Middle Eastern practitioners of Belly Dance. All three case studies present varying degrees of self-branding and narration of the dance found in the Orientalist Belly Dance construct of the Middle East, while seeking to circumvent, confirm or transgress in performance.

The imagined history and reality of Belly Dance has been extensively covered in Belly Dance scholarship, but the identification of the methods and techniques used by practising artists to develop their narratives of authenticity to develop a distinctive Belly Dancing-Self and therefore a form of economic and cultural value within the field is one of the contributions to knowledge this thesis offers. Similarly the gender politics of Belly Dance have been discussed widely but the gender politics found within the performance of Belly Dance and its active relationship to the Orientalist form within the act of producing an “authentic” Belly Dance performance have not been identified and discussed within scholarship. With reference to what constitutes “authenticity” in Belly Dance performance, in chapter seven I will highlight the performance strategies adopted by English Belly Dance practitioners in response to the Orientalist myths.

Chapter 5

5. Three narrative English Belly Dance case studies

5.1 Introduction

Chapter three presents a literature-based case study of two prominent English Belly Dance artists from the 1980s and 1990s, identifying a recognisable English Belly Dance past. This current chapter considers the work of current English Belly Dance practitioners and the narration of their Belly Dancing-Selves in relationship to that English Belly Dance past. It also identifies how current practitioners develop their practices in response to the changing trends within and without the English Belly Dance shared community of practice. The three case studies narrate their Belly Dancing-Selves while presenting distinctive differences in addition to specific shared English Belly Dance characteristics relating to the Hilal and or Buonaventura traditions; it also presents narratives of authenticity in response to regular contact with the Belly Dance practice found in Egypt.

Chapter five is divided into an introduction, a contextualisation of the case studies with Bacon's case study (2003) and then three sections describing the figured worlds⁹⁹ of each narrative case study, presented through a process of biographical introduction, a sample of the detailed analysis of critical incidents (the majority of critical incidents identified can be found in Appendix D), and finally a development of these critical incidents into narrations of each practitioner's

99 I am referring to Holland et al's (2001) social science cultural model of figured worlds, which encompasses both culturalist and constructivist notions of what constitutes an identity in any given social and cultural context. The term figured world describes several levels and identities that can coexist at one time, also an identity that shifts over time and allows for a more integrated and less divided Cartesian dualistic notion of what constitutes identity. Holland et al present a continuum on which a given identity can move between cultural and constructed normative codes and conventions of Self within the social world. In this case I am referring to the figured worlds of three Belly Dance practitioners (Anne White, Caroline Afifi and myself) and their relationship to the wider English Belly Dance community and also the international circuit of Belly Dance practitioners.

developing Belly Dance-Self. The processes of formulating each Belly Dance identity is based upon a concentrated analysis of the break with an initial English Belly Dance tradition (either Buonaventura or Hilal tradition, see chapter three) and the development of emergent narratives of authenticity, leading towards three individual Belly Dancing-Selves. Each practitioner is presented independently throughout this chapter as a method of focusing the reader's attention on their individual figured world.

Before the biographical introduction of the practitioners, a section contextualising the case studies in reference to Bacon's (2003) *Unveiling Arabic Dance in the Urban English Landscape* presents earlier research work in the field and considers its relationship to this research project. I discuss several themes found in Bacon's thesis concerning the formation of an English Belly Dance tradition outside the Arabic Diaspora community. Bacon's contextualisation of the Northampton *Harem Troupe* omits the Hilal and Buonaventura English Belly Dance tradition which was, I argue, already operating in the community. This omission is significant with regard to my own search for authenticity in Belly Dance performance within this now established English tradition (see chapter three) in and from which substantial and substantiated narratives of authenticity have emerged. From this departure point of the Hilal and Buonaventura tradition, and the identification of a distinctive English Belly Dance cultural value within the larger Belly Dance ethnoscape in chapter four, chapter five traces the development of three current English practitioners. These current English Belly Dance practitioners also demonstrate new themes concerning narratives of authenticity with regard to direct links and encounters with Egyptian Belly Dance practitioners and training. Such themes are largely absent from Bacon's ethnographic study.

After the contextulisation, there is a brief biographical introduction to all three practitioners, starting with Anne White, then Caroline Afifi and ending with myself. The biographical introduction provides an overview of the Belly Dancing personal narratives¹⁰⁰ of each practitioner and background information concerning family, location and other details.

Following the biographical introduction, the chapter presents a sample list of critical incidents extracted from the narrative case studies with contextual details, an initial overview analysis of the meaning of the critical incident and the relevant coda (see methodologies chapter two, pp 24-26). The coda represents a socio-cultural model of “perceptions of identity”, referencing the work of social theorists of learning and identity formation Solomon (2007), Williams, Black and Prett (2007), Sford (2005), and Gee (2000). The list is numerically and chronologically ordered, from the first encounter with Belly Dance or dance of some form, to the informant’s most recent activities (also see Appendices B and D).

The final section presents written analysis of each case study’s critical incidents with the aim of describing and identifying each practitioner’s emergent Belly Dancing-Self and attributing narratives of authenticity. This is the first attempt to summarise the narratives of authenticity and Belly Dancing Self of each case study. These findings will be further tested and verified in chapter six by examining performance work to determine the accuracy of the findings. The purpose of chapter five is to organise, assemble and evidence the case that to perform Belly Dance authentically an English practitioner has to maintain historical continuity with previous English Belly Dance practice, reform it in a way that is recognisable and establish a distinctive and “re-vitalised” version. The critical incidents are the primary data source; they are in effect

100 The image and background presented by each practitioner inform their own narratives of authenticity.

narrating each practitioner's construction of authenticity when performing Belly Dance in England.

5.2 Contextualizing the individual figured world of three English Belly Dancers within the English Belly Dance community of shared practice

Bacon's thesis identifies a contrast between other migrant dances found in the English urban landscape and Arabic Dance; she recognizes that dances usually migrate within their attributing cultural Diaspora (2003, 104). Bacon's explanation is "that it's not simply that Egyptian dancers travelled to England and American dancers to England" and "nor is it as simple as the Orientalist agenda." On reflection she comments that there is "something more complex in the history". I would argue that this complexity can be found in the competing narratives of authenticity found in the work of Hilal and Buonaventura, an English Belly Dance tradition described in chapter three. Bacon referenced this English Belly Dance past indirectly, albeit her continual use of the term Arabic Dance throughout her thesis refers directly to the Buonaventura narrative of English Belly Dance origins. I would argue her omission avoided the complex issue of Hilal and Buonaventura's active influence during the formation of a coalesced community of practice (see Wenger, 1996), one which directly affected the dancing figured worlds of her own research case studies. This omission also avoided the themes of authenticity which refer to performing another cultural dance form in a different cultural context. Bacon suggests the Middle East Diaspora's ambivalence towards Belly Dancing in England is a common feature found in England and in Egypt. However, Bacon's reference to Finnegan's (1992) methodological approach indicates Bacon's concern with handling data and the subsequent issues of the identity of the dancers and the dance-object itself (2003, 223).

When introducing her case studies Bacon uses a critical incident of each case study to illustrate the moment when they commit to the formation of a Belly Dance identity. For example, early in Denny's dancing career (2003, 104) she attends "Belly Dance In," a Belly Dance showcase of several groups and artists in Convent Garden, London (circa 1990). This critical incident convinces her to commit to Belly Dance classes. During this period in London several practitioners performing would have been Hilal or Buonaventura trained. Effectively Denny would have witnessed this English Belly Dance tradition at the Covent Garden showcase. Denny's self perception and her process of becoming a self-identified Belly Dancer emerged from direct contact with Hilal and Buonaventura traditions on display. In England the significant "change agents" were Hilal and Buonaventura. It is not clear in Bacon's thesis how this unique English Belly Dance tradition was present.

Bacon draws from a post modern perspective to describe the dislocated status of "Arabic dancing in a global context [which] could be considered to be an activity that is indicative of contemporary urban life that might assist in questioning how theorists and others frame reality" (Ibid, 104). Bacon is referring to the explosion of world dance in western culture, specifically her field site of Northampton. Bacon offers a micro-perspective of a group of Belly Dance enthusiasts, one which draws on the social interactions and the social value of both the movement and the group activities. My research takes Bacon's initial ethnographic work further, by expanding the field site and focusing on practitioners who provide Belly Dance training to a wider public across England and abroad. These key figures represent a macro-perspective on the larger English Belly Dancing field site and reality. My assertion is that the figured worlds of these prominent English Belly Dance community members, members who are not peripheral

members but core members of the shared community of practice (see Wenger, 1996), offer a different perspective on how to theorize and frame the reality of contemporary, urban, western activity of Belly Dancing. The perspective they offer is a complex relationship between their figured worlds (micro) and the changing trends and development of the English Belly Dance tradition and identity in performance (macro).

Bacon found informants who “appear to have no real concern for the form as it might appear in Egypt.” My findings suggest there was reason and truth behind this assertion in the mid to late 1990s English Belly Dance community. Evidence validates this finding; it also presents the case for a paradigmatic shift occurring in the community at the turn of the twenty first century, indicating a “cultural turn” towards an Egypt-focal style of Belly Dance training and aesthetic value. With the advent of cheap air flights it was possible for English Belly Dancers to seek alternative and new training opportunities in Egypt. This paradigmatic shift was taking place during Bacon’s fieldwork in the early 2000s, which could explain her omission, and her research rationale to focus on a Northamptonshire based Belly Dance community in order to examine a community dance practice within an urban location, not the transnational and global dimensions of the field site. However, in contrast to Bacon’s research observations and findings, I assert that English Belly Dancers were and continue to be engaged with the politics of identity and place. I argue that from the moment students walk into a Belly Dance class the issues of identity, culture and eventually their own agency is activated. Research indicates that place and identity in respect to the production of Belly Dance performances are a principal concern for both teacher and student during the late twentieth century (Cooper 2005b and McDonald 2010).

The paradoxical situation Bacon refers to as the “unknown” and the creation of a particular image of the exotic East changed significantly when community members travelled more regularly to Egypt. No longer was there an ancient and distant past; English Belly Dancers were encountering a modern and changing Egyptian Belly Dance culture in terms of music and dance styles. Bacon’s notion of an Oriental otherness found in her Northampton case study was, in effect, in the process of disassociating itself from past notions of otherness towards a new concept through encounters with a modern Egypt and culture. Here, Bacon argues that there has to be some social or cultural mechanism by which women need a sense of “self through the embodiment of universalizing concepts of dancing and womanhood” (Ibid, 105), what she terms “personal myth structure” (Ibid, chapter six, pp 151-182). She suggests that knowledge constructed on irreconcilable binaries of “us and them” in addition to “black and white” are in operation here to define a new identity for women in English urban contexts. Bacon’s point concerning the valuable qualities perceived to be in the otherness, in this case Belly Dance, I would agree has foundation in current English Belly Dance practice. Where my argument differs is in the application of this perception of otherness. Where Bacon searches for a spiritual application, the figured worlds of the three case studies in this research offer a different application, one that is found in the practitioner’s narrative of authenticity and the eventual construction of an “authentic” performance of Belly Dance.

In reference to Bacon’s notion of “the 'other' found at home, part of us, indistinguishable from 'self', it is also possible to attend to the dancing of the individual or group rather than the notion of a dance, or dance text” (Ibid, 105). There remains a question concerning the original status of Belly Dance especially when the current English Belly Dance community privileges Egyptian

Belly Dance over other forms of Belly Dance (significantly over American forms of Belly Dance). Bacon proposes:

The link to western concepts of Orientalism and exoticism found in art, Hollywood films and Modern Dance suggest that this dancing is no longer 'other' but has become part of what is recognisable and acceptable in the popular memory. Neither does this dancing cohere to definitions of traditional dance (Buckland, 1983) because of the lack of historical evidence of its existence in England. (Ibid, 105)

By referencing Buonaventura's historical timeline Bacon traces the existence of Arabic Dancing in England and America before the twentieth century, in which the dance had become part of the dancing landscape. She omits that this narrative of origin contains a bias towards Buonaventura's constructed narrative of authenticity, one which was invested with her Sicilian/Libyan ancestral past. I argue that Belly Dance, the night club Egyptian version of Raqs el Baladi, can be accurately dated to 1926, located in the Dokki region of Cairo, Egypt (now the site of the Cairo Sheraton) and credited to the female entrepreneur Badia Masabni (see Franken 2003 and Nieuwkerke 1996). Buonaventura, Hilal and other practitioners in the 1970s and 1980s in England, along with the assistance of the "recognizable and acceptable popular memory" presented in Hollywood films (Shohat, 2001), narrate a neo-colonialist perspective of what constitutes a hegemonic and arguably a contained Middle East in a fantastical dancing image. The historical evidence of Belly Dance and associated dance forms have a long tradition in England dating back to the late 1920s and 1930s, when *Salomania* schools in London produced countless Salome impersonators to perform the *Dance of the Seven Veils* for the nationwide and international vaudeville theatre circuit (Buonaventura, 2001 and Deagon, 2005). The evidence of its existence in England destabilizes Bacon's assertion that it does not cohere with Buckland's

definitions of traditional dance (1983). It is possible, however, to ascertain that the cross-cultural argument and status of Belly Dance does have currency (Sellers-Young, 1992 & 2005). Badia Masabni, an actress and entrepreneur, travelled to Paris and other European cities, witnessing theatrical displays and masked balls¹⁰¹ and took from this performance showcase formula elements of the dance, socializing, exotica and other performance acts (see Franken 2003 and Roushdy 2010). The central issue of performing another *traditional* dance in a different cultural context is problematised by Belly Dance's cross-cultural foundation back in 1926.

Bacon's research and the initial contextualization of her case study referred to here reinforce my argument that several narratives of authenticity are operating within her case study and within the wider English Belly Dance community of practice. In reality Bacon's use of the term Arabic Dance denotes a Buonaventura tradition. The narratives of authenticity concerning Egyptian Belly Dance practice and its impact on the Harem Troupe case study, I argue, are hidden, not *unveiled*. A detailed examination of the lives of key practitioners in the current English Belly Dance community offers a researcher in the field a multi-dimensional view of past narratives of authenticity, tradition and emerging traditions. In the process, the figured worlds of English Belly Dancers identify and explain a dynamic and changing practice of Belly Dance, one that is influenced and troubled by Egyptian Belly Dance practice and also by the creative choices and

101 In reference to Buckland's conference paper [unpublished] at SDHS conference in Surrey (2010). Buckland describes the masked balls found in turn of the twentieth century European society. In particular she references the masked balls in Paris and the use of Orientalist imagery, dancing, entertainment whilst people mingled with different classes of society. Badia Masabni, a wealthy, middle class Egyptian, travelled to Europe. I suspect she encountered the masked balls of Paris. Several descriptions of the performances held at Casino Opera include the use of comedians, dancers, musicians, singers and different displays of exotic cultural performances including Latino dance with veils. All of this suggests an importation of the European masked ball formula incorporated into the Egyptian nightclub environment (see Franken 2003, Nieuwkerk 1996 and Roushdy 2010). In effect, Masabni's inception of the theatre dance we refer to as Belly Dance is in fact a cross-cultural amalgamation of European social theatre and spectacle with Egyptian social dance and cultural convention. In conversation with Anthony Shay, post Buckland's paper, Shay commented on my theory confirming the plausibility of the connection made with Masabni's dance creation and the Parisian masked balls.

proclivities of each emerging English Belly Dance practitioner. This chapter constructs a detailed examination of the figured worlds of current key practitioners in the field to determine the changing urban English Belly Dance landscape, advancing Bacon's initial research and revealing the complex notion of ownership and identity within an established transnational and translocated Belly Dance tradition.

5.3. Introducing Anne White, Caroline Afifi and Siouxsie Cooper

The three case studies presented include details about the individual, the descriptions of the critical incidents for each case study and the initial analysis of these critical incidents, forming three Belly Dance figured worlds. In the initial case study selection there were seven dancers, although at the time of my fieldwork (June 2008 until Sept 2009, and then intermittently until late 2012) this sample was reduced to three. In the accompanying DVD all three practitioners can be seen in performance. On the DVD selected performance work and movement demonstrations used in a class room context are shown. This is consistent with the live performance work found in the field and the class room material observed in the teaching environment. Whilst I will attempt to describe the dancing and the dance event as accurately as possible, it is important to note that both Anne and Caroline were outspoken and interested in my own construction of their story, and so play a more fundamental role at this stage of representing the visible in this ethnographic construction.

The three English female Belly Dance practitioners perform and teach Belly Dance on a professional basis. They administer the activities of their weekly classes, monthly and biannual performance events, in addition to participating and leading specific regional projects. They also

lead and participate in workshops and performance showcases nationally and internationally. This includes activities such as headline performances to support acts in Belly Dance showcases, and presenting student showcases in which they feature as the primary performer/teacher. All three practitioners engage in presenting informal and formal lecture demonstrations on the subject of Sha'abi dance (Afifi), dance and cultural studies (Cooper) and Baladi dance (White) in different contexts, from local Belly Dance groups, to Universities, to regional and national Belly Dance festivals and for charitable organizations. In addition they support other Belly Dance events and organizers by providing performances and audience support at private parties and in public performances locally and regionally. The women are white and range in age from their mid-thirties to early fifties. They come from a variety of backgrounds and although they have no formal dance qualifications (Bachelors Degree or English University equivalent), all practitioners participated in Belly Dance activities from their mid-twenties and have gained certification for dance safety, Suraya Hilal Raqs Sharqi School accreditation and Devised Theatre Practice Bachelor's Degree or through other non-accredited dance institutions. There are particular narratives of authenticity within both the class and the performance contexts each practitioner constructs that will be examined in subsequent chapters, whilst here the women are briefly described using similar categories so that the reader may get an outline of the physical and socio-cultural contexts of each dancer.

5.3.1. Anne White: South East of England, London**Age:** 52**Height:** 5'11"**Hair Colour:** Blonde**Eye Colour:** Blue

Dress Size: 14

Nationality: English

Link to the Middle East: Childhood in Cyprus

Marital Status: single

Number of Children: 1

Profession: Belly Dance instructor

Highest Educational qualification: BA Hons Degree

Dance qualifications: none

Other related qualifications: Suraya Hilal Raqs Sharqi School certified teacher

Year started Belly Dance: 1982

English Belly Dance tradition: Studied with Suraya Hilal (1982-1997)

Current role in English Belly Dance community: Event organizer Planet Egypt, Egyptian Raqs Sharqi teacher in London, specialist in teaching dancing to live music and workshop leader (national and international)

Number of years in current role: 9

Anne began Belly Dancing in 1982 following Suraya Hilal training for fifteen years. Anne is the dancer of choice for Arabic musicians and the London Arabic community. Anne has been described as “a supremely talented dancer with an encyclopedic knowledge of the dance and the people in the community.” When describing herself, Anne says: “I have always been an outsider, but the dance just gives me something I can’t find elsewhere” (interview 2008). From 1996 Anne has taught Raqs Sharqi classes collaboratively and independently in Greater London. In 2003 Anne established Planet Egypt, a monthly showcase of Belly Dance talent in London.

Other interests: Modern Languages, Astrology and website design.

Inactive website: none

Active website: www.planetegypt.co.uk

5.3.2. Caroline Afifi: North West England, Liverpool

Age: 44

Height: 5'5"

Hair Colour: Dark Brown

Eye Colour: Blue

Dress Size: 12

Nationality: English

Link to the Middle East: Syrian Father, Egyptian husband, apartment in Cairo

Marital Status: married (Egyptian partner)

Number of Children: 4

Profession: Youth Worker and Belly Dance instructor

Highest Educational qualification: Masters Degree

Dance qualifications: none

Other related qualifications: Health and Safety certificate with MADN

Started Belly Dance: 1994

English Belly Dance tradition: Studied and collaborated with Wendy Buonaventura (1995-2009)

Current role in English Belly Dance community: Event organizer (Casino El Layl, Merseyside Arabic Dance Showcase), dance theatre maker, and workshop leader (national and international)

Number of years in current role: 3

Caroline began Belly Dancing in 1991 and studied with Wendy Buonaventura from 1995 to 2005. Caroline has been described as “an understated ambassador for Egyptian dance” and “the Queen of Sha’abi.” When describing herself, Caroline says: “When I perform I present the Egyptian dance, it is about the dance itself, not me as a person.” (interview 2009). From 1999 Caroline has taught groups of dance students, the majority of which are teachers themselves, at monthly workshops in Liverpool. Caroline has produced several performance showcases and events in collaboration with the Blue Coat Theatre and Trinity Theatre in Liverpool. She sits on the board of trustees for the Liverpool Arabic Arts Festival. Another feature of her work is guiding students in Egypt since 1999.

Other interests: Egyptian Arabic, Belly Dance forums and Egyptian music

Inactive website: none

Active website: [www.facebook/carolineafidancer.com](https://www.facebook.com/carolineafidancer.com)

5.3.3. Siouxsie Cooper: South West England, Devon (moved to Manchester in 2008)

Age: 39

Height: 5'4"

Hair colour: Blonde

Eye colour: Blue

Dress Size: 16

Nationality: English

Link to the Middle East: Lived in Egypt for 3 months in 2003/2004

Marital Status: partner

Number of Children: 0

Profession: Researcher

Highest Educational qualification: Masters Degree

Dance qualifications: none

Other related qualifications: BA Hons in Devised Theatre practices

Year started Belly Dance: 1996

English Belly Dance tradition: Studied with Wendy Buonaventura (1997-2001) and then the Raqs Sharqi Society (2002-2005)

Current role in English Belly Dance community: Instructor, performer and researcher

Number of years in current role: 6

I began Egyptian Baladi dancing in 1996 at the age of twenty-four. I became a member of Wendy Buonaventura's company in 1998 and performing in a touring Arab-Egyptian dance theatre piece *Mimi La Sardine* (1999-2001). I have been described as "a dancer with strong presence and power on stage." When describing myself, I would say: "I personify the unruly female qualities of Belly Dance in performance, one that leaves people in the audience on the edge of their seats" (interview, 2011). During an eight year period (2001 to 2008) I taught regular weekly classes, performed and organized regional events in South Devon. In 2008-2009 I became a dance lecturer at Liverpool Hope University specializing in *Dance and Cultural studies*, and *Twentieth Century Dance Fusion*.

Other interests: Spinning (indoor cycling), vegetable gardener, Iyengar Yoga, and cookery.

Inactive website: www.bellydance-southwest.com (active from 2001 – 2009)

Active website: www.bellydanceuk.wordpress.com

5.4. Critical Incidents, context, analysis and coda

Starting with Anne White's case study, then Caroline Afifi and finally mine the following section lists specific critical incidents and the context of the incident in chronological order. Each critical

incident is described in terms of its significance according to each practitioner's narratives of authenticity and with the relevant coda. The reason for the shortening of the list is due to the large number of critical incidents – especially for my case study – and the need to present key transformational incidents in each practitioner's life. All critical incidents extracted from each case study's list are numbered according to the original list; refer to Appendix D for further clarification of each critical incident's chronology.

5.4.1 Anne White

Evidence of a Hilal English Belly Dancing tradition:

3) Theresa's Belly Dance teacher was Wendy Buonaventura; Anne attended a couple classes and then met Suraya Hilal in performance in London. Hilal's physical presence and power in dancing had a dramatic impact on Anne's choice of dance teacher. The dancing presented by Hilal in performance resembled her initial encounter with Arabs Belly Dancing in Cyprus.

CODA: Identity-in-Practice perception and National perception

7) First experience of teaching Raqs Sharqi formally in collaboration with Anne Ashcroft. Working with another Raqs Sharqi dance, enabled Anne to begin to formalize her Hilal training and develop a teaching identity. CODA: Professional perception and Affinity perception.

Reaction to the Hilal tradition:

10) In 1997 completed Suraya Hilal Raqs Sharqi School teacher training. Hilal was in the middle of changing her artistic direction away from SHRSS towards Hilal Dance. The impact of Hilal's departure was monumental; Anne continued to work with the forming Raqs Sharqi Society. CODA: Identity-in-

Practice perception and Affinity perception

11) From the 1997s onwards Anne continued to work with and for the Raqs Sharqi Society after Hilal's departure. She was an advocate, a teacher of choice for the society – teaching dancing to live music – and attended regular business meetings to develop the RSS profile nationwide. CODA: Professional perception and Affinity perception

Break with the Hilal tradition:

12) 2003 Set up Planet Egypt with Vashti and Yvette Cowles, but soon became a solo enterprise. The aim of the project was to attract national and international Belly Dancers to London, and to showcase their work. It was also to widen Anne's social and professional networks. She was suffering under the heightened competitive nature of the dance business – edged out by JWAAD – and needed a new method of gaining a profile, economic value and work opportunities.

Emergent practice and Belly Dancing-Self:

13) 2004 Started to teach nationally at local and regional events including Majma, JOY, Raqs Britannia and MADE. Planet Egypt attracted artists from all over England and in return Anne became a high profile name at Belly Dance festivals around the country. CODA: Professional perception, and Social perception

14) 2007 Saqarah Nights a competing Belly Dance evening, attracts audiences and performers in London. Planet Egypt ceases to pay performers and the business model changes to compete with Saqarah Nights. CODA: Professional perception and Social perception

5.4.2. Caroline Afifi

Evidence of a Buonaventura English Belly Dancing tradition:

4) In 1995 Caroline started to train with Wendy Buonaventura. She attended annual dance week intensives in Bath and took several one to one private sessions with Buonaventura. By consistently working with Buonaventura Caroline developed her performance and theatre work in collaboration with Buonaventura and also independently. CODA: Affinity perception and Identity-in-Practice perception

5) Attended two performances of *Dancing Girls* by Wendy Buonaventura and Jacqui Jamal, the second viewing was in Essex and Caroline took young people she worked with in the Social Services to the event. *Dancing Girls* had a profound effect on Caroline's practice and the possibilities of Arabic Dance in the theatre. CODA: Aspirational perception and Self perception

6) Invited to join Wendy Buonaventura and Company in the show *Mimi La Sardine*. The invitation confirmed Caroline's dance and performance abilities and working with other Belly Dance artists from England established a professional profile. CODA: Professional perception and Affinity perception

13) Revives *Dancing Girls* with Buonaventura for a showing at the Blue Coat Theatre and in Twekesbury 2002. Caroline replaces Jacqui Jamal's role and develops her own solos and duets in conjunction with Buonaventura. CODA: Professional perception, Aspirational perception and Affinity perception

Reaction to the Buonaventura tradition

14) In 2003 Caroline moved her family to Egypt. A death in the family and changes in domestic and career affairs led to the departure. For three years Caroline lives part of the year in Cairo and part of the year in England. She continued family life, worked as a theatre assistant in Cairo, took dance training in Cairo and established networks within the Egyptian Belly Dance community CODA: National perception and Identity-in-Practice

19) Performed for Buonaventura's *And God Created Devil Woman* (2004) for film. This was her last collaboration with Buonaventura in which Caroline was unsure of the purpose of the dancing and film. She found the material repetitive and that it continued Buonaventura's obsession with women and religion. CODA: Professional perception and Affinity perception.

Break with the Buonaventura tradition

20) 2005 Wendy Buonaventura attends LAAF and disrupts a discussion on Egyptian male dancers. Caroline and Buonaventura's relationship was strained and Caroline discontinues collaborating on further projects. On reflection, Caroline identifies differing perspectives on the dance: Buonaventura is not interested in Arab culture whereas Caroline has developed a deeper interest and study of Egypt and the dance. CODA: Self perception, Affinity perception and National perception

Emergent practice and Belly Dancing-Self:

23) A performance and workshops at Belly Dance Congress in Surrey confirms Caroline's status as a

Sha'abi dance specialist. The event promotes her work to the wider English Belly Dance community and she gains appointments to provide workshops and performance specialism. CODA: Professional perception and Social perception

24) Casino El Layl, a biannual Middle Eastern dance event in Liverpool, is a new project Caroline focuses on in place of dance theatre. The aim of Casino is to pay specific attention to Middle Eastern forms of Belly Dance, especially Egyptian styles. Caroline features guest artists and her own students. Casino is an event which caters for Middle Eastern dance only, not fusion Belly Dance. It is gaining recognition as an international showcase featuring invited artists: Leyla Amir (USA), Shareen el Safy (USA) and DaVid of Scandinavia (USA) (all of whom have become colleagues through internet forums) CODA: Professional perception, Affinity perception and National perception

25) Caroline continues her active engagement with a facebook group who discuss Middle Eastern Dance in America during the 1970s. Caroline believes that her most recent education in the dance has been through internet blog sites and forums. CODA: Professional perception and Affinity perception

27) Working with her husband Sherif Afifi on filming Sha'abi dance in Egypt continues her projects on the subject of Sha'abi dance and music in Egypt. CODA: Professional perception and National perception

5.4.3. Siouxsie Cooper

Evidence of a Buonaventura English Belly Dancing tradition:

4) First solo performance, in Totnes, at a world dance and music event I performed a solo choreography learnt at a Buonaventura weekend and the audience response was positive. I

became known as the local Belly Dancer. CODA: Social perception, and Identity-in-Practice perception

7) I received an invitation to join the Buonaventura and Company and become a collaborator and performing member of the touring show *Mimi La Sardine* (1998-2001). It was my first experience of a professional show, including working with prominent artists from around England and participating in a weeklong showing at Edinburgh fringe festival (1999). CODA: Professional perception, Identity-in-Practice perception and Affinity perception

Reaction to the Buonaventura tradition:

11) Due to conflict within the Mimi La Sardine group, in which the only Middle Eastern participant disputed attempts by Buonaventura to fuse different Middle Eastern forms together, I experienced doubt and a crisis of identity-in-practice as a white, middle-class, western woman performing Belly Dance. CODA: Self-perception and Identity-in-Practice perception

13) Late night showing at Glastonbury Festival with Kabudu, our tent was empty. We improved audience members by rounding people up and amplifying our live music. The evening drew over 1,000 people. The second show the musicians took drugs and the show failed to attract the audiences. The experience of performing for large crowds elevated my aspirations for larger audiences and the failure of the second show proved to me the need for a professional code of conduct at work. CODA: Professional perception and Aspirational perception

Break with the Buonaventura tradition:

16) Wendy commissioned a West African dance solo for me for changes to the *Mimi La Sardine* performance presented in Twekesbury, 2000. There was dissent amongst company members,

several had left, and this was the first and only paid gig after over ten performances. I was not invited back to perform at later performance dates. I realized the processes of making a performance changes over time. I was also dissatisfied with the lack of training, the lack of opportunities to perform, the lack of significant financial incentive and political acrimony in the group, which eventually led to my departure. CODA: Self perception, Identity-in-Practice perception, Professional perception and Affinity perception

Emergent practice and Belly Dancing-Self:

20) The injury forced the issue of whether to continue dancing or not, the in-schools group Shekere gave me an opportunity to use my singing and drumming skills in addition to designing “softer” dance choreographies in West African dance. The regular income from Shekere confirmed the financial benefits of teaching dance and music. Peer review of my work indicated an instinctive ability to teach. It became obvious that I was not physically capable of the athleticism needed in West African dance, and political tensions within the Shekere group led to my departure. I returned to my Belly Dance practice and to develop a teaching role. CODA: Identity-in-Practice and Affinity perception

22) My first solo performance at Majma, Glastonbury, I performed a solo accompanied by Tori Amos’s “Me and A Gun” song describing gang rape. The people who gave me a lift to Glastonbury refused me a ride home; several people in the audience stood up and applauded whilst others in the audience walked out. The divided audience response and the abandonment by my transport provider had a strong impact on my sense of self as an artist. It was my first encounter with rejection and illustrated particular strains of resistance to new interpretations of Belly Dance within the community. CODA: Self-perception, Identity-in-Practice perception

and Social perception

27) I found new training methods and material by attending The Raqs Sharqi Society weekend workshops in Winchester (2002) and later in London (2004). My search for dance training was satisfied by their approach to the body and the movement patterns, forms and styles found in the Hilal tradition. It also provided new social and professional networks outside the South West region which was dominated by the Buonaventura tradition.

CODA: Affinity perception and Identity-in-Practice perception

28) By early 2003 I had travelled to Egypt three times and began a Dance Tour of Egypt enterprise with my Egyptian colleague and partner Atef Kamel. The first group tour was in April 2003 and I took a group of eight dance students to Luxor, Aswan, Hurghada, and Cairo. The Tour brought together my recent Egyptian travels and experience of the Belly Dance community in Egypt with my own Belly Dance students and community in England. CODA: National perception and Identity-in-Practice perception

52) Shared a headline performance with Caroline Afifi at Planet Egypt. The experience consolidated our common interests and experiences in Egypt and with the Buonaventura tradition. Caroline presented Sha'abi style dance, both retro and modern, I presented an Upper Egyptian-inspired and Baladi performances. It was the first performance in which the words from the song were a significant aspect of the performance; this method of performing changed my performance style radically. CODA: Identity-in-practice perception and Affinity perception

53) Nawarra witnessed my Tahtil Shibbak performance at Planet Egypt and requested I performed at a Banat Eshorouk event in Leeds. Nawarra is an international performer working in Morocco, France, Germany, Russia

and Israel and her encouragement signaled a level of competence from a Middle Eastern perspective. This competence was further acknowledged by the Arabs in the audience at the Banat Eshorouk event. CODA: National perception, Social perception, Affinity perception and Professional perception

5.5. Initial Analysis

This section presents a detailed reading of the critical incidents and attributing coda. Each reading will be organised by the way of four sub-sections: the formation within existing tradition, the reaction to the tradition, the break away from the tradition and the formation of narratives of authenticity and Belly Dancing-Selves. The initial analysis by way of these sub-sections highlights the transformation embedded in each practitioner's Belly Dance narrative. In effect, the embedded units, the critical incidents, are to be read as follows: the adoption of an established English Belly Dance tradition which is transformed during critical incidents of trouble to found and form a new Belly Dance tradition in England. The resulting narrative of authenticity leading to a central Belly Dancing Self for each narrative case study represents the figured world for each practitioner. This initial analysis of the critical incidents and the relevant coda for each incident offers a more detailed and concentrated description of the three figured worlds. By identifying their distinct figured worlds we can clarify common and contrasting characteristics between the practitioners.

5.5.1. Anne White

A: Formation within existing tradition

Anne White's Belly Dance practice emerges from a Hilal English Belly Dance tradition. Anne's initial encounter with Hilal in performance made a lasting impact, and reinforced an earlier

critical incident of Arabs Belly Dancing in Cyprus. The additional presence of Wendy Buonaventura during this era in London provided a comparative Belly Dance “style” to allow a choice of practitioner to train under. Anne’s comparison made it clear that Suraya Hilal’s version of the dance was what she sought. Anne states: “It was clear to me when I saw Suraya perform that she was doing something completely different to Wendy. She was much more authentic, a great dancer and her use of the music was something to behold: it was her presence in the dance that struck me” (2010). What Anne was seeking can be found in an earlier critical incident. Previously, in an earlier critical incidents Anne described a physical and intuitive response to the Belly Dance she witnessed in Arab nightclubs in Cyprus (circa late-1970s). It would appear that the dancer, musician and Arab-like atmosphere were reproduced by Hilal’s performance. The visceral and emotional dynamism displayed through Hilal’s dancing confirmed Anne’s choice to train under Hilal for over a decade. It also marks a method of “feeling” the dance that appears consistently throughout Anne’s interview. Anne continued her commitment by attending to Suraya Hilal’s Raqs Sharqi School for teacher training, confirming a substantial investment in the Hilal tradition: to a Pan-Egyptian Raqs Sharqi narrative of authenticity.

Throughout the interview, in written material and her collaboration with the Raqs Sharqi Society, Anne continues to refer to her Suraya Hilal training and tradition. Anne’s more recent incarnation as a Baladi expert in England has its roots in Hilal’s Pan-Egyptian Raqs Sharqi; Baladi is one of the three distinct Hilal dance style traditions. Consequently, there is little doubt to which English Belly Dance tradition Anne White is aligned. Notes, emails and writing found in her personal archive draw on both Hilal’s physical and movement descriptions and Anne’s own experimentations and psychological assessments of the material. These primary sources repeatedly refer to the Hilal trident of: Classical Sharqi, Urban Baladi and Sha’abi Raqs Sharqi.

It represents the ideological and aesthetic underpinning of Anne's current practice; undoubtedly the Anne White Belly Dancing-Self has an enduring correlation to the Hilal tradition.

Wendy Buonaventura was Theresa White's Belly Dance teacher (Anne White's identical twin sister). Anne mentions two distinct facts concerning Buonaventura and Hilal's teaching in London in the 1980s: i) they taught in the same building (the October Gallery), ii) both teachers forbade their students to attend the other teacher's class. Anne and Theresa's creative response was to attend one class each and then share their experiences. Anne's creative resistance to the developing enmity in the London Belly Dance scene reveals a certain level of resourcefulness; and I would suggest a relatively mild form of ambivalence shown towards Hilal's doctrine. This ambivalence allowed for the inclusion of other forms of the dance and Belly Dance knowledge to enter Anne's perception during this early stage of forming her Belly Dance practice.

To back up this finding we have to refer back to her first critical incident which details an encounter with Belly Dance in Cyprus (see Appendix D for further reference). Later, Anne continues by entering the Arab nightclub environment in London. Both examples provide an alternative perspective of the dance, one which Hilal resisted, and other resources including musicians, other dancers (from the Arab community) and audiences. Later critical incidents reveal a recurring theme of night club dancing, culminating in her eventual conception and promotion of Planet Egypt. Anne's highly descriptive encounters with the Arab Belly Dance night club community in both locations formed an aesthetic resource and experience of Belly Dance in performance: live music and audience participation outside of what was found in the Hilal classroom. The nightclub context offered a different and complementary study site for Anne's emerging practice. These sites also provided creative, political and economic alliances with Arab musicians and nightclub impresarios which aided her transition into becoming the

dancer of choice for the London Arab community. Anne reports that Hilal, herself, recommended Anne for “dance gigs” but never selected Anne for a performance project in the theatre. By now it would appear that Anne was developing a unique identity within the Hilal tradition, one which successfully transmitted to the Arab community in London the aesthetics of a Belly Dancer, and one that was best suited to the nightclub performance context rather than the theatre stage. In effect, Anne’s double-edged Belly Dance education produced a recognised and accepted form of dance found among the broader Arab community, but one that was rejected by Hilal’s tradition. Anne’s search beyond Hilal Pan-Egyptian Raqs Sharqi discipline and doctrine brought an uneasy alliance with the RSS teacher trainers and practitioners, who recognised her talent but could not “place” her personality in the group.

B. Reaction against tradition

Reading through Anne’s critical incidents the break with Hilal’s tradition can be seen as slow and incremental: a slow and strategized break that kept the “credentials” to be a Raqs Sharqi teacher prominent. A significant date and incident was the break-up of the Suraya Hilal Raqs Sharqi School into the Raqs Sharqi Society and Hilal Dance in 1997. The Raqs Sharqi Society’s aims and ambitions included the continued advocacy and support of the initial Pan-Egyptian Raqs Sharqi, in effect excluding future post-1997 Hilal Dance development. The Suraya Hilal and RSS break signalled Hilal’s change in creative vision and direction. It indicated the consolidation and perhaps fossilisation of the pre-1997 Suraya Hilal Raqs Sharqi School. It remains unclear if Anne had a choice to belong or not with the emergent Hilal Dance project. Reports from several sources indicate Hilal left the group in order to change working relationships, to seek artistic autonomy from the Suraya Hilal Raqs Sharqi School, and to source funding outside England when the New Labour Government replaced cultural diversity with

social inclusion arts policy (1997). While Hilal moved to Italy, Anne stayed in London with the RSS and pursued teaching opportunities through the RSS.

To understand more clearly why Anne did not strongly react against the Hilal tradition I sought outside confirmation of this period in the Suraya Hilal and Raqs Sharqi Society split. In interview, Anne presents a referential accord with Hilal, one that I suspect disguises something else. Juliana Brustik is a leading member of the society and provides vital contextual information. According to Juliana (interview, 2008) Suraya Hilal was a domineering influence in and outside class. Hilal's dominating quality saw students like Brustik's unquestioning acceptance of the Hilal tradition as gospel. Juliana states: "Suraya was a powerful woman, she was a brilliant dancer, she was extremely intelligent and we all loved her. She was the one we wanted to look like and we wanted to dance like her" (2008). Brustik recalls the colossal effort made by her, Jennifer Carmen¹⁰² and other members to consolidate and resist a break with the Hilal tradition. She uses the term "keeping it professional", which suggests that there was indeed a shock, trauma and hostility during the RSS break with Hilal administratively. We can deduce that the break was initiated by Hilal, not Anne. In terms of Anne's figured world and the figured world she shared with the larger Raqs Sharqi community of dancers, the loss of Hilal as their leader did not directly result in an ideological split. We can conclude that the Raqs Sharqi identity was already an established and coalesced identity, one that Hilal left, but one that the RSS members sort to continue.

102 Jennifer Carmen was an important figure in the inception and creation of Suraya Hilal (original name Selwa Raj). She designed many of her costumes, co-ordinated musicians, raised funds and secured tour dates from 1985-1997.

Remaining and consolidating her position in the Raqs Sharqi Society also gave Anne's own teacher training credentials validity. It gave Anne a specific teaching role within the Raqs Sharqi Society; she became the RSS community's teacher of choice to train students in the skill of dancing to live music. In summary it transpires that Hilal reacted to Anne and her RSS peers rather than viceversa. Hilal's departure forced the members of the then SHRSS to assess their commitment, which in turn formulated the RSS. In effect Anne's delayed reaction concerning the Hilal tradition could represent either a satisfaction with the Raqs Sharqi method of Belly Dance or it may have been a delayed shock, one that would occur later. From the list of critical incidents we could argue that a delayed reaction, one that took another six years, occurred and represented Anne's reaction to the Hilal tradition.

Within the wider community of English Belly Dance practice the RSS is a unique organisation, with a unique order of association and membership requirements. On closer inspection, Anne was not present in several theatre performances given by the RSS; again Anne was excluded from performing. Anne's role as the live music teacher capitalised on her professional associations with Arab musicians and the wider London Arab community. She brokered the RSS engagement with live music, a key component of the Hilal tradition. The gain through RSS credentials in the London Belly Dance market place consolidated Anne's economic value but it also excluded her from other emerging London Belly Dance training and performance scenes like JWAAD. In effect Anne's attempts, leading up to the beginning of the twenty first century, to "hold on" to the Hilal tradition and its related community brought with it status and economic surety. It also inhibited and confined the value of Anne's work within a limited audience and student population. A critical incident in 2003, the formation of the Planet Egypt enterprise, represented a new form of collaboration and performance opportunity with other leading artists

in the field, namely Yvette Cowles and Vashti (also known as Cathy Selford). Anne's reaction to the Hilal tradition was more a side-step into other communities and networks of dancers within the wider Belly Dance community. Anne, like all the other trainers in the RSS, has never travelled or studied the dance in Egypt, and a cultural shift within the wider English Belly Dance community to travel and train in Egypt developed a significant schism between those who have been to Egypt and those who have not: increasingly the RSS method and performance work has been regarded as anachronistic and out-of-date.

To position Anne's choice more clearly, by the late 1990s distinctive groups of dancers, with an identifiable leader, Belly Dance image, teacher training programmes and performance repertoire had emphatically emerged in England. Wendy Buonaventura had established student groups in the South West (Bristol) and produced distinctive dance theatre pieces "Dancing Girls" (1994-1996) and "Mimi La Sardine" (1998-2001). Josephine Wise and her new school JWAAD¹⁰³ attracted students nationwide to weekend dance festivals (Fantasia) and residencies (Tring, Herefordshire). JWAAD was also an established teacher training outfit, one that rivalled the Raqs Sharqi Society (several sources report Josephine Wise's application to train with Hilal was declined, in response Wise instigated her own school of Belly Dance teacher training: JWAAD). As a result the RSS members needed to consolidate the Hilal tradition, continue the teacher training and performance work and construct a recognisable and continuing narrative of authenticity. In southern England the ideological and aesthetic conflict concerning authentic

103 JWAAD is the acronym for Josephine Wise Academy of Arabic Dance. Even though the use of the term Arabic Dance signals a Buonaventura tradition, Josephine was initially trained by Hilal until Hilal refused her entry to the SHRSS training programme.

primacy over English Belly Dance was gaining pace. Anne's affiliation with the Raqs Sharqi Society secured her a position and declared her interests.

The competition brought with it controversy, ridicule and under-cutting. The expression "Raqs Starchy" entered popular English Belly Dance parlance, illustrating the uniformity and upright spinal alignment of the RSS dance training and dancers. This discourse illustrated outside criticism of the RSS efforts to maintain a pre-1997 Hilal tradition, which in effect fixed the Hilal narrative of authenticity to a specific period in time. This episode in Anne's life illustrates two significant characteristics of the narratives of authenticity i) the decision to uphold the Hilal tradition was an attempt to stabilise what was in effect falling apart, ii) it would appear that an intrinsic characteristic of Belly Dance narratives of authenticity are their unfixed and mercurial quality.

C. Breaking free

It would appear that it took time for Anne to appreciate the second characteristic. By repeating what she had known, Anne was in effect holding onto the past. Even today she recollects a "golden era" of the Suraya Hilal Raqs Sharqi School. Hilal's dominance and doctrine that was the Pan-Egyptian Raqs Sharqi narrative of authenticity was in effect a binding contract, one that her followers continued even after her dismissal of it. On further examination of the interview transcript and the specific incidents relating the inception of Planet Egypt, several comments are made relating to Anne's social perception among her Raqs Sharqi Society peers. RSS members, Vashti (Cathy Seford) and other work colleagues corroborate Anne's social perception of herself as being "different" and an "outsider." Anne for "dance gigs" Anne self-consciously states: "I was loud, brash, rude, and I stayed up till late into the night" (interview 2009). It would appear

that these personal characteristics were not encouraged and did not suit the requirement for the RSS narrative of authenticity.

Prior to the RSS break with Hilal, Anne in 1995 gave birth to her daughter Alexandra. The pregnancy and birth created monumental changes privately and in her career. It also brought about a change in her physical appearance and new domestic issues including child care. Anne's regular attendance at late night dance events discontinued, and she confides: "I was also a lot larger [in weight] after having Alexandra" (2009). Later, she comments on the reduced gigs secured in the London Arab Community, joking: "I was no longer 30 years of age" (2009). Changing personal circumstances and the withdrawal from a sizeable social aspect of her dancing life altered and reduced the performance opportunities and employment available. In several informal conversations Anne regularly comments on the Belly Dance market and its demand for young nubile women at the expense of experience and stage craft.

Anne's changing domestic and financial affairs brought a heightened urgency to making a living with her dance. Initial dance employment began with adult education classes and working for the social services. This new application of her dance training within different social and cultural groups had a lasting impact on Anne's conceptions of the "power" of the dance. Beyond any desire to perform, Anne was aware of the need to encourage and support women in her local community through dance endeavours. Anne has since developed projects with health care professionals, mental health workers and brought about specific funding and research outputs through her dance work in the community. It also spurred on her solo trading career, beyond the RSS, into the community. She actively used her SHRSS qualifications, which became a recognisable dance certificate to gain employment within health, social and educational

institutions. This relatively high economic value compared with unaccredited dancers gave Anne the advantage within the wider community of dance market.

The sum total of these changing personal, physical and financial circumstances brought into sharp relief a need to capitalise on her extensive training and open new dance markets. Her experience as a dancer, within the Arab community and working with different levels of dance and movement competence allowed Anne access to different institutions interested in new methods of engaging their staff, patients and students. Anne's innate outward and gregarious nature lent itself to developing these markets and presenting herself and her dance to new audiences. The changing contexts within which to present Raqs Sharqi work offer an insight into the approaches taken by practitioners to continue their work beyond the threshold set by nightclub impresarios. It also highlights the sole trading and strength of character required by practitioners to sustain and produce career longevity. Anne's developing narrative of authenticity emerged through a difficult economic, social period in which she had to reinvent herself as the exponent of mature women's knowing craft and dance expertise.

D. Forming Belly Dancing-Self and narrative of authenticity

A core narrative of authenticity producing Anne's distinctive Belly Dancing-Self is the Hilal tradition. It is important to note that the Hilal tradition in her practice was a pre-1997 Hilal tradition, not the subsequent Hilal Dance innovation post-1997 (see chapter three). By the turn of the twenty first century Belly Dance class numbers were increasing and Anne's Belly Dancing-Self gravitated towards community inclusion through event enterprises. Planet Egypt, a monthly Belly Dance showcase, formed in 2003. The political strategy to collaborate and share audiences with members outside the RSS indicates the formation of Anne's Belly Dancing-Self,

a movement away from the RSS and the Hilal tradition. On the Planet Egypt website, the statement “Planet Egypt is a consortium of acclaimed performers and highly-skilled and experienced teachers of Raqs Sharqi, and other Oriental dance styles¹⁰⁴,” arguably retained the Hilal tradition only to win primacy in the market place and signify quality assurance, skill and experience. Anne’s strategy to attract new students, audiences and collaborators needed both the affirmation of her past and a declaration of a new future. Anne found a mediatory role within the burgeoning and competitive London Belly Dance community, the role of a female-nightclub-impresario.

When considering the aims of Planet Egypt and Anne’s new role in the community, we read the list of aims for the enterprise describing an encompassing and nurturing ambition:

- Cultivate a deeper understanding and love of Oriental music and dance
- Promote high standards of Oriental dance education
- Support fledgling dance professionals
- Work with and feature leading exponents of Oriental dance
- Produce and stage quality shows that are enjoyable, inclusive and successful

www.planetegypt.co.uk/planetegypt [last accessed January 2012]

The qualities of nurture and control underpin a matriarchal role, identifying Anne as the power broker, the controller and omnipresent mother of the London Belly Dance community. By cultivating a female-nightclub-impresario role, not unlike the Awalim role for female dancers found in Egypt before the nineteenth century (see van Nieuwerke 1996 and Franken 2003), Anne repositioned herself as the arbiter of Belly Dance quality control, skill and experience. The Planet Egypt experience offered Belly Dance students and artists a performance context

104 White, A. www.planetegypt.com/planetegypt [last accessed 12/03/2012]

exclusively constructed to perform to Arabic and Arabic fusion music, in a simulated Bedouin tent environment with Middle Eastern mezze¹⁰⁵ food available. Planet Egypt featured Raqs Sharqi dancers, male Belly Dancers, cabaret acts, Burlesque dancers, American Tribal Style Belly Dancers, fusion artists and Moroccan shikhatt¹⁰⁶ dancers. The enterprise promoted Anne's own performance and teaching practice by featuring or excluding other event organisers. Interestingly, Anne rarely featured her own performance practice. Her primary role is the compeer presenting performers and informing the audience of forthcoming London and national Belly Dance events. During this period significant numbers of English Belly Dance students were travelling to Egypt to witness and experience the Egyptian Belly Dancer in tourist nightclubs for the first time. Anne has never travelled to Egypt. By incorporating her own first-hand experience of the Arab nightclubs in London and the changing tastes for Belly Dance performances to be held in a nightclub context, Anne capitalised on her expertise and status within the London community and the English Belly Dance tradition.

To find Anne's Belly Dancing-Self we have to describe Planet Egypt as the vehicle and illustration of this Belly Dancing-Self. Anne created the defining role as the female impresario of English Belly Dance. She brings extensive experience and alliances among London based practitioners to bear on the project. The inclusion of Arab musicians and the Arab community are a direct result of her working relationships within the community and a project strategy to

105 Mezze are a selection of side dishes from olives, to humous, tabouleh and other regional dishes often attributed to the La Vante region of the Near East. Mezze is also found in most Middle Eastern and North African countries. The Spanish version called Tapas would be the closest European equivalent.

106 Shikhatt is a form of dance and itinerant dance culture found in Morocco. The dancers sing and there are dance group displays with soloist presenting virtuoso movement and entertainment. The emphasis is on the song, the words sung usually addressing current social and cultural issues found in the host village or town. The Shikhatt for many years have been wedding entertainment and coital instruction for the bride and groom.

incorporate Arab and English Belly Dance enthusiasts under one roof. As a consequence we can deduce that Anne's Belly Dancing Self as the host the female-nightclub- impresario of English Belly Dancers, is a significant role within the English Belly Dance community.

5.5.2. Caroline Afifi

A: Formation within existing tradition

Caroline's Belly Dance practice emerges from a Buonaventura English Belly Dance tradition. By examining early critical incidents, a conflict between Caroline's initial encounter of the dance through an Egyptian friend and subsequent experiences in local Belly Dance classes in Liverpool informed her training options. The difference between the two experiences initiated a wider nationwide search for Belly Dance tuition. Early in her dance career Caroline attended both Suraya Hilal and Wendy Buonaventura workshops. Her eventual choice to continue her studies with Buonaventura indicates key qualities and characteristics sought by Caroline in order to develop a dance theatre based Belly Dance practice. In fact, earlier training in the *Yellow House Theatre* group (pre-Belly Dance interest) confirms her awareness regarding theatrical components found in the Buonaventura tradition.

Buonaventura's *Dancing Girls* (1994-1996) dance theatre show represents an important critical incident, one in which Caroline was inspired to create her own alternative narration of western fantasy and Orientalist encounter of Middle Eastern dancers in the touring theatre show *Forbidden Fruits* (1999). Within three years, Caroline revived a version of *Dancing Girls* (2002) in collaboration with Buonaventura. Theatre and performance skills featured strongly in Caroline's self-perception and in interview she considers herself a performer first and a teacher second. This self-perception as a performer of Arabic Dance registers with the Buonaventura

tradition. The primacy of performance over teaching is a common feature of Caroline's list of critical incidents, corresponding with her identity-in-practice perception. We can note that a gradual change from performing towards teaching began in the mid 2000s and develops primacy by the late 2000s. Her own theatre work, alongside the collaborative theatre work with Buonaventura, indicates an independence of her identity as a theatre producer outside Buonaventura's projects.

B: Reaction to the tradition

On reflection and in interview Caroline indicates that collaboration with Buonaventura provided significant instruction and knowledge concerning the performance qualities and skills required in creating effective dance theatre and performance work. I worked with Caroline on the *Mimi La Sardine* show (1998-2000). The social perception of Caroline from her peers in the group included inventiveness and a high quality of dance skill and execution. Buonaventura, in interview for a local television programme, states, "Caroline has a good sense of what works well in the theatre, she is inventive and comes up with good suggestions" (Bristol TV, 2000). Caroline was trained to perform Buonaventura's solo performances and also trained to substitute Venus Saleh's Baba Koram¹⁰⁷ solos. In interview, (ten years later) Caroline confided that the experience was unsatisfactory and led to the development of her own theatre work. Her confession and the list of independent dance theatre work present a strong case for a reaction and break with the Buonaventura tradition.

By early 2000s Caroline worked on a filmed performance piece for Buonaventura, *And God Created Devil Woman* (2004), which featured a mixture of Argentinean Tango dance, the Baba

¹⁰⁷ Venus Saleh is a Persian dance specialist from Bristol. The Baba Koram is a cross-gender dressing parody of Iranian gangsters, and it is a humorous dance.

Koram (Persian dance) and a Maghreb dance-inspired sword dance. Caroline reports in her interview that she had no idea what the theme or purpose of the show was. She suggested it was another Buonaventura attempt to discuss and represent the reactions of religious institutions to dancing women from different countries. During the mid-2000s Caroline travelled and lived in Egypt over an extended period of time, during an episode of domestic upheaval and change. It also signalled a break with the Buonaventura tradition toward a revision and research into modern Egyptian Belly Dance practice.

Her move to Egypt was a significant critical incident, one which brought about changes in identity-in-practice along with perceptions of the national and cultural heritage of the dance found in Egypt. The experience of living full time in Egypt brought about encounters with Egyptian nightclubs, a nightclub environment that differed from the tourist nightclub. Here Caroline witnessed working class Belly Dancers performing to Sha'abi music, a working class urban music form characterised by political statement and humour. This encounter established a new formation of her identity-in-practice, one that coheres with her self perception as a working class, urban dancing woman in England.

C: Breaking free

A very specific critical incident narrates Caroline's break from a decade of collaborative work with Buonaventura. Caroline views this break on the grounds of irreconcilable differences concerning fundamental beliefs regarding the Middle East and the cultural contextualisation of the dance. According to Caroline, Buonaventura considers the alteration of Arabic Dance to create theatre and performance important; by contrast Caroline's experiences in Egypt led her towards the opposite conclusion. The primacy of an artist's vision over the cultural contextual

reading and meaning found in the dance no longer figured as a priority in Caroline's Belly Dance reality.

The definitive break-away incident occurred at a Liverpool Arab Arts Festival (2005); Caroline hosted and co-ordinated the Arab dancing component of the week-long celebrations. In this particular year she hosted two European fusion dance artists, Buonaventura and Raksan (German), together with Middle Eastern dance exponents Houda Amrani (Moroccan), Khalid Mahmoud and Shafeek Ibrahim (both male and Egyptian). Caroline recollects an incident which saw Buonaventura and Raksan walking out during a presentation on male Egyptian dancers by Shafeek. They re-entered the seminar room later to cross-examine Shafeek in a hostile manner. Caroline reports, "I lost my temper with Wendy" in public. On reflection, Caroline realised that Buonaventura's conception of the dance and her own were diametrically opposed and were no longer compatible as collaborators. Caroline's break with the Buonaventura narrative of authenticity was in direct relationship to perceptions of nationality and aspirational perception.

Another feature of Caroline's break from Buonaventura has been guided dance Tours of Egypt she has conducted since 1999: this tour guide enterprise has continued to the present day. Twice a year, she guides groups of dancers out to Egypt to explore the Sha'abi form of Belly Dance and culture. In an interview for NADA magazine¹⁰⁸ Caroline declares, "I usually aim my own trips at being a little of the usual dance mix and some very exciting ventures off most tour operators' radar" (2012, 15). Clearly, this continual engagement and familiarity with the dance community in Egypt impacted on Caroline's self perception and identity-in-perception during the turn of the

108 Bisco, A. (2012) 'Caroline Afifi: An Understated Ambassador for Egyptian Dance' in Northern Arabic Dance Association (NADA) magazine Issue 48, Winter, pp12-17.

twenty-first century, whereas Buonaventura's interest in Egypt and the Middle East diminished from the mid-1990s (see chapter three).

D. Forming a Belly Dancing-Self and narratives of authenticity

With the break from Buonaventura's tradition and her continual engagement with the Egyptian Belly Dance community Caroline's own narrative of authenticity established itself. It has to be noted that prior to Caroline's break with Buonaventura Caroline had produced her own theatre work and solo performance repertoire. Two specific events found in Caroline's list of critical incidents bring into sharp relief an emerging Belly Dancing-Self prior to the final breaking point with the Buonaventura tradition found in the LAAF incident. The first, Caroline devised and produced the dance theatre work: *Forbidden Fruit* (1999), *Cafe Medina* (2005) and *Sabrina* (2006). The second, Caroline moved her family to Egypt (2003) for a period of time living and working in Egypt and she continued to research and train in Egyptian Belly Dance.

The series of dance theatre can be read as a narration of Caroline's developing Belly Dancing-Self (and will be analysed in more depth in chapter six). However it is worth noting that the subject of the three dance theatre works begins with a research-led narration of Western Orientalist fascination with Middle Eastern dance (*Forbidden Fruit*, 1999), an alternative to Buonaventura's dance theatre piece with a similar ambition *Dancing Girls*. *Forbidden Fruit* narrated the Western encounter with Middle Eastern dancers at the Great Exhibitions in Paris and Chicago, the illusive myth of "Little Egypt", Mata Hari's Salome invention, balletic renditions of the Orient and Burlesque pastiche of Belly Dance movement and female unruliness.

Caroline's second dance theatre piece was a site-specific experimentation with performance contexts in *Cafe Medina*, held at the Bluecoat Theatre, Liverpool, commissioned by LAAF.

Caroline collaborated with Kurdish film artists Galen and Moroccan musician Hossam Erajii. They presented a simulation of an Arab Cafe in which audience members enjoyed entertainment and refreshment; this was interrupted by loud quadraphonic recordings of tornado fighter planes; at which point strategically positioned actors in the audience dived for cover. Understandably, chaos ensued and with the rising tension performance vignettes followed illustrating contradictory and provocative images of resistance to the Iraq invasion.

Finally *Sabrina* (2006-2007) was a theatre documentary-style–dance-drama narrating the social and cultural conditions of Belly Dancers working on Pyramid’s street nightclubs in Egypt from the 1970s to 1990s. Caroline defends her work by stating: “My work has to have something to say, it can’t be just about dancing and sequins. It’s got to have some social comment to it otherwise what’s the point?” (2009). Together these three dance theatre shows narrate Caroline’s emerging Belly Dancing-Self: from Western fascination to gritty Egyptian working class reality.

From 2003 to 2005 Caroline lived predominantly in Egypt, renting an apartment and living in Cairo. Her extended stay in Egypt included encountering Egyptian nightclubs which differed from tourist nightclubs. Egyptian nightclubs are a late night social location for regular working class men to meet, smoke and drink. The nightclubs feature live music and numerous Belly Dancers throughout the night. The dancing differed considerably from in the popular five star Belly Dance nightclubs frequented by most tourists and was commonly referred to as the archetypal Egyptian Belly Dancer for aspiring Western Belly Dancers. Caroline’s encounter with the Egyptian nightclub culture and the Sha’abi music and dancing style brought about a revision of her identity-in-practice perception and self perception. In effect, Caroline’s devised documentary-style-dance-drama. *Sabrina* describes her encounter with another aspect of Belly Dance culture in Egypt. On closer examination the Belly Dancing component of the show was

minimal compared with the social, political and cultural commentary. *Sabrina* demonstrates Caroline's modified focus from the Belly Dancing towards national perceptions of the social and cultural components of what constitutes an Egyptian Belly Dancer. *Sabrina* was not a sensational and glamorous portrayal of the life of an Egyptian Belly Dancer: it was the bleeding heart and the blood and guts reality of making a living with the female dancing body in Egyptian culture. The resultant Belly Dancing-Self is a working-class-sha'abi-reality. Caroline is commonly referred to in English Belly Dance discourse as the "Sha'abi Queen" of England¹⁰⁹.

5.5.3. Siouxsie Cooper

A: Formation within existing tradition

My Belly Dance practice emerges from a Buonaventura English Belly Dance tradition and then later a pre-1997 Hilal English Belly Dance tradition promoted by the Raqs Sharqi Society. My initial encounter with the Buonaventura tradition resulted in a unique opportunity to join Wendy Buonaventura and Company in a touring dance theatre show for two years. The experience fulfilled aspirational and professional perceptions to become a Belly Dancer; it also provided choreographic training and expertise in performance and theatre skills. By becoming a member of Buonaventura's company it confirmed social perceptions of my identity as Buonaventura protégé, which in turn determined my association with the Buonaventura English Belly Dance tradition.

B: Reaction to tradition

While working with Buonaventura on the *Mimi La Sardine* (1999-2001) performance, several incidents occurred which indicated limitations to further opportunities to train, perform solo

¹⁰⁹ See NADA article above.

work and gain financial remuneration. A request for extra dance training was denied on the grounds that we were chosen for our individuality. The show was divided into group choreography and solo performances, the majority of which were performed by Buonaventura. The only payment received was on the eleventh performance in Twekesbury, my last performance on the show. In conjunction with *Mimi La Sardine*, I was performing regularly across England and earning regular wages with the West African ensemble Kabudu. The favourable professional conditions offered by Kabudu outweighed the interest and professional perception to continue Belly Dance with Buonaventura's company.

A significant and complicated issue emerged during the rehearsal process of *Mimi La Sardine* during the process of developing group choreographic material. The only Middle Eastern participant of the company regularly questioned the process of assimilating different dances of the Middle East and forming new fusion-style choreographies. Her voice was dominant, and it was difficult to come forward with a different view point. The handling of this internal dispute created social and racial tensions which were never resolved. It also highlighted Buonaventura's own ambivalence towards fusion of different cultural forms. The issues of race and ownership of culture and the lack of people management contributed to my own identity-in-practice crisis as a white, middle class, western woman performing Middle Eastern-inspired fusion dance.

My *Me and a Gun* (2001) performance represents both my continuation and reaction to the Buonaventura tradition. I utilised Middle Eastern dance to devise polemic in solo dance theatre performance. The audience's mixed response indicated that my version of the Buonaventura tradition was too extreme. This critical incident brought to the fore the need to source alternative theatre and performance training at Dartington College of Performing Arts.

The part-time Belly Dance teaching work used to finance my College studies also motivated a continuation of my professional practice. In contrast to the lack of dance training found in the Buonaventura tradition, the Raqs Sharqi Society offered the physical and movement training I sought. I participated in weekend workshops and classes around England, developing a new affinity and identity-in-practice with the Hilal tradition. After several years of participation the repetition of the workshop material and the lack of leadership, artistic direction and teacher training opportunities signalled the limitations in the Hilal tradition promoted by the RSS. Another indicator was the social perception of my dancing by the Society's teachers who commented on my "wildness." Several international RSS students requested workshops to learn my style of the dance, which they perceived as distinct from the Raqs Sharqi style of dancing. Both social perceptions of my dance led to my eventual resistance of the Hilal tradition.

C: Breaking free

In 2003 an extended stay in Egypt for three months provided new dance training opportunities. The experience presented a more complicated cultural and social Belly Dance reality in Egypt. In effect the dance training and performance found in Egypt contradicted and exposed the constructed narratives of authenticity found in both the Buonaventura and Hilal traditions.

The Ghana project with Shekere¹¹⁰ confirmed two aspects of performing another culture's dance form: i) the suitability of one's body for the specific energy and athleticism found in the dance ii) in an attempt to find the "source" of West African dance we encountered an improvisational approach which prioritised individual interpretation and "feeling" above prescribed steps and

¹¹⁰ Shekere was a group of West African dancers and musicians I belonged to. We took West African dance and music into schools. In 2001 we gained "On the Line" funding to travel to Ghana for a month to train in dance, drumming and singing.

national identity. My own travel and research in Egypt confirmed similar findings within Egyptian Belly Dance aesthetic and ideology.

By establishing a regular practice in the community, which included a Tours of Egypt enterprise, I was able to develop and expand my own interpretation of Belly Dance, leading to the formation of my Belly Dancing-Self outside the Hilal and Buonaventura traditions. My work as a community dance practitioner over an extended period of time afforded creative licence to develop my own teaching style and content. In conjunction with my academic studies at Dartington College of Arts, I was able to incorporate my Belly Dance work into my final Bachelor's Degree year and, with AHRC funding, complete a Master's Degree focusing on my practice in the community. Implementing a practitioner-researcher model into my Belly Dance practice lent a progression to my recent research work and the formation of a Belly Dancing-Self.

D. Forming a Belly Dancing-Self and narrative of authenticity

Moving from one tradition to another, from Buonaventura to Hilal (via the Raqs Sharqi), my own narrative of authenticity originally emerged from both practitioners' work in the English Belly Dance traditions. As a result my identity-in-practice and professional perception as a Belly Dance initially draws from both an Orientalist dance fantasy theatre and fusion, in addition to a Pan-Raqs Sharqi dancing body. Social perceptions of my dancing confirm both traditions are still present in my current practice. These traditions were destabilised by 2003 due to regular encounters and training with Egyptian Belly Dancers and dance trainers based in Egypt. The Egyptian Belly Dance training and performances found presented an improvised, female solo performance art that promotes audience interactive-play, gesture and song.

A key theme recurring in the list of critical incidents is the movement and physical work found in Belly Dance and other world dance forms specifically Kerry Ribchester's Cuban Casino-Salsa workshops and Zab Maboungou's Congolese dance workshops. The search for an internalised method of moving that complemented my studies of another culture's dance form has been a common theme in my quest for authenticity. Finding a physical language which incorporates rhythm and internal torso movement and use of the pelvis became a necessity as injuries curtailed my dance development.

Continuing with academic work which leads to publication in trade magazines has become a common feature of my practice and another narrative of authenticity. Transforming my practice towards that of a researcher-practitioner has raised social perception of my research work – due to its uniqueness in the field – and through subsequent publications in trade magazines, academic texts and on international internet forums. Creating a unique researcher-practitioner role within the English Belly Dance community of practice has generated interest in my performance practice and teaching. In effect establishing an academic role within the community work has raised my economic value and increased my audience size.

With the researcher-practitioner role in place audiences have attended several high profile performances at Planet Egypt in London, for the Banat Eshorouk events in Leeds, the Liverpool Casino El Layl event and Sahara Nights in Nottingham to witness the integration of my research into my performance practice. The performance of the Belly Dancing-unruly-woman, a persona first conceived at a live art performance for contemporary art audiences at Dartington College, which has now developed into a defined Belly Dance performance strategy, has gained recognition within the community. The unruly-woman not only represents a strategy used within my practice, it also identifies my own personal leanings towards wildness and the grotesque in

performance. The performance of Self and its interrogation through internal body work and gender politics has produced a Belly Dancing-Self of the Performance-of-the-unruly-female-Belly Dancer.

5.6. Conclusion

The initial analysis of the critical incidents have proved valuable in both identifying the past English Belly Dance traditions each practitioner is aligned with and the “breaking” free from this tradition towards an emerging English Belly Dance present. Already the results have provided similarities between each practitioner, thus establishing an evidence base of a shared community of practice; it has also highlighted difference and contrast. To further pursue this line of inquiry the following chapter six will consider the performance practices and samples of teaching work found in the community of each case study. The next process of analysis will both verify the above findings and further elaborate on the initial Belly Dancing-Selves identified in order to establish a more concrete and substantial analysis of each practitioner’s Belly Dancing-Self and attributing narratives of authenticity.

Chapter 6

6. The performance of English Belly Dancing-Selves

6.1 Introduction

Inevitably the question arises concerning a potential gap between what a practitioner declares as the main rationalization for their practice intention and then the reality of what they actually practice. By considering and analysing their practice there is potential for us to differentiate the values in their practice (Malinowski 1994). More significantly, such an approach further demonstrates how particular narratives of authenticity are manifested, and provides the research with concrete verification of the proposed Belly Dancing-Self for each practitioner. In effect, this chapter considers what practitioners actually *do* more than what they *say* they do.

The initial examination of the relationship between postural alignment and the production of Belly Dance isolations provides material for analysis to formulate and assess the different ‘genealogy’ of each practitioner’s Belly Dance movement knowledge and describe how they perform their own narratives of authenticity. A comparative study of each practitioner’s work over a period of a decade details specific contextualisation issues each practitioner encountered when constructing meaning and a performance site for their Belly Dance performances. The culturally appropriate or effective contextualisation of a Belly Dance performance is a key factor in the development of performance work in the field. For example, each practitioner – over time – rejects the western theatre stage for a performer/audience shared space, usually in the form of a nightclub situation. This chapter will expand issues linked to the initial concern of how and for whom English Belly Dance is performed, revealing specific cross-cultural concerns. Finally, the performance material of each practitioner over time, with a closer examination of a signature

performance, offers further proof and supplementary information with which to further identify each practitioner's narratives of authenticity and Belly Dance identity.

6.2 Movement and teaching analysis

6.2.1 Anne White

In chapter five Anne's Belly Dancing-Self was characterised as the female-night-club-impresario, one which can be found in her style of teaching more than in the movement she teaches. Anne's teaching approach includes step by step instruction of a movement, in which she uses tools like a chair, instructs students to place their hands on their bodies and uses visualisation of everyday movements such as "standing at a bus queue" and "stepping on an escalator" to illustrate the shape of a movement. The chair technique offers upper movement solutions for the students. Anne states:

"There is a more casual aspect to the teaching practice. Already I am getting good and mindful body positions. I will get them to change the collapsed chest position many do when sitting on a chair to an elongated spine. The upper body movement is very easy because the lower body isn't trying to help. We can do vertical movement with the shoulders, horizontal movement we can do diagonal and circles of the chest." (2010)

The attention to detail and the care taken in class to promote safe dance technique references the Hilal tradition. Anne's version places more emphasis on nurturing students and providing the tools to generate physical self-awareness and technical accuracy. This attention to detail extends to the visual impact of movements like the chest shimmy (in which the breasts move freely). Anne mentions the engagement of pectoral muscles: "This is what bras do and we have forgotten how to engage them." In answer to a requirement from the more voluptuous students to lessen the impact of mobile breasts in action, Anne proposes:

“[to] minimise it [breast movement], being very voluptuous and being respectful, and we also squeeze arms together to add more cleavage for those who want it. To control the movement, the expression is in the shoulder not the breasts, which are shielded by the arms. [She demonstrates liberal breast movement] A bit like Nagwa Fouad in the 1960s and there is nothing wrong with that though some women are not liberated enough to be able to do that.” (2010)

Her commentary includes Nagwa Fouad, a famous Belly Dancer from the 1960s, and the gendered issues of “liberation” through movement of the breasts. Her reference to past Egyptian Belly Dancers identifies Anne’s practice with the idealised Golden Era of Egyptian Belly Dance (1940-1970s). Anne has never travelled to Egypt. Hilal referred to practitioners like Fouad as exponents of an Egyptian Raqs Sharqi aesthetics and ideology. Anne’s tacit knowledge of the women attending her classes concerning issues related to body-image, confidence and freedom of expression represents her teaching approach, one that caters for a spectrum of women under her matriarchal dance teaching guidance and nurturing skills.

Another interesting characteristic of Anne’s teaching is found in private notes concerning her own learning and theorising of the Hilal tradition. Anne’s notes capture elemental qualities of earth, air, water and fire to illustrate the kinaesthetic qualities of the movement practice. Hip movement, according to Anne’s elemental theory, is represented by the earth, and strong percussive use of the hips, fire. Anne theorises that larger dancers have a lot of earth. By contrast slim women have little earthiness and more air elemental qualities to their dancing practice. In her workshops Anne encourages students to visualise the lower body as the earth, heavy and solid, the arms as the air and the undulating flow of the abdomen in relationship to the movement in either hips or shoulders as the element of water. The watery, emotional element is referred to again when expressing the soulfulness of a Nai taqasim (flute) or Oud taqasim¹¹¹ (an

¹¹¹ Taqasim is the Arabic name given to an instrumental solo. During a performance of traditional Baladi songs it is common practice for the band leader to allow an instrumentalist a solo spot where they can improvise over the traditional melody,

Arabic guitar similar in structure to a European medieval lute). Anne uses water analogies to encourage emotional connections to the instrumental solos. The elemental approach, with reference made to both Arabic and Hellenistic female archetypes¹¹², illustrates the woman-centred ideological underpinning to Anne's knowledge and teaching practice. In interview Anne identifies several interests in alternative health, well being and psychology:

"I have been doing Astrology for thirty years and Tarot for twenty-five years. So I have always [been] interested in these and I was always interested in psychology. I am a qualified masseuse. I have worked a lot with Haringey Health Service and I have been sponsored by the National Lottery. As a result of the work I have done I have been approached by psychotherapists asking me to work with people with severe trauma cases, with a view to how this dance can help them. It answers my desire to do deeper work and work with people on these projects." (2010)

The combination of Hellenistic-Arabic female archetypes to visualise a Belly Dancing-Self refers to her own Mediterranean past and provides authority for a role conducting woman-centred dance activities as a female-night-club-impresario.

Anne teaches Baladi style Belly Dance, inherited from the Hilal triptych of Baladi, Sha'abi and Classical. Baladi is an older woman's dance; one in which experience and skill are transmitted through improvisation and movement virtuosity, in place of youthful appearance. The Baladi repertoire includes lyrical movement, percussive movement and the display of charisma and

displaying their virtuosity and musical invention. The Nay taqsim is characteristically haunting and the Oud taqsim light and dappled in nature.

¹¹² Hellenistic female archetypes include mythical characters like Diana, Hera, Minerva and other female goddesses, these goddess archetypes are embedded in western astrology practice, and also figure in Anne's childhood spent in Greek Cyprus. The Arabic female archetypes she references are from Ancient Egypt like Isis, Hathor and also contemporary modern archetypes found in Egyptian film etc. These female characters have been described by Hilal and Katrina Robinson in newsletters and other publications which describe rural female archetypes such as Dall'ua (playful woman), Ma'alimah (boss woman), Alma (learned or wise-woman) and Ya Walla or Ya Wadd (tomboy), sourced from the *Hilal School of Raqs Sharqi Newsletter* (October, 1994, Third Issue): pp2-3.

personality. Invested in the Baladi¹¹³ movement is life-experience and movement-craft. In a workshop at the NADA live music event in Nottingham (February, 2012), Anne directs students to the different musical phrases, emphasising a variety of movements complementing different rhythm sections. According to Robinson, writing for Hilal's newsletter in her article *The Birth of Baladi*, the interwoven musical and dance phrasing found in the Baladi repertoire is distinctive characteristic, she states:

The ten-part music and dance repertoire known as 'Achra Baladi' was established as a distinctive form and style. Part of its distinctiveness lies in the importance of improvisation: the music is improvised around the set ten-part structure, and the dance leads the musicians in the Baladi taqasim, which consists of variations on a theme taken up by different instruments in turn [with the dancer]. (Ibid, 1994):pp1-2

It was clearly noted to the attendees certain movements complement specific rhythms. The codes and conventions provided by early-Hilal tradition and Anne's prescriptive approach continue the non-democratic teaching style of Hilal. Within this prescriptive style of teaching and movement demonstration Anne exhibits a maternal, caring and all-knowing persona, representing a matriarchal leadership rooted in Golden Era Egyptian Raqs Sharqi certainty and reaching for a universal female truth in English Belly Dance tradition.

6.2.2 Caroline Afifi

¹¹³ Several Hilal sponsored articles in her various newsletters over a period of fifteen years detail the origins, history and development of the Baladi musical and dance form. Katrina Robinson, an accredited Raqs Sharqi Society teacher, in her article 'The Birth of Baladi' in the *Hilal School of Raqs Sharqi Newsletter* (October, 1994) describes a changing social and cultural landscape which saw the creation of Baladi music and dance in Egypt during an era of post-colonial rural migration to the cities. Robinson states: "Baladi has its origins in the old rhythms, dances and songs of the countryside. The word 'Baladi' itself, meaning 'native', or 'belonging to the country', refers to both the rural roots and the down-to-earth qualities of the dance and music" (1994, 1). She describes over a period of several decades the new technological and cultural changes that saw the introduction of western instruments and influences. The music components includes traditional Egyptian instruments like the "doff (frame drum), mazhar (large frame drum with metal cymbals), ney (flute) and tabla (waisted drum)" with the introduction and new sounds of "the concertina, keyboard-accordion, the saxophone, clarinet and trumpet" (Ibid, 1).

As identified in chapter five, Caroline Afifi's Belly Dancing-Self is the female-working-class-reality. One of the clearest examples of Caroline's Belly Dancing-Self being performed is in her selection of Sha'abi movement. Sha'abi is a term used in Egypt to describe a particular form of music in which musicians play high energy, politically astute songs about urban street life, with catchy verses and melodies. Sha'abi dance, alongside the working-class roots of the music, is a dance found amongst the working-classes of urban Egypt, characteristically flat-footed, unrefined movement with a low centre of gravity, constant undulation of the abdominals and a loose gait. The gyration of the hips is used satirically to produce innuendo and provoke shock. For example there is the strumming of the guitar movement in which the dancer imitates playing the guitar (also references a woman pleasuring herself).

Caroline regularly teaches the Sha'abi moves in workshops around the country. In a workshop held at the Belly Dance Congress (2009) and another held at JOY (2010) Caroline shares the floor space with the students, presenting clusters of new movements encountered from her regular visits to Egyptian nightclubs in Cairo. She plays one song throughout the workshop¹¹⁴, played on a loop, from recent live recordings of new Sha'abi music. The workshop material includes demonstrations of new movements witnessed in the nightclubs along with colourful anecdotes describing "characters" and "star performers" from these clubs. The non-hierarchical use of the space in relationship to her students represents a democratic teaching ideology inherited from the Buonaventura tradition. The inclusion of anecdotes narrating the lives of individuals found in Egypt reinforces this meritocratic ideology. By contrast, the "warts and all"

¹¹⁴ At the Belly Dance Congress (2009) Caroline played a recording of live Sha'abi music from in an Egyptian nightclub, I do not have the name of the musicians or song. However, another example of the music she uses is "Si Abdou" by Sami Ali Saher Hamdi, which she considers to be vintage Sha'abi from the 1970s. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T_AyyvwUx3M&list=PLB9C8A418A78B9F20 for an example of Caroline performing Sha'abi to "Si Abdou" in Liverpool, 2010 [last accessed 7th Sept 2012]

(interview, 2009) illustration of the life of a working-class dancer presenting sexually explicit dance content represents a tension between democracy and the gritty social reality encountered in Egyptian nightclubs. The underlying social commentary presented in Caroline's workshops illustrates the pragmatic concerns of the Belly Dance business in Egypt, which ultimately leads towards the sex-trade and a gritty street "Get your tits out" reality. In effect, Caroline presents the tension between western fantasy and Egyptian social realism, one that aligns her own Belly Dancing-Self towards the pragmatic concerns of a Belly Dance business woman.

The guitar strumming movement and other innuendo laden movements are presented to workshop attendees and provoke laughter in addition to disbelief. Caroline demonstrates the use of an open-legged stance, one in which the legs are placed further than hip-distance apart. The hip is thrust and vigorously shimmied from one side to the other, and differs considerably from the more contained hip shimmy of other styles of Belly Dance. Caroline instructs dancers to be loose and relaxed in the movement, which emphasises the use of a low centre of gravity in the movement. Another surprising movement is the bum shimmy, one that differs from the usual hip and Modern Cairo style shimmy (both movements are executed from an upright posture, containing the vibration effect to just the hips and the lower abdomen). The bum shimmy is an exaggerated shimmy (shake) of the buttocks, drawing the viewer's attention to the rear, away from the hips and lower abdominals. Caroline humorously labels this movement: "The bouncy bum one" (2009). Caroline demonstrates the vigorous wobbles in her buttocks to the amusement of the students, instructing them to shift their weight to the back of the heel, relaxing the lumbar and bouncing the knees hard. She instructs the workshop attendees to "Let it all hang out.....this can get very tiring" (2009). All these movements present a matter-of-fact reality concerning the Belly Dance technique of the Sha'abi dancer. The self-pleasuring, open-legged presentation

with pelvic tilt and the bouncing bum illustrate the working reality of low class Egyptian Belly Dancers, a reality in which Belly Dance performance is found alongside the sex-industry.

A distinctive aspect to Caroline's teaching practice is the numerous seminars presented at local and regional festivals. For example, at Majma in Glastonbury (2007) Caroline presented a brief history of Belly Dance in Cairo, highlighting the social and working conditions of the nightclub dancers from the 1970s to 1990s. At the Northern Arabic Dance Association AGM (2011) in Liverpool Caroline presented a seminar tracing the existence of Egyptian nightclubs alongside the five star hotel nightclubs, detailing the differences in nightclub culture, social structure and its resistance to revolutionary change post-Arab Spring 2011. The resilience of the Egyptian nightclubs – the majority of tourist nightclubs along the Al Ahram street were burnt to the ground – to political change and religious censorship and their relative longevity since early twentieth century reinforce Caroline's assertion that Sha'abi represents the Egyptian street life reality.

Her intellectual and political investment in retelling the Sha'abi Belly Dance narrative promotes Caroline's tours of Egypt. These tours with the working title "From Oriental to Sha'abi" guides English Belly Dance students away from the tourist nightclubs frequently used by other Belly Dance tours of Egypt, towards the inconspicuous Egyptian nightclub frequented by Egyptians. Students join in the social and cultural activities of the clubs, and witness Caroline mingling with the locals, speaking with nightclub owners on first name terms and being much-admired as she takes a Sha'abi dance turn on the Egyptian night club stage. Current practice includes raising money at the Casino El Layl event held in Liverpool then to take the funds – in cash – out to Egypt and encourage tour participants to hand out the cash to the needy in post-revolutionary Egypt. These Sha'abi tours of Belly Dance contextually frame Caroline's Sha'abi-working-

class-reality and reinforce her authority as the self-legitimizing inheritor of the Egyptian Sha'abi tradition.

6.2.3 Siouxsie Cooper

From the findings presented in chapter five the clearest demonstration of my unruly-female-performance-artist Belly Dancing-Self can be found in the variety of workshops I give to offer a diversity of Belly Dance styles, a feature of the Buonaventura tradition. A current style is the Baba Koram, technically not Belly Dance¹¹⁵, but a form of popular urban dance found in Iran/Persia. It is commonly referred to as the Persian cross-dressing gangster dance. The movement found in the Baba Koram dance varies, from the use of the hips, to shoulder shrugs and ornamental movement of the arms and hands. The costume worn for Baba Koram includes a suit and trilby. The trilby hat along with scarf and braces provide visual interest and prop with which to extend movements of the arms and head. When teaching the Baba Koram (JOY 2012, Derby 2011) I emphasise the “attitude” of the dancer within the character of the Baba Koram. My advice to students contemplating a Baba Koram performance is to play with the satirical content¹¹⁶ and interact with audience members. The taught movement includes the use of the thumb signal (the Persian equivalent of a rude V sign) and several intricate isolations and comedic vignettes, like the grinding of the hips, juggling the breasts and throwing an imaginary breast over one shoulder, kicking it and catching the breast, sliding the head from side to side,

¹¹⁵ The Baba Koram is an Iranian/Persian popular dance which I have fused with my Belly Dance practice.

¹¹⁶ When I refer to the use of satire in the Baba Koram, I talk to my students about the cross-dressing, the humorous use of gesticulation and exaggerated facial expressions. The dance is characterised by the use of angular and assertive movement, direct eye-contact, the miming of moustache curling, beer swigging and penis swinging. All of which are performed for the hilarity of the audience, the satire is both obvious and nuanced. In the performance there is a running commentary between performer and audience concerning the absurdity and defiant act of a woman dressed in male-drag. Humour is an important constituent of the Baba Koram, I would also argue, it is a significant ingredient in most Middle Eastern dance forms.

moving the bottom lip from side to side and thrusting the pelvis forward on each step, with a hand signal to the side of the hip comically representing an erect and then a flaccid penis. The gestural content of the Baba Koram movement represent the unruly joke-telling and play found in my unruly performance-Self. The mix of gender roles in costume, movement and gesture all help to present explicit sexualised zones of the body, supporting the feminist and comedic commentary of my narratives of authenticity.

A common feature of my teaching practice is the use of a variety of dance techniques and somatic studies incorporated into the teaching of the movement. Regular techniques include Alexander Technique, to lengthen the back, and techniques used to open and lower the shoulder line, connecting the shoulders with the lumbar. I use a technique to lower dance students' centre of gravity; it incorporates pair work, with students massaging each other's sacrum and placing a warm hand on the coccyx. The students walk with their partner's warm hand placed on the coccyx, eventually releasing the dancer and allowing her to move freely. The effect produces a low centre of gravity, students experience a weightiness and paradoxically an endless supply of energy. In the classroom I apply this knowledge to the scissor-walk, rooted in Hilal tradition, and also found in the dance work of Egyptian artists like Fifi Abdou. The spine is a key feature of this technique. With the coccyx engaged I demonstrate the use of the hip sliding side to side when walking and the inclination of the thoracic spine (alternating with the right foot forward, the dancer twists the thoracic towards the right foot etc), which in turn produces a swagger-like walk common to both Hilal technique and Egyptian dance promenading. The Baba Koram teaching ideology is permissive and feminist. There is also an aspect of rigor and body-centred investigative application of Pilates, Alexander Technique, Yoga and other techniques to encourage accurate polycentric execution and ephebism.

Egypt is, as many commentators and scholars neglect, a country located on the African continent¹¹⁷. Consequently, I refer to Dixon-Gottschild's (1996) understanding of the Africanist presence in Belly Dance. It also draws from my own training in West African dance. I am in agreement with Gore's observation that "West Africans dance with precision, a verve, and an ingenuity that no other race [region of Africa] can show" (1949, 213). For example, the pioneering work of Africanist dance lexicologist Mabougou¹¹⁸ recognises and identifies a movement instigator, kinetic transfer and recoil with which to identify key movement transfers and build complex Congolese dance steps. I apply Mabougou's technique to my own teaching practice. Students are taught key technical concepts, from weight shift, the release of movements through the knees, to the hips found in the Egyptian Belly Dance lexicon. Controversially, I teach footwork, a common occurrence in West African dance but arguably not so prevalent in Egyptian Belly Dance. I argue that footwork is present in the Egyptian Belly Dance lexicon. It is found in travelling movements and the body's relationship to the floor. Footwork is not found in Caroline's and Anne's movement teaching. They emphasise the transfer of weight through the hips to the feet and floor, whereas I emphasise the act of placing the feet on the floor to produce movement through the feet to the knees and hips, where the feet are the instigator and kinetic transfer of the movement. There is an Africanist presence in my movement teaching that contrasts with other practitioners' work, and it evidences past dancing traditions and methods

117 Africa is a large continent and Egypt is located on the Saharan north eastern edge. Due to its size and diverse socio-religious and cultural demographic I am not suggesting here that the dance culture found in Egypt is reduced into a broad definition of African dance. What I am suggesting is there is an Africanist presence in the Belly Dance movement lexicon. For example particular pelvic movements relate to those found in Senegalese, Ugandan and Moroccan dances. There is a strong use of polycentrism and an emphasis on *ephebism* (soulfulness) over technical virtuosity etc.

118 Zab Mabougou presented workshops in London and around the UK during the late 1990s and early 2000s. She is based in Toronto, Canada and runs the contemporary African dance ensemble Nyata Nyata and writes extensively on her LO KE TO teaching technique.

beyond Hilal and Buonaventura, in addition to offering the more diverse styles, experience and body knowledge of inherent Africanist aesthetics found in Egyptian Belly Dance.

An important narrative of authenticity has been my guided tours to Egypt, my frequent visits to Egypt, a lengthy romantic and business relationship with an Egyptian man and conducting interviews with Egyptian and non-Egyptian Belly Dance practitioners living in Cairo for several years. This information I have disseminated in published articles in the trade magazines and workshops. I present anecdotes¹¹⁹ from interview material and my own experiences of dancing in Egypt informally. In conjunction with academic research conducted at Dartington College of Art and the development of teacher-training work in the English Belly Dance community my status as a “guru” or an academically sanctioned expert in the field is self-confirmed.

6.3 Narration of Belly Dance performances

Where movement and teaching practices provide the detail of the Belly Dance content and knowledge transferred by each practitioner to their students, Belly Dance performance work presents an opportunity to articulate in performance their Belly Dancing-Selves. Workshop, teaching and movement practice is transmitted to Belly Dance students, Belly Dance performance is transmitted to both students and wider audiences. Each practitioner produces solo, group and in some cases dance theatre and live art performance experimentation with Belly

¹¹⁹ The anecdotes I present include meetings with old Cairo Belly Dance stars, frequent visits to nightclubs and dancing experiences in villages, towns and cities. An example has been my experience of dancing with the village women of El Barat, on the west bank of Luxor, during a wedding party. The men sit in rows facing the musicians on a trailer. The eight strong band squeeze onto a tractor trailer and play all night long. The women usually sit away from the men, in a corner, clapping and ululating. Young men gather around the musicians and form dancing groups of four to six. They dance in lines, holding hands and singing songs for long periods of time. Infrequently, the women assemble, and circle each other. They encourage younger female dancers into the centre of the circle to perform, whilst the older women surround them to “protect” them. I had an opportunity to dance with both the men and the women. This freedom was afforded me because of my foreigner “She doesn’t know any better” status. I was also an interesting attraction which would have provided gossip for the village for at least a month if not more.

Dance content. Over the last decade all three practitioners have produced regular performances at local, regional and national level, including international performance work in Egypt, the USA and Europe. In this section I compare and contrast each practitioner's Belly Dance performances. In part, it is an illustration of the diversity in the field. Also – in line with the Hilal and Buonaventura chapter – I argue each practitioners work is defined by the others performance work. Not only does it define the individual but also it describes the larger community of Belly Dance practice in England.

6.3.1. Compared and contrasted English Belly Dance performances

Belly Dancing contexts

The earliest dance performances of Caroline and I were located in theatres, initially in collaboration with Buonaventura. The dance theatre performances of Belly Dance continued into our own separate endeavours, Caroline with *Café Medina* (2005) and *Sabrina* (2006) and myself with *Me and a Gun* (2001) and related theatre projects. Anne trained with Suraya Hilal, but did not feature in Hilal's elaborate group dance theatre performances that included *Colours of Cairo* (1992) and *Divine Rites* (1990). Anne's early performance work was found in collaboration with other London based dancers, generally Hilal trained, and with Arab musicians at private events or casually at London Arab clubs. Already tensions around performing on a western theatre stage and, as was the case with Anne, developing alliances and networks within the established Arab nightclub entertainment industry are evident in the practitioners' early performance choices and preferences. The contextualisation of each practitioner's Belly Dance work proved to be increasingly problematic.

By inheriting a Buonaventura theatrical tradition Caroline and I deconstructed western theatrical conventions in order to investigate the contextual framing of the dance. We separately, but similarly, experimented with site-specific, cross-cultural and participatory performance practice. Caroline devised an Anglo-Arab collaborative site-specific performance, *Café Medina* (Afifi, 2004), and I devised solo cross-cultural participatory performances, *Tea for Two* (Cooper, 2004) and performance/workshop *Enta Omri* (Cooper, 2005). *Café Medina* and *Tea for Two* both incorporated a café culture mise-en-scene experience for audience members. The Belly Dancers performed at floor level and mingled with the audience – a simulation of a form of Belly Dance performance found in restaurants across the country. The difference in Caroline’s *Café Medina* was the use of quadraphonic sound blasting the audience with tornado jets and simulating the bombing of the café, disrupting the calm atmosphere and pleasure of a Middle Eastern cafe. My *Tea for Two* performance simulated an English tea room, not the Middle Eastern café found in *Café Medina*, and my solo performance was one of a dancing, prancing, disruptive and chaotic waitress. The dancing of the waitress was Persian-dance inspired and the movements were exaggerated to incorporate transgressive waitress behaviour, including crushing cakes to my breast, spitting tea, scoffing cream and crawling on the floor. Even though both performances shared common characteristics on closer examination the differences present different uses for the dance. Caroline’s solo performance of a Belly Dancer in black fending off bullets spoke to the effect of war on the Middle Eastern female body, which was no longer languid and revelling in café small talk. The waitress in *Tea for Two* appeared, disappeared and disrupted audience eating patterns or crawled on the floor, the images and interactions random, unconnected but with a semblance of something otherworldly and excessive. Caroline’s message was direct whereas my message was perhaps more abstract and diffuse.

Throughout both performances the disruption of the audience's composure was a central aim, one in which the moving female body disrupted the initial Orientalist hedonism signalled by the scenery, and transformed it into a more sinister and brutal reality of females Belly Dancing to entertain and serve. Both examples represent an experimental process of leaving the Buonaventura tradition and related dance theatre convention and moving towards an engagement with unconventional dance theatre practices in search of a Middle Eastern realism and performative quality in the dancing (Goodman, 1993, 182-183). It could be argued that both Caroline and my attempts to remain within the milieu of the "art" in the dance meant we had to borrow from contemporary dance devices and theatre strategies. In effect, we were transporting another culture's dance form to an English performance context, with no cultural referent, in so doing losing its meaning in translation. We made several attempts to retrieve that meaning in our respective performance work. However, the most effective method of "performing" the meaning was in our teaching work, a performance arena that allows speaking, explanation and a process of understanding the meaning of the dance over time by our respective audiences. Performing Belly Dance on a western stage resulted in revealing the political and social situatedness of that "borrowed" dance in its new cultural home: in effect politicising the act of Belly Dancing in performance.

Anne's transition from a Hilal tradition, a tradition that failed to fulfil her performance potential, included co-founding joint performance opportunities with other "discarded" members of the Hilal tradition, which in turn attracted performance and enterprise opportunities with practitioners outside of the Hilal tradition. These early collaborative performances led towards the inception of Planet Egypt (2003), a project which included Anne's Hilal expertise and her in-

between status as a Hilal devotee rather than a Hilal protégé. Anne's side step towards creating and sanctioning her own dance stage and environment was the only logical solution.

This new mediatory role located in the burgeoning London Belly Dance community enabled Anne to devise a new role as female-night-club-impresario. The aims and objectives of Planet Egypt reference Raqs Sharqi training (see www.planetegypt.co.uk) and include the promotion of "quality" Belly Dance performance at Planet Egypt. Anne is located between and brokers different London-based Belly Dance communities, attracting everyone and excluding no-one. This narrative of authenticity is further reinforced by the references made to early London Arab nightclub culture in her biography, an Arab nightclub continuum spanning early years in Cyprus to encounters with the Arab musicians and Belly Dancers in London in the 1980s. A golden era of Arab nightclub experiences in conjunction with Hilal dance rigour are synthesised in the female-operated simulation of a Belly Dance nightclub (Planet Egypt), one that carries a notion of a golden English Belly Dancing past (Hilal tradition) whilst opening its doors to future English Belly Dancing hopefuls. Anne maintains a pseudo-Arab nightclub context in which the socialising, eating, and drinking frames the performer and remains the performance constant at a Planet Egypt Belly Dancing event.

Early films, images and publicity for each practitioner present Belly Dance performances concurrent with their attributing Buonaventura and Hilal traditions. The experimental and western theatre framing are consistent themes in the work of Caroline and myself, both inherited from the Buonaventura tradition. Caroline continued large-scale group performances and collaborative projects with other artists (in the majority, Arab artists), whereas I continued solo performance work and experimentation, outside the Belly Dance scene, within the walls of University dance and performance art tradition. My narrative of authenticity concerning an

academic affiliation and authentication of my work is consistent with the performances presented at University and continues the Buonaventura research-based Belly Dance performance practice (1989, 2009).

Caroline's working-class Sha'abi reality is found in the *Café Medina* (2004) performance, which demonstrates a defiance of Western invasion of Iraq. This performance marked a shift in Caroline's earlier dance theatre productions, from a Western representation and fascination with the dance, to a more Middle Eastern perception of the impact of Western imperialism on the Middle East. The political concerns of performing a Middle Eastern dance form figure in both the work of Caroline and myself. Where Caroline presents a protest I approach it with a more abstract method of unpacking and re-representing myself in the dance within the parameters of a University critical arts practice. Where Buonaventura tradition remained within the parameters of the theatre stage, Caroline and I expand the performance parameters beyond by incorporating new audiences. The "us and them" binary found in the Oriental paradigm underpinning Belly Dance is disrupted when we reconfigure ourselves in the Belly Dance trope by stunning our audiences into participating. Both performances (Caroline's *Café Medina* (2005) and my *Tea for Two* (2004)) demand audience participation. There was no choice when the tornado struck and when my waitress split, spat, threw food and sat with audience members at the table. The Belly Dance performance was no longer anxiety free spectatorship. The Belly Dancer performed up close, slipped into a grotesque and excessive interactive mode with her audience, the attempt to dislocate the audience from their comfortable Orientalist imagery complete. Caroline reports audience members hiding under the table, or running out of the room. In *Tea for Two* audience members refused eye-contact, laughed nervously and breathed a sigh of relief when it was over.

Withdrawing the Orientalist “safe” imagery brought with it a new antagonism and anxiety for which our Western audiences were not prepared and had no reference point.

Caroline suggests that in order to produce meaningful dance theatre in Belly Dance you have to re-educate your audience. In reference to audience responses to *Café Medina*, she states:

“The Belly Dancers in the audience hated it. Funnily enough, it was the artists and theatre people in the audience that couldn’t get enough of it, they loved it...[...]... You find this in the Belly Dance world. They all seem to have a way of thinking about the dance and the Middle East and that is that. I tried to make something that was relevant, relevant to what was happening out in the Middle East, but these Belly Dancers they don’t want to know. It’s quite depressing really when you think about it.” (interview 2009)

Likewise, I experienced a similar struggle with the Belly Dance audiences in South Devon. For example, I devised an abridged interpretation of Eve Ensler’s (2001) *Vagina Monologues* for a regional performance platform¹²⁰ (Café Cairo 2005). It provoked strong negative reactions from the audience. Admittedly, the association of Belly Dance and Ensler’s *Vagina Monologues* was tangential¹²¹ but the search for a western feminist contextualisation of the dance was evident. A similar dichotomy was expressed by both practitioners attempting to bring their personal political positions and interests together with their Belly Dance practice. Both practitioners took middle class, white feminist positions that sought a performance solution beyond the Orientalist paradigm, one that simultaneously displayed and exposed the contradictions found in the western theatrical tradition. Even when applying new post-Buonaventura experimental techniques, it still

120 Café Cairo was a biannual Belly Dance event attracting teachers and students from all over Devon, Somerset and Cornwall. The performance of the *Vagina Monologues* in 2004 featured actresses from the local arts college and it was performed during the interval.

121 Dr Cameron Cartiere, Masters Degree tutor at DCA, remonstrated with me for taking a production of the *Vagina Monologues* to the regional Belly Dance event, stating: “What were you thinking? Your job as a cultural event organiser is to think these things through, it was a mistake to mix these two performances – I will be surprised if anyone comes back next year.” (2005)

remained a case of “revitalising” the Belly Dance with a “renewed” feminist reading and re-representation of it.

Encountering Egyptian and Arab Belly Dancing contexts

Another key feature occurring in the critical incidents of Caroline and myself was that by 2005 we were regular visitors to Egypt, both engaged in long term relationships with Egyptian men and spending two or three months at a time in Cairo, Luxor and the Sinai – not together although our timelines are similar. My own critical incidents describe a new phase in dance training, one that incorporated the Modern Cairo Style Belly Dance technique taught by Raqia Hassan. Caroline’s critical incidents include working as a lighting designer at local theatres in Cairo. Our initial search for a western feminist narrative of authenticity in Belly Dance performance changed in response to regular contact with Belly Dance performers and trainers in Egypt.

Caroline describes the change:

“I started to see the dancing differently, see the women who were dancing and also the music. Before I had only a slight understanding of the words in songs, when I lived in Egypt you lived and breathed the music every day, in taxis, shops, coffee shops at friends houses it was totally different. I was also bringing up my son and family and living in an apartment you see a very different side to Egypt when you live away from the touristy places.” (interview, 2009)

Caroline admitted to dancing less and learning more about the social and cultural life of Egyptians. This both inspired her future dance theatre work *Sabrina* (2005) and troubled her identity as a Belly Dancer. I recollect visiting English Belly Dance practitioners Yasmina of Cairo and Sara Farouk during a prolonged visit in 2003. In conversation (2003), Yasmina described an interesting and colourful life as a professional Belly Dancer. By contrast, Sara elucidated on the political and social difficulties faced by Belly Dancers and the relatively small

amount of foreign dancers, who generally pay for the privilege to perform in Egypt and the majority Egyptian dancers who Belly Dance for economic reasons. Like Caroline, I found that living outside the tourist areas of Egypt, living with an Egyptian man and travelling as a white woman in Egypt changed my perspective on the dance dramatically. I too experienced an identity crisis, one that represented another contextual reading of Belly Dance beyond my initial readings of the Orientalist paradigm.

The London Arab nightclubs contextualisation of Belly Dance

Anne's experience of training in the Arab nightclubs includes references to the proper etiquette required. She reveals the pressures, even when not the assigned dancer, to behave appropriately within the "closed" community of musicians, impresarios, dancers and audience members. She recalls:

"I sat quietly and courteously in the corner, near the musicians and I was polite. People referred to me as that nice English woman who can dance. To be honest I was not really that aware but I knew if I behaved in a certain way I could get into these clubs, get to know the musicians and the dancers. There was always a sexual frissant something that you kept at bay, so as to not get a reputation." (Interview 2010)

Anne's account makes it clear that a Belly Dancer, in whatever location, within the Arab nightclub context is a woman of a certain reputation. Anne discloses the fact that because she was not Arab she was not subject to every social and cultural rule pertaining to the conduct of an Arab Belly Dancer. Likewise Caroline reports a similar "difference" in expectations as she gets up to perform alongside the Sha'abi Belly Dancers in Egyptian nightclubs, and my own experience performing in Dahab, Sinai (a frontier town where young Egyptian men and European women often live together) saw a similar "excuse" and allowance made for my Belly Dance performances (2003-2004). It would appear that in the thick of the cultural and social

codes and conventions found both in Egypt and in the Arab nightclubs of London all three practitioners were made aware of the strict codes by which a “good” (relatively speaking) Belly Dancer may abide, and the fact that her western credentials offered permission to continue in her “liberated” western feminist ways – this still had to be sanctioned and was continuously appraised by musicians, other dancers and audience members alike. Regardless of their own politics, social position outside these dancing contexts and artistic proclivities each practitioner encountered and was expected to negotiate their membership. The rules were dictated within Arab social norms and conventions – there was no alternative.

Re-inventing the Arab Nightclub experience in the 21st century

With reference to the education of English Belly Dance audiences, Anne continues the theme of codes and conventions laid down by the Hilal Raqs Sharqi tradition; one that took precedence over her own and other forms of Belly Dance. Hilal’s bloodline narrative concerning Egypt and the social conventions of what constitutes “quality” dancing authorised Anne’s enterprise endeavours. Nonetheless, the commercial pressure to maintain a thriving Belly Dance performance platform has demanded the entry of other Belly Dancers beyond the limitation of the Hilal tradition. By way of containing difference and possible breaches of the code, Anne positions herself within the Planet Egypt performance as the compere, the mediator and arbiter of Belly Dance taste. As compere she is able to address the audience, presenting an edited biography and narration of the next performer’s presentation. Anne suggests she is educating her audiences about the different forms of dance, the skill of the dance and the various narratives of authenticity each represents. Anne states:

“Planet Egypt is about educating our audiences. This dance is beautiful and it takes a lot of skill to do it well. Too often people think it is about putting on a fabulous dress and wafting around with veils. I am

there to help promote these dancers and put this dance in a good light. You know, our audiences see a lot of different types of [Belly] dancing and they are starting to realise how much effort goes into it.” (Interview 2010)

All three practitioners present various anecdotes concerning the negative public image of Belly Dance. They all refer to the Orientalist imagery and harem fantasy which each practitioner attempts to resist in different ways. Anne attempts to cajole and promote both the dancer and audience in a fashion she considers to be appropriate to the Arab nightclub culture. Anne’s role as compere provides a position from which to nurture and promote her standards and narratives of authenticity. Anne continues the Hilal tradition of control through mediation of the Arab presence in the dance. By contrast, Caroline as the performer, creator and narrator of the gritty urban reality of Belly Dance in Egypt continues her narrative of authenticity in which she is the mediator of Egyptian working class reality in Belly Dance. My own theatrical experiments within the confines of the University establishment promote my academic and alternative reading of the dance sanctioned by dance in the academy. Both Caroline and I continue to be the Belly Dancer performer, Anne takes a sideline position, one that encourages others to be the performer. It provokes the question: beyond the Orientalist framing and contextualisation of the dance what is possible for a western, white, middle class female Belly Dance performer?

For Anne it is clear the Orientalist contextualisation is always present in the framing of the dance. Beyond the physical framing (i.e. music, lighting, costuming, Bedouin tent interior) the female-impresario actively and continuously negotiates every Belly Dance performed moment. Even though the female impresario role appears peripheral, Anne is emphatically at the heart of the performance experience for both performer and audience. For Caroline attempts to dramatise contemporary Egyptian Belly Dance lives which portray an image of Belly Dance beyond the

Orientalist fantasy is rejected by Belly Dancers but embraced by other dance and artistic communities. She has a choice, to stay or return. Since *Sabrina* Caroline has rejected dance theatre in favour of building her own Belly Dance venue (Casino El Layal) – in homage to Badia Masabni’s Casino Opera. Caroline’s narrative of authenticity is fixed on the “originating” Egyptian experience of Belly Dance. My work forced the issue of performance context. The resultant separation of my scholarly and University dance work from my Belly Dance in the English community presents a split dance reality, one in which the dance struggles to fit the context. To separate or resist the Orientalist paradigm inherent in the Belly Dance trope, the performer risks becoming a pariah, with no reference point from which the Belly Dance performance can be recognised.

Working inside and outside the Hilal and Buonaventura traditions

Caroline continued working with Buonaventura until the mid-2000s, I continued my own practice in rural Devon, developing a small Belly Dance community into a thriving Belly Dance industry and Anne continued to teach and perform alongside her Hilal trained peers and for Arab musicians. Where Caroline, early in her dance training, changed from Hilal to Buonaventura; I changed allegiances in early 2000s towards a Hilal tradition, and my performances reflect this change through costuming and styling¹²². One of Buonaventura’s explanations for Caroline’s recruitment for *Mimi La Sardine* was Caroline’s strong dance training under Hilal (interview 2009). My search for better training in movement and Caroline’s search for a more expressive and theatrical development of her work led us in opposite directions. It remains that Hilal’s

122 I used the Hilal triptych of Sha’abi, Classical Sharqi and Urban Baladi, wore long double circular skirts and body covering blouses.

movement lexicon underpins both our work, and it is even more strongly present in Anne's training. Hilal's standardised lexicon continues to be present through our own teaching practices, the use of the spine, the relaxed gait, scissor walk and weight shift from right to left.

A revealing conversation with Juliana Brustik from the RSS recounts the process of the Hilal dance codification:

Juliana: "Jo [Josephine Wise] and I would go home together and try to work out what we had learnt in Suraya's class"

Siouxsie: "Suraya didn't teach you then?"

Juliana: "No, no, no she would show us [demonstrates with her body a movement], she did not explain it. We had to look at our own bodies and work it out from there. Remember she was showing us, she wasn't great at explaining but she was excellent at moving, we all wanted to get there. I had to find out how it worked and so did Jo. It was good fun."

Siouxsie: "I thought Suraya broke down the movements, you know, from the spine, to the feet and the weight shift etc"

Juliana: "She wasn't very good at that, we did it. Later we worked with Suraya on the Hilal School of Raqs Sharqi helping her work out how to teach it, building the school, the levels and training. Jennifer Carmen was important and so were a few other people. Let's say Suraya was not the best organiser, but she was a brilliant dancer."(interview 2008)

The Hilal movement codification and standardisation process was in fact a collaborative effort by her English students who required more instruction than was on offer. Later the Hilal dance lexicon was taught by the RSS (Juliana Brustik is a leading exponent), and they incorporated Pilates technique and the breakdown of each movement into modalities (pendulum, scissors, spiral etc). This was the only standardised movement lexicon available for English practitioners – who are used to a form of dance rigour inherited from our Ballet pasts (Anne and myself had taken ballet in our youth). Obviously the encounter with a different form of dance found in Egypt by Caroline and myself and in the Arab nightclubs by Anne was going to disrupt our

notions of Hilal dance lexicon certainty. Even with the changes made due to travel to Egypt, the Hilal lexicon remains the root of English Belly Dance poise, especially the continued use of weight shift from right to left through the body. All three practitioners have re-focused their loci from England to an Egyptian Belly Dance tradition. However, it remains that the Hilal tradition, in various guises, continues to be present in each practitioner's Belly Dancing-Self in performance.

Performing Arab Cultural ambassadorship

Anne continues to present Baladi performances to live music, working within the Arab community in London. She has presented dancing to live music programmes for the Northern Arabic Dance Association (2011). Caroline presented solo performances for the Yemini community in Liverpool, which led to the co-founding of the Liverpool Arab Arts Festival (LAAF) in the early 2000s, in which Caroline was instrumental in building relations with the Arab community through dance, inviting artists like Buonaventura to teach and perform. My own work features the development of a sub-community of Belly Dance students in Devon and presenting performances for schools, community groups and dance organisations within a predominantly white middle class audience. Anne continues the Arab live music theme found in her narrative of authenticity, whereas Caroline's work in the wider social environs of Liverpool to improve relations between Arabs and non-Arabs in Liverpool through dance and other art endeavours is a crucial aspect of her social realism narrative. Through my performance work I brokered relations with the South Asian Dance community in Plymouth and Cornwall against Racism, via the University, and other sub-genre groups including Gothic Tribal Belly Dance and Burlesque dance groups. Where Caroline and Anne negotiated their Belly Dance identities within large metropolitan and specifically Arab communities, rural Devon provided English

eccentricity and representation of other minority groups, aligning my performance work with Arab culture purely because there was no other reference point.

The mediation of Arab culture through Belly Dance performance activities features in each practitioner's narrative of authenticity. Caroline states:

“I work for Taste of Cairo¹²³. She [Tracey Gibbs] gets me to go to the Arab events because I think she knows I know how to deal with them. She has the “lookers” for the corporate events [young pretty novice Belly Dancers] and then the “old ones” like me, long in the tooth [laughter], who can cope with different reactions and audience getting up and dancing with you.” (2011)

Awareness of becoming an ambassador for Arab culture within the English culturally diverse landscape is a recurring characteristic found in the development of each practitioner's Belly Dancing-Self. The public persona of an arbiter of tasteful Belly Dance (Anne White), culturally appropriate Belly Dance performance (Caroline Afifi) or talented “Arabness”¹²⁴ in the execution of the movements (Siouxsie Cooper) indicates the necessity and pressure to perform “culturally” or be an embodiment of that “culturalness” by association (Ness 2004). The fact that each practitioner had specific narratives of authenticity leading towards an English Belly Dance tradition has not detracted from the alleged representation of *Arabness* therein. Anne explains, “I pay abeyance to the culture, this dance is nothing without the culture” (2010), an interesting position when Anne has never travelled to Egypt, but her command of the language (both spoken and with her body in the dance, alongside her detailed knowledge of the old and new dance

123 Taste of Cairo is a Belly Dance agency operated by Tracey Gibbs in Manchester providing Belly Dance performers for private events, including corporate and local government showcases.

124 Performing for a mainly black audience at University College Falmouth for the “Cornwall Against Racism” foundation several audience members quizzed me over my “genuine” feeling for the music. For example I was asked if I had some form of Arab ancestry and “where did I get that rhythm?” These comments were given in response to the performance of folkloric, Baba Koram and classical Sharqi Belly Dance (I was immersed in my Raqs Sharqi training at the time) in 2007.

music repertoire) gives the impression that she is immersed in the culture, specifically the London Arab community. Caroline's immersion includes marriage to an Egyptian, being fluent in Egyptian Arabic and owning an apartment in Cairo. My own connection is through linguistic knowledge – not as extensive as Anne or Caroline – via my research and travels in Upper Egypt and through association with the tourist industry in the Sinai, Egypt. The reciprocal relationships when negotiating cultures, both Egyptian and English, in performance and literally as impresarios, in marriage and as tour operators, are specific narratives of authenticity that align our performance work with Egypt. The parameters of what is performed as a Belly Dancer, and the scope of different contexts and audiences, has redefined the roles of each practitioner and their Belly Dancing-Selves, changing them from what Hilal and Buonaventura first negotiated. There is an increased awareness of the cultural diversity issue among English Belly Dancers. Through the act of performing Belly Dance in large multi-ethnic cities (like Liverpool and London) the Belly Dancer becomes a representative for the Arab Diaspora in England.

Belly Dance performances post-2003

During the year 2003 significant changes occurred in all three practitioner's performance practices. I travelled to Egypt to gain employment in an Egyptian nightclub, Caroline moved her family to live semi-permanently to Egypt, and Anne created the Planet Egypt Belly Dance nightclub experience in London. All three physical and entrepreneurial moves witnessed a break from previous Hilal and Buonaventura traditions and a move towards an Egyptian focus, literally in their life-styles and figuratively in their self-publicity. By the mid-1990s the majority of the Arab nightclubs in London had closed, there was an increased competitive population of Belly Dancers in the capital and Hilal had departed England. Anne candidly admits, "I was no longer thirty years old." The market demand for youth over experience edged Anne out of the Belly

Dance market and the Arab community too. In response to life and death changes in her private life, and an increased frustration with Buonaventura-style dance theatre, Caroline moved her family to Egypt. At the end of my degree course the opportunity to produce my own project in which contextual analysis was the primary objective and moving to Egypt to pursue a Belly Dance career, presented an ideal solution. The movement away by each practitioner from their initial training and tradition, to follow travel opportunities to Egypt and or build a business around the theme of Egyptian night clubs, presented a new contextual understanding of the dance and greater economic opportunities.

Caroline recounts various experiences living in Egypt in which the social and cultural life of raising children, running tours of Egypt and seeking out new dance experiences and training presented a new perspective on the lives of Egyptian women and Belly Dancers.

“A lot of people go out to Egypt and they don’t get it. They come back to the UK and tell us they have learnt from this dancer and that dancer. And then you look at their dancing and honestly there is no change. I found myself doing less dance and just learning to live in Egypt. You know life in Egypt is very different to here. The pace of life is slower, there is the heat, the noise, the large numbers of people and it’s very different socially to here in the UK..[.].An Egyptian Belly Dancer is a social outcast in Egypt, no family would invite her around to their house for tea, she has a very hard life..[.].I was not attracted to that life but I discovered Egyptian nightclubs where the dancing is completely different.” (2009)

Following her extended visit to Egypt Caroline devised the social realist dance theatre piece *Sabrine* (2006), in which the individual stories of Egyptian Belly Dancers working in the various nightclubs on Al Ahram¹²⁵ street were recounted. The dominant narrative structure of *Sabrine*

125 Al Ahram is the long street running from downtown Cairo out towards the pyramids. The district is commonly referred to as El Giza. There are nightclubs on either side of the street populated by Belly Dancers, live bands and a variety of wealthy clientele, including rich Gulf Arabs and Western tourists. Unfortunately, during the Arab Spring (2011) most of these nightclubs

was social commentary and intrigue. The dance performances were secondary to the lives, loves, rivalries and wider social and cultural upheaval narrated throughout the performance of *Sabrina*. Anne has never travelled to Egypt. Planet Egypt locates her work not just in the locality of Egypt but also in the universe of rising global interest in Belly Dance. The nightclub simulation presents an alternative to theatre performances and small regional haflahs. Anne co-ordinates the Planet Egypt nightclub to attract international artists, including Belly Dancers and musicians. Therefore her contacts, networks, reputation and ability to attract different groups of artists within and without the Raqs Sharqi enterprise are key features of her work and identity. Planet Egypt recreates the late nights of the Arab club atmosphere of yesteryear London, but in which Belly Dancers are now the main co-ordinators, owners and promoters of the event, providing an impresario opportunity for Anne. As for my own experiences in Egypt, during 2003 foreign Belly Dancers were banned. In response my project changed into a research project, interviewing Egyptian Belly Dancers, banned foreign Belly Dancers and audience members, and travelling the country to film social dances, Belly Dance performances and folkdance ensembles. The difficulties in finding performance work brought about a change in my narrative of authenticity, from aspiring Egyptian Belly Dance performer to scholar and field researcher of Egyptian Belly Dancers.

By not continuing with either Hilal or Buonaventura training and instead engaging in performance work there was both the freedom and isolation of continuing my Belly Dance practice in Devon. The influencing factors found in Devon were the students themselves and their image of themselves as Belly Dancers. The Orientalist paradigm I sought to disrupt

have been ransacked and burnt to the ground. The only nightclubs continuing are the transient Egyptian nightclubs, nightclubs with no fixed address, but with an impresario/owner who promotes Sha'abi Belly Dancing for an Egyptian audience.

perpetually reincorporated itself through my commercial interests as a dance instructor. Students demanded the newest fashion in music, costuming and group dancing – all of which were in conflict with my own dance training in Egypt. By travelling and performing in Egypt this led to sanctioning my narrative of authenticity over consumer demands and regional competitors. It also saw the demise of my regular classes and continued enterprise in the field.

6.4 Recent performance work

The most recent performance work of each practitioner includes regular solo performance appearances at regional, national and even international events. Caroline, Anne and I feature as guest artists at different events nationwide and also feature at each other's events. I currently perform the Baba Koram, Upper Egyptian-inspired dance, classical and experimental dance, and a version of Baladi dance to the song *Tahtil Shibbak* at local and regional events like Planet Egypt (London, 2010), Casino El Layl (Liverpool, 2010), Banat Eshrouk events (Leeds, 2010) and Sahara Nights (Nottingham, 2011). Anne presented Baladi themed performances with recorded or live music. Anne rarely performs these days and I have used her compering of Planet Egypt as an example of her performance work. Caroline presents Sha'abi performances and occasionally performances of Oriental, Golden Era Egyptian Belly Dance (1940-1970s) and Baladi styles to recorded and live music. My performances include home-made costumes, audience interaction and character dances which provoke audience participation, and laughter and surprise, continuing the theme of my performance artist and unruly Belly Dancing-Self. Throughout the Planet Egypt event Anne approaches regulars and new audience members for informal conversations. She takes centre-stage with microphone and introduces the Planet Egypt ethos, the performers and extra local events. Throughout the night Anne discusses local and national Belly Dance concerns, introduces members of the audience to each other and extends

each performer's introduction with commentary and debate. The performance of compering the night is central to a Planet Egypt event. Anne performs her female-night-club-owning role to define proceedings and signify her insider knowledge and political power broking. Caroline wears Mamdouh Saalama costumes, the Egyptian Sha'abi dancer's costumier of choice. The Sha'abi performances are framed by the theatre stage at her own event in Casino El Layl and usually on the audience floor at other events like the Banat Eshorouk event in Leeds (2011). The dance content is a primary focal point, exhibiting new movements recently sourced from a visit to the Egyptian night clubs, along with the usual movement vocabulary of hip drops, circles and shimmies. Caroline extends the movement outwards by bending at the waist, she shimmies for extended periods of time, turning in circle formation, she uses hand gestures, a loose body oscillation and cheeky expression, representing the simple working-class credentials of her Belly Dancing-Self.

6.4.1 Signature performances

A closer examination of recent performance work observed and filmed during the years 2010-2012 provides an opportunity to analyse key signatures and characteristics present in each practitioner's performance practice. I have chosen Caroline's retro-Sha'abi performance to the 1970's Egyptian Sha'abi song *Si Adbou* performed at *Casino El Layl* (2010) and posted on youtube.com [last accessed April 2012], Anne White's performance to the Baladi Blues ensemble for the NADA event in Nottingham (2012) posted on youtube.com [last accessed April 2012], and my performances of Baba Koram at the Derby Iranian Cultural Event (2011), Nottingham Sahara Nights (2011) and at Bradford Jewel of Yorkshire festival (2012) available through Planet Egypt and Rachel Rafiefar youtube.com posts [last accessed April 2012]. In the case of my performance practice three examples are provided, to triangulate findings in an effort to avoid

partiality. Performances examined earlier in this chapter cover past performance practice. It is fair to assume that the most recent performances represent the closest definition and demonstration of each practitioner's current narratives of authenticity, thereby confirming or challenging each Belly Dancing-Self finding.

Anne White performing with the Baladi Blues Band in Nottingham, February 2012

The NADA funded event in Nottingham was organised in conjunction with a Nottingham based teacher and Belly Dance event organiser, Janet Rose. The evening was advertised in the NADA trade magazine, which emphasised the affordable opportunity for audiences to enjoy live Egyptian music played by the Baladi Blues band, and performances by skilled dancers. The venture was an opportunity for regional artists to perform with a select group of colleagues to live music, a very rare opportunity. These bands cost in excess of £1000 a night. Other locations receiving NADA funding include Doncaster and Edinburgh. Anne White was Janet's special guest teacher brought to Nottingham to perform for the Nottingham Belly Dance audience and to hold workshops on how to perform with live music the next day. In fact, NADA preferred a Northern county's based artists but Janet insisted on Anne White from London. Anne is one of the countries leading performers to live music, having had previous experience performing with Sheikh Taha, the accordionist, in his 80s, one of the key members of the band, and founder of Ashra Baladi.

The venue was in the Mapperley district of the city of Nottingham, and the event was held early February 2012, during a snow blizzard. The venue was a leisure centre, and the actual performance took place in a large modern function room, with a small proscenium theatre stage. The band was assembled on the stage, allowing for ample floor space, below the stage for the

performers to navigate. The audience was seated around the dance floor, creating a circle of chairs and tables. Belly Dance clothes, jewellery and henna painting vendors were positioned around the edge of the function room under direct lighting, while the main room was lit with dim lighting. A bar was open all night selling beverages and snacks. Janet also sold vegetarian and meat somosas during the interval. Janet's friend manned the entrance table, charging people £10 for entrance. The accompanying workshop with Anne the next morning was priced £15. Both prices are extremely reasonable – due to NADA funding - considering the cost and rarity of enjoying live music.

Several performers presented dance with the band. They included Clair McGregor, Tatiana Woolley, Diana Mehira, Sabrina Owen and Janet Rose. Each performer presented an Oriental style of dance and performed to songs like Aziza, Tamra Henne and Enta Omri. All performers wore professional Belly Dance costumes and each performer took it in turns to perform a solo dance piece to the live music. Anne performed twice, with two costume changes. Her last solo performance consisted of two songs played consecutively. She also directed the musicians on tempo, accents and repetition. Guy Schalom, the band leader and lead drummer, noted the following day that it is rare to play for an English dancer who can direct the band. Anne closed the performance section of the evening programme by inviting people onto the dance floor. The musicians continued for another half hour, and then recorded music was played until the end. It has to be noted that one of the musicians arrived near the close of the evening. He had spent over 20 hours travelling from Germany. Due to the snow he had been monumentally delayed, but the moment he arrived he took his coat off, opened his flute case and began to play.

As people left, the musicians began to assemble outside by the car and proceeded to smoke. They were scheduled to play for the workshop the next day and were booked into a hotel for the night.

Anne remained with me and other dancers whilst we waited for Janet to complete business with the venue manager, volunteers and vendors. Anne, several dancers, including Clair McGregor, the NADA representative and myself, decamped to Janet's house. The evening continued with drinking, talking, and heated dance debate until 5am in the morning. Anne had to teach at 11am the next morning, so it was decided that sleep was in order.

The workshop was held in a Ukranian run social club. This is Janet's usual monthly dance evening venue. The floor is wooden, the lighting bright and the workshops fully booked with over thirty five attendees. Anne presented herself in dance attire with Guy Schalom, the drummer of the Baladi Blues Band. Together they demonstrated and taught a joint workshop on the different rhythms, dance cues and changes a dancer could experience when working with live music.

Anne's performance begins with an entrance on the floor – the musicians are positioned on the stage – and she sweeps into the performance space holding a large veil. Her long blonde hair, rich make-up and dark blue diamante encrusted gown signify the entrance of a goddess-like woman. Her movements are slow and stately, using large sweeping movements of the upper torso to guide the diaphanous veil around her five foot eleven frame. Her hip movements are slow and languid, with undulating figures of eight and camels. She greets audience members, acknowledges the musicians – directing the progression of the melody to suit her performance – and sweeps across the dance floor, interacting with different select groups in the audience. Throughout the performance, Anne weaves dance with audience interaction, directs musicians and nurtures a link between musicians and audience – she plays the conduit between music and viewer – through the use of her body, hand signals and maternal presence.

Caroline Afifi performing at Casino El Layl, February 2010

Casino El Layl is a Belly Dance event held at the Royal British Legion Club, a club which has two separate socialising and drinking areas. One area has a bar and space for people to sit, drink and socialise. The second area is a larger function room with a small raised proscenium theatre at one end, chairs and tables in the main space and two swing door entrances at the far end as the entrance. There is a small dressing room located away from the room for performers to dress and ready themselves. The front door, of the building opens onto Rose Lane in the Mosseley Hill area of Liverpool. A security guard mans the front door which is operated on an intercom system for extra security from passing drunken pedestrians that frequent Rose Lane. Members of the public have to buzz the intercom to gain access.

The Casino El Layl mission is to preserve and support Egyptian style Belly Dance and the cabaret styles in preference to the rising interest and profile of American Tribal Style Belly Dance. The tickets are printed in full colour with guest artists in full cabaret costume striking a pose. The advertising strapline states “A Spectacular Evening of Middle Eastern Dance” or “Egyptian Style Club Cabaret”. Tickets are priced at £10 and a list of guest artists is placed at the bottom of the ticket, with an urdu-inspired font style spelling out Casino El Layl on the top line of the ticket. Earlier tickets identify the evening as “Caroline Afifi presents”, later tickets emphasise the charity intent of the event: “A spectacular charity evening”.

The function room is organised into clusters of chairs and tables facing the theatre stage. The stage is lit with a flashing net of led lights, and stage lighting. One of the regular dancer’s son attends to the audio equipment and DJs for the whole night. He is given a list for the programme

and all relevant CDs are numbered chronologically according to the programme and lined up in preparation on the DJs desk.

The audience is largely made up of women, with husbands and male friends in tow, approximately 10:1 in favour of women present. There is a bar open all night and Caroline's family members man the door, taking ticket payments and also selling raffle tickets to raise extra funds for the Egyptian charity sponsored by the evening. Each Casino El Layl event sponsors social projects in Egypt, and Caroline personally takes the money out to them.

The evening is conducted by a compere introducing the next act, the composer, title of the music used and the style of dancing. Additional superlatives are used to describe the dancer's talent, entertaining information about the culture or specifics concerning Belly Dance.

The evening's entertainment is divided in half with a musical interval for audience members to enjoy a dance. Usually the compere and guest dancers perform in the second half. The variety of dance styles includes Persian, Moroccan, Turkish and Saudi. The majority of performances are Egyptian, including Baladi, Modern Cairo Style, Sha'abi and Cabaret. All performers, students and professionals, tend to wear expensive, bejewelled costumes from ateliers in Cairo. These costumes on average cost in the region of £150-£300. Several performers have two or three costume changes during the night.

The evening closes with special thanks given to organisers and volunteers. The raffle is drawn and prizes distributed. The performers mingle with fans, students and new admirers during the final dance on the dance floor. As the night winds down with Arabic music, people chat, exchange numbers and eventually leave. The final people to leave are Caroline and her volunteers, who sweep the floor, put all the chairs and tables away, clear away rubbish from the

dressing room, hand over the keys to the bar staff and confirm the date for the next event in six months time.

Caroline's performance takes place on the stage. She completes the performance by jumping into the audience for added shock and drama – this is an unusual strategy that is not commonly seen at events. Caroline has mentioned in interview she is more relaxed when performing at her own events and tries out new ideas for the fun of it. It is noticeable that the majority of her students perform similar styles to Caroline, some of her students even perform in her old costumes. The students are given an audition prior to performing on the night, and Caroline stipulates that a student needs to be in regular attendance of her monthly Sunday classes to be eligible to perform at Casino. A few hours before the doors open, each student performer and guest performers are welcome to participate in a rehearsal, with Caroline overseeing final changes and artistic direction.

Caroline's use of the stage with kitsch lighting and the Casino El Layl branding clearly describes a simulation of an Egyptian nightclub. The retro-Sha'abi music and dance also indicate a level of knowledge and ability, signalling her entry into the Egyptian Sha'abi Belly Dancer tradition unknown to most English practitioners. The components of the dance include the use of a vigorous forward and back hop, and held pauses in which a vigorous hip shimmy or exaggerated gesture with the hand, eyes or leg is presented. Throughout the performance Caroline incorporates a lively internal bounce, maintaining the high energy of the Sha'abi style. The high energy and simple galabeya costume, full length lime green dress with lime green hip scarf and head scarf represents a youthful working-class simplicity, the kitsch theatrical framing an Egyptian authenticity.

**Siouxsie Cooper performing at the Derby Iranian Cultural Event at DEDA Arts Centre,
September 2012**

Rachel Rafiefar, a dancer specialising in Persian dance, requested I perform alongside other performers at her unique Iranian cultural evening at the DEDA arts venue in Derby (Iranian and Persian are used interchangeably to describe this geo-political region and its dance by most practitioners). DEDA is the arts centre, specialising in dance, for Derby. It is located at one end of the city centre, with a huge multi-storey car park opposite, and DEDA is a large, multi-spaced and modern purpose designed arts venue. The Iranian cultural evening was a highlight of their autumn calendar in 2011 and highlighted as an “exotic” night of dance, culture and different tastes. Iranian food was available for nibbles and purchase in the foyer.

The evening was presented in a theatre setting, with lighting, black curtains and dance floor space at one end of the room with tables and chairs for the audience at the other end. There were silks, patterned material and carpets placed in the performance space to add an element of Oriental luxury and opulence. In fact the set design was meagre relative to the size of space and detracted from the quality of the show – it is an unfortunate but regularly used motif by many event organisers in the Belly Dance community. A small raised platform with more rugs was placed in the left foreground of the performance space for a story teller to use. Tim Garside, a well known percussionist in Middle Eastern music, was present and offered a Persian duff drum solo (a large frame drum with metal rings running around the inside rim of the drum to add light jingle sound texture to the rumbling bass drum tone).

Rachel’s students performed several group choreographies to Persian music, both popular and classical music. Rachel performed a solo and I presented a Baba Koram performance. Rachel

compered the evening, with no microphone, but as the night wore on I took over the compering role at Rachel's request.

There were Iranians in the audience. One table in particular had a large extended Iranian family seated close to the dance floor. Belly Dancers from around the East Midlands region also attended the event. DEDA also attracted new audience members. In total there were over hundred people attending. The arts centre provided a sound and lighting engineer who was hostile to the preparation and rehearsal. It was unclear why, but several attempts to develop the scenery through lighting were disrupted. Nevertheless, when my music format did not fit the new sound system on offer, young DEDA receptionists assisted me to find the music on itunes.com. There was an element of "make-do-and-mend" to the whole proceedings. It was in fact a new event devised by Rachel. It was her first event and she was unsure of certain requirements from both the performers and technical staff.

Mid way through the performance I entered the space in my Baba suit to the cheers and jeers from the Iranian family who approved of my "presence" and "attitude". I performed in the designated space and then began to break into the audience, greeting members, some of whom knew me very well and started to talk to me informally. The challenge was to stay in character, and by the time I reached the Iranian table they were on their feet, disrupting me and joking. I took this cue to bring men into the performance space for a dance-off. Both Iranian and English men joined the competition. I signalled to the technician to continue the music and the men began to dance their best Baba. The joke is to watch them, make facial gestures and rude signs to and with the audience to indicate my disapproval. Then I chose one man to challenge to an orchestrated dance duel. This heightens the audience excitement, there's a risk I will lose and there is a risk he will really look "unmanly". At this point several members of the audience are

on their feet shouting, laughing and screaming. The man loses the duel to much hilarity, booing and jeering. All the men leave and return to their seats exhausted, the women in the audience jeer and laugh at them. I complete my last turn on the dance floor. The audience erupts into spontaneous applause, laughter and cheering for an encore. I bow, wink, make a silly and slightly rude gesture with my breasts and leave.

The cultural evening completes with Rachel thanking the audience, the venue managers and the performers. The audience mingle with performers in the foyer and several buy drinks and continue to discuss the evening's performances. Rachel and her students tidy the theatre space and then we decamp to Rachel's house for the night.

Siouxsie Cooper performing at Sahara Nights in Nottingham, November 2011

Sahara nights is a monthly Belly Dance showcase in Nottingham run by Belly Dance World entrepreneur Janet Rose (see www.bellydanceworld.co.uk). Janet presents her students work, her own solo performances and duets with long standing dance friends. The evening also showcases local and regional teachers and their students, and it attracts people from Lincoln, Leicester, London, Derby, Chesterfield, Sheffield, Leeds and other locations along the M1. These events usually attract over one hundred and fifty participants and audience members. With every monthly event, Janet invites a star performer. This night I was the star performer (see appendix F for youtube.com clips).

I presented several solos, including a Saaidi folkloric dance piece to the music of the 'Musicians of the Nile', Baladi solo to 'Rul El Fuad's Dinga Dinga' and 'Fatme Serhan's Tahtil Shibbak'. My signature performance of Baba Koram was also performed.

Other styles of Belly Dance presented during the evening included Tribal Belly Dance, Gothic Belly Dance, Burlesque Belly Dance, contemporary group choreography, Raqs Sharqi dance, Sha'abi, Classical Oriental and other styles. There are vendors positioned around the semi-circle seating area, selling cakes, jewellery, costumes and Belly Dance accessories. Janet's brother sets up a large DJ music system and runs the music all night, providing Arabic music during the interval and the end of the night for everyone to dance to. Janet's sister sits at the front door taking pre-paid tickets, and money from new audience members. She also provides somosas during the intervals to earn extra money for Janet. The venue itself is a large, wooden floored function room at the Ukranian working men's club in Basford. Ukranian men and women work behind the bar, and several men, who are members of the club, stand drinking in an anti-room whilst the event continues in the other room. The dancers all change and get ready in an upstairs room.

During my performance the water tank in the roof exploded and cascaded down the stairs towards the function room. It was decided that the night would continue and Janet asked if there was a plumber in the house. A man in the audience volunteered and jumped up to attend to the disaster as the performances continued. He took his clothes off and ran through the rain and waterfall to plug the hole. The evening finishes, we tidy the space, key people remain to chat and laugh about the event and then return home. I stay at Janet's for the evening, having previously presented a three hour workshop and completed three performances.

Siouxsie Cooper performing at Jewel of Yorkshire Festival in Saltaire, Bradford April 2012

JOY, which is an acronym for Jewel of Yorkshire, is a biannual Belly Dance event held in the Victoria Hall, Saltaire, just outside Bradford. Saltaire is a very pretty, old industrial site with

large elegant and expensive housing, and Victorian buildings, and is a tourist attraction. The JOY event has been in operation for over eight years and is run by the duo Chris Ogden and Mandy Teasdale. This particular performance was in Spring 2012. Chris is a Tribal Belly Dance advocate and Mandy makes Belly Dance cabaret costumes. The interior of the grand hall is an ornately decorated, Victorian style building. There is a gallery and large stage. The large audience space is filled with tables and chairs which then get transformed into rows of seats for the evening entertainment on Fridays and Saturdays. Around the edge of the seating area several traders have stalls selling Belly Dance gear, including CDs and DVDs, Tribal Belly Dance costumes and accessories, and Cairo Oriental style Belly Dance costumes. There is a café at the back of the hall selling cakes, tea and sandwiches.

The JOY festival offers a variety of workshops in different styles of dance, and associated subjects led by a variety of practitioners, both local and international. Regular international stars include Camelia, Rhanda, Khalid Mahmoud, Sara Farouk, Lorna of Cairo, Yasmina of Cairo and Paulette Rees-Denis. The stars and other teachers perform on the Saturday night, and recently the Friday night has become a Belly Dance competition night, with teachers judging young hopefuls and new emerging Belly Dance talent.

I presented a Baba Koram workshop to complement the performance I was giving in the evening. The workshops are held in the various rooms either in the cellar floor, ground floor or second floor rooms. These rooms are similarly grand in size and decoration, kitted out with modern audio equipment, with a volunteer on each door checking the register as each participant arrives for a class.

The Saturday performance night is compered by local dancer Anne Kingston, who presents each performer by standing centre stage, speaking on a microphone and reading from a text written about each performer. The audience consists of female, workshop participants with a handful of men, the latter usually technical staff or musicians. The stage has stage lights and there is a large sound system plugged in. There is no decoration or set design, a plain black back drop and a stage entrance to the left. The costumes are usually brightly coloured, with extravagant sequin design, and the performers are heavily made up. I performed the Baba Koram in a red suit and started on stage. Halfway through the performance I took the stairs down into the audience to continue the performance at a more intimate and risky level. Most performers remain on stage, take a bow and leave. A few performers, including myself, take to the audience space to further complicate and enliven the show.

By contrast to most Belly Dance performances, I enter the stage dressed in pin stripe trouser suit with waistcoat, braces, trilby and tie. I wear a serious grimace on my face, alert eyes and inspect individuals in the audience. The dance is presented at audience level, rarely on stage. I use broad, angular movements of the arms, the shoulders, and oscillate my neck in time with the music, thrusting my hips mockingly towards the audience. The audience confrontation through the aggressive caricature of a Persian gangster disrupts the Belly Dance conventions of beauty and “femininity” in performance. Performing at eye-level and approaching members of the audience heightens risk for the performer and anxiety for the target audience member, breaking audience/performer separation by invading space and provoking playful participation. The contrast of straight lines and pin-stripes of the suit against my voluptuous figure signals gender subversion in conjunction with a demand for interactive play with the audience, generating excitement and surprise for both performer and audience member.

The initial description of each practitioner's performance offers three contrasting Belly Dancing-Selves concurrent with Anne's elegant signal of a past era of a Raqs Sharqi glory and matriarchal presence, Caroline's narrative of authenticity concerning her Sha'abi-working-class-reality and my cross-dressing feminist-performance of unruly behaviour. The framing of each performance is different. Anne use of grand luxurious robe, encrusted with jewels recalls a past golden era; Caroline uses a simple, kitsch Egyptian simulation; and my performance a cross-dressing, rude and completely unexpected aspect of Middle Eastern dance repertoire. The narratives of class, gender and an *Orientalist* golden past run in corollary to concepts of age, experience and unruly female behaviour in performance. The different approaches include relationships to the audience, musical accompaniment and costuming.

6.4.2 Performance motifs

By examining the movement and improvisational content of each performance it is possible to identify recurring motifs that reinforce the narratives of authenticity. The earlier movement analysis presented commonalities and differences in movement teaching and execution. The analysis of the performance of these movements, with attributing spatial and syntactical design, presents another form of encoding and embodying each practitioner's Belly Dancing-Self. I have isolated specific instances within each performance and identified the movement patterns, improvisational choices and expression used by each practitioner to substantiate their corresponding Belly Dancing-Self.

In Anne's Baladi performance she enters with a veil. It is a rarely used prop formerly used by Hilal and reminiscent of Golden Era Egyptian Belly Dance (1940-1970s). It is a classic entrance movement found in American style Cabaret Belly Dance, especially the lifting of the veil

overhead and placing it full length in front of the dancer's body. Anne completes this task and then walks into the veil; the light blue veil illuminates her womanly figure, producing a goddess-like tableau indicative of a Goddess-like-deity. Throughout the performance Anne approaches various tables of seated audience members and performs a vignette of percussive hip movements and accented and lyrical arm movements punctuated by direct eye-contact and a knowing grin. She raises and returns the veil to behind her body and on the balls of her feet she repetitively undulates to the right, changes direction and continues to softly undulate. The undulations are small, barely visible and she breaks up the extended repetition of the travelling by talking to the musicians, directing new verses in the song and finding another seated group to entertain. Anne's performance prioritised the various groups of people watching and playing music, and circumvented the space with subtle, understated movement, resting the final gaze on the musicians and audience members themselves. Anne's Belly Dancing-Self of the female-night-club-impresario where communication between groups of people is facilitated by her mediating role is evident even within the performance of Belly Dancing itself.

Throughout Caroline's *Si Abou* performance she maintains a relaxed "natural" posture – there is no emphasis on a straight upright spine, lifted chest etc (changing the inherited Hilal lexicon) – and her arms hang loosely to frame individual movements. A commonly occurring motif is the extension of the arms to embrace and frame the audience. A regular travelling movement is a forward and back hop. She marks the space using this movement at the beginning and completes the travelling sequences with a simple walk forwards and backwards. Throughout the performance travelling movements are punctuated by stationary sections in which the hip, chest and shoulders are individually or together shimmied. For example a couple of Sha'abi movements used to punctuate the stationary sections include grinding her hips into large circles,

an exaggerated torso flex which lifts the chest up and down, and a wide leg stance moving the hips side to side layered with shimmies and thrusting action. The syntactical device of travel and punctuating percussive verses in the *Si Adbou* song recur in Caroline's performance. There is a mixture of carefree energetic use of the space and body and heightened moments of exaggerated movement and hilarity. Within the more obvious use of satire and comedy Caroline layers the improvisation with a continual undulation through her spine. A regular subtle movement used throughout is a forward figure of eight. The forward figure of eight is an isolation of the hips, forming a figure eight pattern by alternating hips forward and back. The undulation occurs with the abdominals working to guide and instigate the movement. There are several repeated sections in which Caroline raises her arms above her head and she continues with a simple figure of eight configuration. The engaged abdominal action adds another dimension to the movement, a kinetic intensity which represents feeling as sensation and also refers to the Egyptian Sha'abi motif of working the movement from the lower abdominals, not the Raqs Sharqi lumbar and knee action. In performance Caroline's gaze is open and smiling towards the audience and she uses her eyes to direct our attention to different body parts. It is a deceptively simple improvisation that has gained her respect from Belly Dance colleagues, Arabic audiences and students alike. Caroline uses her Sha'abi expertise and skill to win the votes of a cross-section of Belly Dance audiences, creating a Sha'abi-working-class-reality with which to affirm her Belly Dancing-Self.

I enter the theatre stage striding, legs apart. I lift my trilby and rotate my neck, gesticulating and hunching my shoulders. The music shifts from an atmospheric rising melody, in which I promenade on stage, to an explosion of a rolling six eight rhythm. My movements follow patterns of shoulder, then chin, chest and then hips, all percussive and gesticulating. The

pronounced movement, the different isolation patterns of different body areas and the promenading and interactive design of the performance lend themselves to humour and self-mockery. I use shoulder shimmies and shoulder flicks. I jut my chin in and out and roll my head to give the impression of masculine mood and aggression. I move from the stage to the audience floor and begin to circle my hips, turning 360 degrees on the spot, indicating the presence of a female under the gangster disguise. With the palm of my hand facing upwards I pretend to juggle my breasts, I throw one up into the air and then kick with my back leg to eventually catch it with one of my hands. This breast juggling vignette is repeated and exaggerated (for example I pretend to have lost the breast in the rafters) until the audience laughter is sustained. I characteristically click my fingers Persian style (called the Beshkan, see Shay, 1999) and lean over into a female audience member. With hat pulled down I travel up and down her body – checking her out – usually from upright to crouched position. By breaking with the theatrical tradition of a fourth wall, and leaning into my audience, spilling out with mischief, interacting with them while my own female body is under the confines of the straight-laced male costuming, the Baba Koram performance signifies my Belly Dancing-Self as the unruly-feminist-performance-artist.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has substantiated the findings from chapter five and extended the descriptions of each practitioner's Belly Dancing-Self. The examination of the movement demonstrations and teaching practices of each practitioner demonstrates the respective English Belly Dance traditions and specific characteristics of each practitioner's narratives of authenticity. For example Caroline's regular travel and incorporation of new Sha'abi movement encountered in Egyptian nightclubs in her teaching practice differs considerably from Anne's reference to Hilal

training and video footage of Golden Era five star hotel Belly Dancers Nagwa Fouad and Fifi Abdou. My own work contrasts completely with both Anne and Caroline, with the inclusion of Persian character dances and the challenge given to Belly Dancers to interact and take their performance cues from their audiences. There is the new characteristic of a “matriarch” aspect to Anne’s Belly Dancing-Self, which privileges Belly Dancing pasts, the working-class “heroine” found in Caroline’s teaching practice, and an Asian-Africanist-Arabic body work specialism in my own Belly Dancing-Self.

The narratives of each practitioner’s performance practice reiterate the respective inherited English Belly Dance tradition and the resistance to that past. The resistance for each practitioner concentrates on the development of a sub-community within which each practitioner is able to fund their expanding Belly Dance endeavours. By 2003 each practitioner made the transition from their inherited English Belly Dance tradition, which privileged dance theatre performance, to an aesthetic and ideological contextualisation of the dance based on an Egyptian nightclub environment. Anne’s Belly Dancing-Self is of particular interest here. All her narratives of authenticity lead to the female-night-club-impresario role, specifically because of the creation of the Planet Egypt venture in London. Caroline has generated a similar nightclub venture in the North West. Its aim is to showcase Middle East only Belly Dance, differing from Anne’s aim to encourage all styles of Belly Dance related performance and activity. Caroline maintains that the wider Belly Dance circuit in England is featuring fusion Belly Dance over Egyptian Belly Dance, thereby continuing her narrative of authenticity in relationship to Egyptian Belly Dance over English Belly Dance experimentation – a key characteristic of the Buonaventura tradition. I continue to be invited to perform at regional events and nightclubs, but my interest lies with researching the events others offer. In effect I have moved away from generating a local sub-

community of artists to working with a wider cross-section of world dance artists: a Persian group in Derby, a West African group in Manchester, and an advanced training group in Nottingham, where I fill the role of world dance and performance artist “guru.” The performance of my researcher-practitioner self is a central narrative of authenticity.

Chapter 7

7. Dis-identification in English Belly Dance performance with the Orientalist paradigm

7.1 Introduction

Given the underpinning nature of the Orientalist paradigm (shown in chapter four) in Belly Dance, the question needs to be asked if a practitioner can really create their own individualistic and branded narrative of authenticity. We have established that a key characteristic of a Belly Dance narrative of authenticity with which to construct authenticity in performance is a break with a past tradition and its narratives of authenticity. There is the suggestion, as described below, that given the permanent position of the Orientalist paradigm (Dox 2006) which resides at the interior of any Belly Dance practice, there is no prospect of a break with it. Furthermore, there is a particular control of and challenge for women, what with the harem fantasy supported by the Orientalist paradigm. However, I would assert that it is possible to break with the Orientalist paradigm.

I refer to Nieuwkerke's (1995) broad study, and Roushdy's (2010) and McDonald's (2010) recent ethnographic studies in Egypt, for a comparison with local norms found in Egypt. Both Roushdy and McDonald's findings create a question for this research project, which locates the agency of the Belly Dancer in the eye of the storm of what a Belly Dancer embodies, enacts and represents in a gendered performance display of sexuality, heterosexual normatives and the Orientalist tropes found in Belly Dance performance. To frame the iterative process of gender politics found in Belly Dance productions Roushdy (2010) utilises Butler's notion of gendered *performativity* (1990) and McDonald (2010) Butler's *contestible categories* (1990). Both researchers argue that within the act of Belly Dancing the enactment of femininity and

femaleness is a “relational” process negotiated with audience and Orientalism (McDonald 2010, 181).

Roushdy’s accounts of al-raqs al-baladi performance in Cairo nightclubs offers an interpretation of the role and socio-cultural meaning to Belly Dance found in modern day Egypt. She states:

As it pertains to *al-raqs al-baladi* today, public criticism tends to fixate on the costume, whereas in the mid-twentieth century it fixated on the practice of *fath*, or drinking and socializing with patrons after a performance, and, earlier in the mid-nineteenth century, on dancing in the streets. Yet no matter how much *al-raqs al-baladi* has changed over the past two centuries, and regardless of whether the dancer is referred to as *ghaziyya*, *’alma*, *artiste*, *ra’asa*, or *fanana*, the liminal positioning of this cultural form remains constant even as what the dance itself becomes capable of expressing about Egyptian culture continues to evolve within the confines of those spaces in which the codes of modernity remain blurred. (2010, 94)

In her conclusion, Roushdy emphasises the failed attempts by the Egyptian state to eradicate Belly Dancers and still even in their weakened, marginal state: “the professional [Belly] dancer ha[s] produced her[self] as a betwixt and between figure in Egypt’s modernity project: one that personifies the boundary between proper (modern) and improper (un-modernized) feminine comportment” (Ibid, 94). The al-raqs al-baladi dance gendered role, according to Roushdy, is to perform her assigned marginality, one that is located between colonial and post colonial nation-statehood and between the social and cultural mores of gendered roles in Egyptian society. The Egyptian Belly Dancer remains defiant, unbroken, and through the lens of her isolation and defiance, continues to reproduce both social and cultural commentary in the margins to which she is relegated.

McDonald’s thesis *Belly Dance and Glocalisation: Constructing Gender in Egypt and on the Global Stage* (2010, 178-208), refers to male Belly Dancers problematising the heterosexual normative of femaleness and femininity as a dominant narrative of authenticity in Belly Dance.

By utilising the Butlerian concept that “gender performance is not merely predicated on the agency and intentions of the performer, but it also depends on the expectations and reactions of those receiving the performance” (2010, 203) McDonald demonstrates that [Belly] dance can be conceived of as a fantastical dancing space outside ordinary life with which women can explore alternative constructions of their gendered identity (Ibid, 203). McDonald’s concepts of the use of dance for interrogation of heterosexism and phallogocentrism is in line with Adair’s notion of the dualistic nature of dance which both enforces dominant gender paradigms and provides a space for resistance (1992, 31). Butler states that “Fantasy structures relationality, and it comes into play in the stylisation of embodiment itself” (2004, 217) and can be applied here to the Orientalist paradigm. McDonald’s Butlerian model confirms both hers and Roushdy’s notion of the in between and liminal space Belly Dance inhabited by both western and non-western dancing contexts.

McDonald is not convinced that Belly Dance practitioners are aware of the impact of their own agency, tending to rely on the “community-orientated approach to dance instead of a purely choreographic one”, which in turn is affected more by performer-audience dynamic than the “significance of choreographic embodiment” (Ibid, 204). According to McDonald Belly Dance “will remain a permanent site of contestation....an open coalition category in the Butlerian model...a place where dance can concurrently hold several different meanings” (Ibid, 207). Both researchers use Belly Dance performance to describe the social and cultural mores pertaining to their field sites, which dismisses the role and impact of the Belly Dance artist and as social subversion, which in turn omits the act of creating performance and art with its own political and aesthetic purposes.

According to McDonald's analysis on the international stage Belly Dance engages in "a community-orientated approach" (2010, 204) which can frustrate the purely choreographic endeavours based on the "art" in the dance. The tensions between alternate expressions of femininity within "different audiences spheres of support or objectification" (Ibid, 156) further complicate the process of making a Belly Dance performance. The community-orientated approach, one that focuses on shared experience, shared knowledge and development, suggests a continual relationship with what is known to be Belly Dance and what is later discovered, through discussion, travel and further training, to be Belly Dance i.e. a search for the "unknowable East" (Dox 2006 and Yegenoglu 1999). Caroline states: "I'm always learning, I spend more money on training than I do making it with my own [Belly Dance] work" (2009), Anne suggests "We are always learning, it never stops and I see my role as passing the knowledge on, in abeyance to the Middle Eastern culture we have in the UK" (2010), and even in my interview the endless quest for more knowledge was pointed out by the interviewer, "When do you think you will ever know enough, when will your quest be complete?" My reply: "Never" (2011). It remains that the identities of each practitioner and their attributing Belly Dancing-self is in constant flux and negotiation with internal and external forces.

McDonald's identification of a different value system and method of aesthetic and ideological development through "community-led approach" favours the performer-audience dynamic. An approach that McDonald refers to is as part of the Butlerian model of gender, which proposes that to be and enact femaleness/femininity is a relational act (1990, 217) one which is continually reconstructed and enacted within the social space. Likewise, in reference to Said's text *Orientalism* (1978), the same relational dynamic applies to the Orient in relationship to the West, a relational binary of West and East which exposes the product of the political and historical

encounters of imperialism (1978, 106). Therefore, according to McDonald's analysis Belly Dance cannot exist outside a reference to an audience, patriarchy and Orientalist fantasy. To Belly Dance is to fulfil and reiterate the performance-audience dynamic, the heterosexist logic and the Orientalist expectation of acting and relating in a "cultural" way (Ness, 2004). By contrast, I assert that it is in the processes of performing reiteration a Belly Dancer can resist the Orientalist paradigm, thus destabilising moment to moment the Orientalist logic.

The earlier search to create and affirm the "art" in the dance resulted in the dancers (Hilal or Buonaventura) being continually caught between representing the Middle Eastern culture and the pressing social and cultural standards of what it means to be female in performance. As described by Dox, there is no escape from the Orientalist paradigm (2006). The only constant found in any rendition of or search for the authentic in a Belly Dance performance is a dialectical negotiation of "dancing around Orientalism" (Ibid, 57). Likewise, each current English Belly Dance practitioner has confirmed that the Orientalist framing of their performance continues to inform and interrupt their efforts to reproduce a better understanding; Caroline states, "You have to constantly educate your audience, even before you get on stage, people seem to have no idea of what is really going on" (2009). Sarah Farouk suggests that this is partly due to the lack of experience and expectation from audiences who are not used to woman performing solo on stage. She states, "If you think about it women rarely perform solo on stage, especially older and more mature women who are much more experienced in life and could offer so much more in performance" (2010).

Nieuwkerke (1995), McDonald (2010), Roushdy (2010) and even Butler (1990) state that breaking with the heterosexist and phallogocentrism of the Orientalist paradigm is not achievable. By contrast, Cypriot male Belly Dance scholar Karayanni (2004) advances an

alternative. He suggests that Belly Dance creates a space to explore alternative expressions of gender identity by offering performers a space to sublimate heterosexist discourse. In reference to Butler's question, "What kind of subversive repetition might call into question the regulatory practice of identity itself?" (1990, 42), there is a suggestion in *Gender Trouble* (1990) that, for example, the butch/femme dichotomy can be viewed as a parody of the idea that gender identity itself is a copy and there is a continual process of copying the copy (1990, 174-175), offering a way through the repetition of the naturalised ontologies by using the very repetitious mode of reproducing meaning to excess. Both Karayanni's and Butler's shift towards excess, and their use of subversive and displacement strategies in the enactment and embodiment of gendered normative correspond with Pecheux's identification theory (1982). Before I introduce Pecheux's identification typology, Karayanni's male Belly Dance perspective introduces what could be seen as a symptom suggesting that the Orientalist paradigm as a determining force in the Belly Dance trope is not so straightforward. The male Belly Dance presence within the Belly Dance scene suggests that a break with the Orientalist paradigm is possible. Male Belly Dancers are gaining prominence on festival billings, demand higher fees and rise to become key figures within a short space of time, suggesting that even when the Orientalist paradigm is concerned with the female body, the male Belly Dancer is a plausible alternative.

7.2 Male Belly Dancers

It is more complicated than male Belly Dancers versus female Belly Dancers. There has been and remains a complicated debate concerning the rising prominence of the male Belly Dance expert. As shown (chapter three), Bounaventura's response has been to generate a gender-specific form of the dance, whereas Hilal has concentrated on creating a unisex dance programme. The male Belly Dancer debate and various responses suggest that there is

something more complex about the male/female dynamic in the narratives of authenticity and their relationship to the Orientalist paradigm. It is also worth noting that a number of Belly Dance practitioners believe that breaking with the Orientalist paradigm is possible.

The presence of male Belly Dancers suggests that there exists an alternative form of the Orientalist paradigm. I am suggesting the alternative lies in the declaration of ethnicity over femininity as a narrative of authenticity. As pointed out by McDonald there still remains a “caveat that most of the women [interviewed] had strong reservations about the performance of male dancers” (2010, 195). McDonald gives several reasons for this ambivalence, one of which is that “certain movements they do are stylistically too feminine” (Ibid, 196) and the other – which I think has more weight – “men get too much credit and approbation when they get up on stage for their actual level of skill” (Ibid, 196). One of McDonald’s male case studies Zorba declares his awareness of the need to “negotiate the discourse of feminine empowerment” (Ibid, 189). McDonald interprets Zorba’s contextually appropriate behaviour as an indication of his mindfulness towards the female majority and his “perceiving himself as a guest” (Ibid, 189). I would suggest Zorba, and other male Belly Dancers in the community, are also cognisant of their rarity, with attributing high economic value. In addition in reference to what Adair (1992, 30-31) and Bane’s (1998, 10) describe as a common feature of most dance institutions which position men as principle choreographers to women dancers, Zorba’s rise to prominence is surely confirmed. Zorba’s name is not Middle Eastern but it holds East Mediterranean derivation¹²⁶.

The Orientalist fantasy frames male Belly Dance ethnicity as the active possessor/choreographer

126 I was referring specifically of the Greek hero Zorba. It may not have a direct etymological link to the Middle East, but still the name Zorb conjures up images of a fantastically strong and virile East Mediterranean mythical character – in line with the Orientalist paradigm present in Belly Dance discourse.

and Belly Dance expert of the harem of female Belly Dancers. Images of both Zorba and Jim Boz found in McDonald's thesis (2010, 189 & 191) confirm the Arab Sheikh subtext and imply the appropriated authority male Belly Dancers cultivate in performance and as experts in the field.

In reference to Islamic and Middle Eastern feminist who articulate what it means to be female and raise feminist politics in reference to different audiences, offering Belly Dance scholarship an intellectual route for arguing for the analysis of the act of Belly Dancing itself and the woman performing it. Arguably Belly Dance continues and reinforces the male dominated society's cycle of sexual objectification in line with what western and Middle Eastern feminist (Abu-Lughod, 2001) have strived to eliminate. Even though they do not necessarily seem to overcome the challenge, the struggle remains important and defining for the three practitioners. I am suggesting here that the harem fantasy – in performance – is not all it seems from first impressions. The gender-specificity of that struggle in performance is paramount, and the perspective, performance tactics and negotiations on the performance stage of each practitioner offer a method of theorising what is being reproduced.

7.3 Dis-identification with the Orientalist paradigm

According to Pêcheux's (1982) typology there are three modes of identification to consider. The first mode is the "identification" with Orientalism. With the identification mode the female performer is accepting and reinforces the Orientalist ideology through imagery, narration of a distant fantastical past and embodiment of the passive, alluring, femme fatale found in the dance of the seven veils. Then there is the "counter-identification" mode, which rejects the dominant Orientalist ideology and attempts to construct a completely new identity and meaning. Finally,

the “dis-identification” mode is one that neither opts to identify with or strictly oppose: rather, dis-identification is a strategy that works with and against the dominant ideology. According to José Esteban Muñoz in his text *Dis-identifications: Queers of Colour and the Performance of Politics* (2001) dis-identification “is a strategy that tries to transform a cultural logic from within, always labouring to enact permanent structural change while at the same time valuing the importance of local or everyday struggles of resistance” (Ibid, 36). We can also refer to Dixon-Gottschild’s (1996, 11-21) concept of contrariety in Africanist dance forms – she notes that juxtapositions of states of being within a performance – resulting in the Africanist aesthetic of contrariety which dis-identifies with dominant narratives of race and racial politics in dance performance. This aesthetic wins over dance technique and accuracy of movement execution (Ibid, 19). I argue the same aesthetic values can be applied to a Belly Dance performance.

7.4 Dancing Around Orientalism

Leila Abu-Lughod (2001, 101-113) in *Orientalism and Feminist Studies* suggests that Mary Strathem’s (1987) memorable phrase, “an awkward relationship” (2001, 101) is a useful departure point for feminist scholars of Orientalism. Abu-Lughod proposes that Said’s text may have relegated gender and sexuality to a subfield in his analysis of colonial discourse but it remains that he offers Middle Eastern feminists “a mode for the kind of entangled political engagements they inevitably face” (Ibid, 113). Abu-Lughod’s text provides a Middle Eastern feminist perspective on the legacy of colonial rule and present hegemony, a perspective shared in a paper presented by Soraya Altorki at the Middle Eastern Women’s Studies Association, in Cairo 1997. Altorki describes the dichotomy faced by Middle Eastern feminists in a global context, Altorki quotes:

Identifying exclusively with the West means rejecting the Arab heritage, while rejecting the West and cleaving to 'tradition' means accepting patriarchal structures of subordination and inferiorisation. The solution is to refuse the tradition/Western modernity divide, but how sophisticated do you have to be to manage this? (Altorki, 1997 quoted by Abu-Lughod 2001, 110)

As a consequence, feminists in the Middle East have two audiences "caught between representing Middle Eastern women as complex agents [West], and advocating their rights at home [East]" (Abu-Lughod 2001, 107). Moghossi (1999) expands on Abu-Lughod's concern in *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis*, in which she lists three limitations of the fashionable use of postmodern analysis adopted by a largely Western trained Middle Eastern feminist scholarship. She notes i) social analysis has been diminished in support of analysis of representation, ii) binary thinking has made us think too much about the West and not enough on the domestic heterogeneity of Middle Eastern society iii) redirecting attention away from "local institutions and cultural processes that are implicated in the production of gendered hierarchies and informs of subordination based on gender" (1998, 18). The personal and the political are significant here, post modern analysis concern with representation only limits our knowledge of the actual experience and political forces imposed on the lives of women in the Middle East and arguably the lives of women in Western locations too (Daly, 2004 and Walter 1999). Still, as Middle Eastern feminists frequently point out the position of Eastern women is frequently compromised when the "power of Orientalism comes from its power to construct the very object it speaks about and thereby establish the identity and the power of the subject that speaks about it" (Yegenoglu 1998, 90-91).

The Turkish academic Yegenoglu's comprehensive text *Colonial Fantasies: towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* analyses "how representation of cultural and sexual difference are

constitutive of each other” (1998, 1) in response to Said’s neglect of gender and sexuality.

Yegenoglu identifies “latent” Orientalism, which refers to “the nature and extent of the sexual implications of the unconscious site of Orientalism” (1998, 25), and should be according to Abu-Lughod the core of our analysis (2001, 106).

The latent Orientalist connotations found in the construction of Belly Dancers in either location (see Sellers-Young & Shay 2003) are embodied in the sexualised and cultural otherness of the Belly Dancer. Belly Dance is caught on the axis of Yegenoglu’s cultural and sexual difference, one that is augmented through a constant repetition of their logic. I refer again to Butler’s suggestion that “If repetition is bound to persist as the mechanism of cultural reproduction of identities, then the crucial question emerges: what kind of subversive repetition might call into question the regulatory practice of identity itself?” (1990, 42). Belly Dance is caught between different audience expectations, between low and high art and loaded with sexual connotations of the Western unconscious. I would argue that Belly Dance is the perfect site to analyse the subversion of the repetition of cultural and sexual identities in line with Yegenoglu’s search for a new approach towards a feminist reading of Orientalism.

We should be wary not to conflate the politics of gender with the politics of race, let alone class. However the intercultural performance artist Coco Fusco offers practice-based experience of approaching the themes that intersect an Orientalist performance genre. Fusco’s text *The Other History of Intercultural Performance* (1994) presents a revealing account of how her collaborative performance with Gómez-Peña of *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit.....*(1992) explored the limits of “happy multiculturalism” (Ibid, 2). By way of example, she describes the impact of their golden cage performance, in which both performers represented the last inhabitants of a newly discovered civilisation off the coast of Mexico. Fusco and Gómez-Peña

intentionally spent three days of each performance¹²⁷ silent, allowing the audience's participation and interaction to provide the majority of the "performance". They allowed audience members to pay for photographs, offer gifts, verbally insult them, offer money for one to one dance performances etc. Fusco catalogues numerous examples of the exotic and erotic projections they experienced and asserts that the performance exposed Bhabha's notion that racial stereotyping is a necessary component of colonialist discourse, one that disguises the colonialist fear in "not knowing" the other (Ibid, 9). She completes her text with a revealing observation concerning her capacity to endure objectification unlike her male colleague by stating:

Gómez-Peña found the experience of being continually objectified more difficult to tolerate than I did. By the end of our first three days in Madrid, we began to realise not only that people's assumptions about us were based upon gender stereotypes, but that my experiences as a woman had prepared me to shield myself psychologically from the violence of public objectification. (Ibid, 16)

Fusco's shielding and her training as a woman to be able to "block out" or at least deflect the violence directed at her exposes a core factor when considering the different expectations and demands made on female performers compared with their male contemporaries. In effect, the gender stereotyping is a necessary component of gender discourse, one that disguises fear of women, and a radical feminist perspective would further the argument to include not just fear but also hatred of women (Dworkin, 1974 and Daly, 1978). Dox in her text *Dancing Around Orientalism* (2006) offers a similar perspective concerning the sanitisation of Belly Dance in the West which allows women to participate in "revealing" their transformed Selves and their bodies without becoming a "striptease" act. Dox suggests that the Orientalist mythos offers a shield for

127 Fusco and Gómez-Peña presented the *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit...* live art installation in several key cities around the world that were involved in the European colonial expansion projects of the 15th and 16th centuries.

Western women, who would otherwise be perceived as sex industry workers. Dox points out that if there were no form of Orientalist ideological landscape/narrative underpinning and justifying the sexualised performance of a Belly Dancing-Self on stage (2006, 52-57), then the middle-classes would not participate.

How the middle-classes and in particular the three practitioners of this research participate and negotiate the axis of cultural and sexual difference in performance is the concern of this chapter. In reference to Yegenoglu's notion this it is the sexual implications of latent Orientalism which offers a discursive site for a new feminist reading of Orientalism. I turn to Pêcheux's (1982) trident of dis-identification, identification and counter-identification. The identification trident offers a method of exploring the relational dynamics found in the performance of Belly Dance presented by each practitioner, offering a lens through which the relational, performer-audience dynamic and the sexual/cultural axis of performing Belly Dance can be further analysed. The following section will compare and contrast the performance work – already outlined and analysed in both chapter five and six – to further expound and investigate Yegenoglu's inclination that cultural and sexual difference form the nexus by which we can approach the subject of the "immanently corporeal" Orient (Said 1992, 184). In this case, English Belly Dancers achieve authenticity in Belly Dance performance by presenting an oscillating identification and dis-identification with the heterosexual normative, which in turn re-represents the not knowing of either women or the Orient in performance; the two are interchangeable and constitutive of each other (Yegenoglu 1998, 1).

7.5 The gender-specific narrative of authenticity

A significant narrative of authenticity in English Belly Dance is the narrative relating to the gender specificity of being female to produce an authentic Belly Dance performance.

Previously, chapter three detailed Hilal and Buonaventura's different perspectives on the subject of male Belly Dancers: Hilal incorporates her male partner and *allegedly* other male Belly Dancers into her training and performance programme¹²⁸ (interview 2008); whereas, Buonaventura emphatically states that male Belly Dancers are not part of the Belly Dance standard (interview 2009). Further proof of the inconsistency of male Belly Dance participation and opinion is found in the English Belly Dance scene and provided by the three case studies. All three practitioners are female, which already signals their bias, and they differently acknowledge and appreciate the rising presence of male Belly Dancers in the community. It follows that the male Belly Dancer's tactic is to replace the female-only narrative of authenticity in part with an ethnicity¹²⁹ narrative of authenticity (Karayanni 2004 and Shay 2005). The narrative of authenticity privileging female-only presence in Belly Dance is a significant area of dispute revealing the centrality of gender and sexual difference in a Belly Dance performance (Graham-Brown 1988, Mabro 1991 and Malik 2000).

128 I use the term *allegedly* because Alessandro is the only male participant to be seen training and performing in Hilal Dance. Alessandro directs his own Hilal Dance trained choreography group *Iskandar Dance Company* (2005) with only female collaborators and performers, which again indicates his unique status within the ranks of Hilal Dance.

129 Male Belly Dancers found in England include Khalid Mahmoud and Shafeek Ibrahim, both of whom are Egyptian, and who both capitalise on their Egyptian heritage in advertising and presenting workshops and performances. Similarly, Ozgen, a Turkish folkloric dancer, capitalises on his Turkish gypsy ancestry to promote his dance workshops and performances within the English Belly Dance community.

The narratives of authenticity from my own case study reveal the centrality of the female perspective and representation in an authentic Belly Dance performance¹³⁰. The different responses given by Anne, Caroline and myself indicate a shared, albeit differently executed, perspective on the value and prominence of their gender identity in performance, teaching and debate. To be female is a significant narrative of authenticity, one that privileges in reproduction of the solo woman in performance. Where chapters five and six present three distinctive, solo, and singular Belly Dancing-Selves, chapter seven analyses and compares how and why the reproduction of the female Self is so significant. Already, the three practitioners problematise the notion that the fantastical Belly Dancing identity is a homogenous one. Each Belly Dancing-Self proposes a variation on the theme, bringing forth different and complementary identities relating to a maternal role, working class prostitution and female excess. It remains that the performance of a *female* is a central figure in Belly Dance discourse and the three case studies offer a self which nurtures the female and “feminine” dance talent in others (Anne), a self in who reproduces a specific female Egyptian style and class of dancer (Caroline), and an embodiment of the female-self in excess during performance (myself).

I argue that Belly Dance needs to be considered as a performance art and a feminist act in addition to it possessing elements of dance. Dance, as prominent ethnographers, anthropologists and scholars have indicated, is a generalist and troubling term (Kaepllar 2001, 49, Buckland 1999, 3 and Reed 1998, 503), one that excludes the complexities of different forms, variations on a genre, social purpose, and one in which the dance-object itself might be a supplementary action within a multitude of actions found in a given *dance* genre. I refer to Goodman’s *Contemporary*

130 My own perspective is that Belly Dance is a female-centred performance art. This bias can be found in the identification of my unruly-performance-artist Belly Dancing-Self.

Feminist Theatres: Each to her own (1993, 183): “Some contemporary feminist theatres use performance art as an approach to their work – as a way of moving away from text-based theatre into more physical exploration of body language, gesture and movement.” I am suggesting here that broadening the definition of Belly Dance from dance genre to performance art¹³¹ and dance is a useful ontological shift. Belly Dance discourse refers specifically to the focus on the female body on display and the subsequent representation of *femaleness* in performance¹³². Consequently, Goodman’s description of performance art is closer to a definition of Belly Dance than a generalist *dance* term.

The physicality of the Belly Dancer being a woman, presenting movement of the body – especially the use of the pelvis – and the parading of the female-Self takes precedence over spoken text. However, speaking and communicating with the mouth, eyes and through humorous interaction with the audience is widespread practice in Egypt (see Lorius, 1996). Goodman provides practical and artistic reasons for the propensity of performance art amongst feminist theatre makers. I am not suggesting here that English Belly Dance practitioners are necessarily feminist in intention. Still, it remains that the “empowerment of women”¹³³ motif commonly asserted in Belly Dance discourse and scholarship indicates a semblance of feminist

131 Other characteristics of the dance include “dressing-up”, the use of humour and the musical accompaniment. Belly Dance is interdisciplinary by incorporating song, music, gestural patterning, audience interaction, costuming, variations on musical accompaniment and humour (Lorius, 1996, Kent & Franken 1998 and Young 1998).

132 The terms femininity, femaleness and sexuality are commonly used in Belly Dance discourse. It is not so clear what each term means and their common usage supports Butler’s notion that “their naturalised ontologies” are a result of repetition of the phallogocentrism revealing “the power regimes of heterosexism[.]...seek[ing] to augment themselves through a constant repetition of their logic, their metaphysics” (1990, 42), this is also evident in the Orientalist paradigm. I am using the word femaleness to encompass the notion of the presence and representation of a solo female performance artist in Belly Dance.

133 The empowerment of women has been variously debated and I refer to Dox’s (2006) notion that the empowerment to reveals one’s true “feminine” self in the Western performance of Belly Dance.

politics found within expectations of western practitioners and students alike (Bacon 2003, Dox 2006, Sellers-Young 2005, Bock 2005, Keft-Kennedy 2005, Laukkanen 2003 and Frühauf 2008).

7.6 Three English Belly Dancer's dis-identification with the Orientalist paradigm

I will describe how each case study through the embodiment of their distinctive Belly Dancing-Selves in performance relate to all three modes of identification with the Orientalist ideological landscape. All three practitioners share and demonstrate in common characteristics that identify their performances to be Belly Dance, in addition to presenting specific traces of their distinctive English Belly Dance inherited traditions in performance. In performance each practitioner oscillates between identification and dis-identification. Arguably counter-identification cannot exist (Pecheux 1982 and Prett, Farnsworth & Whelan's 2012 [under review])¹³⁴, in effect, there always needs to be a cultural and social reference point with which audiences and performer can negotiate and reformulate a Belly Dancing identity. The difference between their individual performances is the level of intensity each practitioner brings to the different modes of identification with the Orientalist ideological landscape.

Anne's cultural model of the female-nightclub-owning-impresario counter-identifies with the majority of male nightclub owners of earlier London Arab nightclub culture in the 1970s and 1980s. She remains within the Hilal pre-1997 tradition of three distinct Egyptian Raqs Sharqi styles, which reside within the identification mode of the Orientalist ideological landscape, even when Hilal argued that her "discovery" of the Classical, Baladi and Sha'abi was an effort to re-discover and to dis-identify with the Orientalist paradigm within the dance genre.

134 Prett, P, Farnsworth, V and Whelan, P (2012) Cultural Narrative and Ideological Webs: Identities of Female Engineers in the Ideological Landscape [under review] Manchester: Manchester University

In fact, Anne demonstrates within a Baladi workshop (Nottingham, 2012)¹³⁵ how a tradition and the fixity of the form is disrupted and “played” with in performance. She states: “When the masmoudi¹³⁶ is playing, the dancer takes her time, you feel the rhythm and you enter the dance floor space. When the rhythm changes from masmoudi to maqsoum then you need to pick up the pace, your movements need to be more percussive and suited to that faster rhythm” ([sic] 2012). Anne demonstrates the slow build up from masmoudi to maqsoum. Anne dis-identifies with the Orientalist ideology when she announces: “This is a guide. You don’t have to do exactly what I show you. Here, I am showing you ideas and how you can play with the movement and the rhythm – it is up to you.” Anne’s guidelines introduce the complex mixture of live music, different rhythmic patterns and timing. A dancer needs to employ a combination of movements both to relate to the music and also to bring an element of herself into the dancing. Anne is demonstrating the primacy of reinvention in the act of performance, with loose codes and conventions Anne encourages students to explore, find out what suits their own aesthetic and the rhythm of the drummer. There is not set rule, and the looseness of the form suggest a relaxed and non-conformist relationship with the Orientalist paradigm therein.

Anne’s dis-identification with the Orientalist mode is the introduction of the Self in the dance. One of the hardest questions to answer in her interview was the question concerning how she introduces herself and her creative vision into another culture’s dance form. Anne’s reply was

¹³⁵ Anne White (February, 2012) ‘Dancing to Live Music’ with Guy Schalom from The Baladi Blues band accompanying Anne on the Tabla drum (also known as the Darabuka). The workshop was part-funded by NADA (Northern Arabic Dance Association) and by Janet Rose from Belly Dance World in Nottingham.

¹³⁶ Masmoudi is an Egyptian 8/8 rhythm which characteristically presents a rhythmic tension in the music, creating a slow steady pace for the dancer. The Maqsoum a 4/4 rhythm is a faster paced rhythm which counters the slow held qualities of the Masmoudi rhythm, breaking into a faster pace and livelier presentation of the dance. The two rhythms are used within one piece of music to form a tension between slow held rhythm (masmoudi) with a faster, lively paced rhythm (maqsoum).

revealing: “I don’t, I am dancing in abeyance to the Middle East and my understanding of what the dance is. I pay attention to getting it right and my work is about that, it is about getting right and being appropriate to the Middle Eastern culture” (2010). Anne’s abeyance to the Hilal tradition and to Middle Eastern culture through her Belly Dance performances creates a tension between her own agency as a Belly Dancing-Self, which I detailed in earlier chapters, with the need, and I would argue the pressure, to embody a “culturally appropriate” dance performance which resides in Pecheux’s identifying mode.

Anne rarely performs these days, due to the rise in competition from younger Belly Dancers, and her work with Planet Egypt concentrates on the facilitation of other Belly Dance artists. In interview Anne details her awareness of specific cultural and social factors of Belly Dance performance, including stage craft, etiquette and specifically aspects of dancing for an “older” and “larger breasted” woman (interview, 2010). In effect, Anne’s dis-identification with the Orientalist ideology resides in the fact that she is an older and larger woman more than it is measured by any attempt to dis-identify with either Hilal or Middle Eastern dance tradition. In performance Anne continually wrestles with dis-identification and identification.

In performance both as a compere and Baladi specialist (a soloist performer dancing to a traditional/improvised music) Anne presents a mode of performing which identifies and dis-identifies with the Orientalist ideological landscape. In her compering role Anne mediates between what the audience is expecting and what the dancer has to offer in performance. Anne’s suggests that a Belly Dance audience has preconceived ideas of what a Belly Dance performance will entail in interview, she states “Before you go out and perform the audience already has an image of who and what you look like and what you are going to do” (2010). As a compere Anne’s role is to reduce audience anxiety concerning the content of the next performer. She uses

jokes, identifies people from the audience, details the next event or similar events that are occurring in the capital and provides a brief overview of the content of the next performance, the music, the style of performance and brief performance biography of the performer. In effect, Anne is smoothing the transition from not knowing to then encountering a new performer of Belly Dance. Her investment in a female-nightclub-owning-impresario is economically and socially invested in retaining a semblance of the Orientalist paradigm. To counter-identify and to dis-identify too strongly would in effect sabotage her business and her networks.

Caroline Afifi, by comparison, is more strident in her dis-identification, having attempted to counter-identify during her dance theatre career *Café Medina* (2005). Caroline uses a similar performance approach to Anne, in which identification of the Orientalist ideology is present and more recently associated with her simulation of a working-class Sha'abi reality. At the Egyptian nightclub simulation *Casino El Layl* Caroline creates a context, not unlike *Planet Egypt*, in which she performs on a small theatre stage, in an Egyptian-bought Sha'abi costume, with recent Egyptian Sha'abi music sourced from her latest visit to Cairo. She mouths words of the song and utilises a mixture of Buonaventura stylised dance theatre movements (loosely choreographed, and designed for the theatre stage with movement exaggeration), with extra "collected" Sha'abi movement like the abdominal contraction and release to present interest and a current Egyptian narrative of authenticity. Caroline switches between dis-identification and identification with ease. The framing of her dancing represents her up-to-date knowledge of the dancing contexts and practice found in the Egyptian nightclubs. It also allows a strategy of transforming the cultural logic from within Belly Dance whilst simultaneously avoiding permanent structural change to the dance.

Caroline's earlier dance theatre work *Forbidden Fruit* (1999) presented a Western fascination for the dance, and consciously used the undergirding Orientalist mythos for which each Belly Dance vignette within the whole dance theatre was an exemplar. For example the Burlesque dancers wore a bedlah costume and demonstrated the "thrust and grind" motif of Burlesque dance whilst performing to a comical piece of Western music. Caroline did not completely counter-identify with the Orientalist aesthetic present in her Burlesque rendition. She exposed it and the performance offered an alternative version. Caroline continued to represent the Orientalist mythos through her collaborative work with Wendy Buonaventura. A reconfiguration of *Dancing Girls* in 2002 narrated the nineteenth century Orientalist travel writer's fascination with the dancing girls of the Middle East. In one dance performance vignette Caroline enacted a solo narrating a travel writer's visit to a remote village. The village girl who was paid to perform was paid extra to dance bare-breasted. Caroline performs a dance and at the moment when the narrator reveals his intention to see the dance bare-breasted, Caroline turns away from the audience disrobes and as she begins to turn to face the audience the lights go down. Even though, *Dancing Girls* identified with the Orientalist ideology there were attempts to demonstrate both the inherent misogyny of the travellers' accounts and the resistance brought to bear on their circumstances by the dancers. Still both dance theatre pieces relied on and were consistently framed by the Orientalist ideology. *Dancing Girls* almost completely identified with the dominant mythos, but there were attempts to dis-identify with it to produce dramatic tension. Later work by Caroline attempted to counter-identify by presenting alternative expressions of the dance, specifically in the *Café Medina* (2004) site-specific performance. The intention of the Belly Dance performances at the beginning of the site-specific piece was to identify with the Orientalist concept of Belly Dance, when the bombing simulation took place the audience and

even the Belly Dancers activities were completely disrupted. Out of the chaos came a Belly Dancer dressed in black with no sequins and the music was a newly composed drum solo with the sound track of gun fire and machine guns. Caroline's solo counter-identified with the Orientalist mythos and offered a political and resistant narrative, one that witnessed a woman in the middle of a war zone fending off bullets with her hips. Finally, *Sabrina* (2006) offered another dance theatre narrative, using the Buonaventura tradition of spoken narrative with music, and dance vignettes. *Sabrina* presents a social and cultural commentary of the changing political, religious and personal landscapes of the Egyptian Belly Dancers. At this juncture, Caroline dis-identifies with the Orientalist mythos by narrating the Egyptian Belly Dancers "Self Exoticisation" of the Orientalist ideology, which details the gritty reality – not fantasy – of being a working Belly Dancer in Egypt. As discussed previously Caroline's later dance theatre work represents a break from the Buonaventura tradition, and the formation of her new ideas concerning her travel, study and reassessment of her own dancing whilst living in Egypt for an extended period of time. From early dance theatre work it is possible to see a significant shift towards more dis-identification with the Orientalist mythos and an attempt even to counter-identify in *Café Medina*. Her final dance theatre piece gained critical acclaim within the Belly Dance audiences – an audience that is more regularly in contact with the Egyptian Belly Dance reality of working full time as an artist in the field – but was unable to sustain a touring show due to finances and little interest from regional and national venues. Caroline states: "I take quite a bit of time to get a piece like that together, and these days I am not sure if it is relevant to continue putting this dance on the theatre stage" (2009). My analysis also considers the fact that *Sabrina*'s stronger dis-identification with the Orientalist mythos may have also led to institutions not being able to recognise or appreciate the social documentary a Belly Dance theatre

performance could offer their audiences. It's dis-identification with the standard Orientalist mythos made it unrecognisable and commercially unviable.

Her move from the formal dance theatre setting to a more informal theatre at a Royal Legion venue in Liverpool for Casino El Layl maintains the Buonaventura dance theatre tradition.

Unlike Planet Egypt's same level audience and dance floor, Casino raises the dance floor level higher than the audience seating arrangement. The framing of the Orientalist mythos is conventional and it continues to identify and reiterate the Orientalist mythos, allowing in some cases invited guest artists to attempt to counter-identify. Caroline is outspoken concerning the counter-identification tactics of the American Tribal Belly Dancers and Fusionists. She insists: "They are not doing Belly Dance and should not be on the same billing. If I get a ticket for a Belly Dance show I expect to see Belly Dancers not bloody Vampires, for God's sake" (2009). Caroline oscillates between Orientalist mythos (attempting to identify with the Egyptian Sha'abi version of Self-Exoticism) and dis-identification, allowing for some room to reconfigure the dance genre, allowing particular strategies to transform the cultural logic from within Belly Dance whilst simultaneously avoiding permanent structural change.

Finally my work, like Anne and Caroline's, has had different phases of identifying and dis-identifying. Initially, when first referencing Pêcheux's typology I assumed that my performance work was largely counter-identification. Where Anne spends the majority of her work dancing between identification and dis-identification, and Caroline strategizes dis-identification along the lines of a more Egyptian-inspired Self-Exoticisation with the Orientalist mythos, I have attempted to dis-identify with the Orientalist mythos through feminist commentary, live performance art and an adoption of the excess reiterative mode Butler (1990) and Karayanni (2004)referenced earlier. The majority of my University based dance work (performance work I

consciously did not share with the wider Belly Dance audiences) and my more recent performance work within the community present an animated oscillation between identification through to excessive dis-identification. In performance I strategise dis-identity, one that is based in the Buonaventura experimental performance of Belly Dance with reference to the Orientalist mythos. In fact, on closer inspection, my dis-identification is stronger than that shown by Caroline and more strident in its attempts to subvert and resist the cultural logic within Belly Dance. I do, however, enact permanent structural change, whereas Caroline continues to reinforce and advocate an Egyptian narrative of authenticity with attributing structural codes and conventions, which she considers to be vital as a method of resisting the Fusionist and Tribal Belly Dance styles imported from America.

My performance experiments *Tea for Two* (2004) and *Enta Omri* (2005) were based on audience-interactive concepts from Belly Dance fieldwork analysis conducted in Egypt (2003-2004). The first considered the cross-cultural contextualisation of the dance, the latter a performance/workshop experiment with which to interrogate different levels of audience participation with the dance. An earlier experiment *Me and a Gun* (2001) shown at a national Belly Dance event in Glastonbury again demonstrates my search for meaning, specifically with the sex and sexual content of the dance movements. Each performance represented a form of dis-identification; an attempt to break with the Orientalist paradigm, but in fact needed a reference point – via music, dress code, movement form – as a method of identifying with the dance genre.

Later performance work, mainly solo performances shown in venues across the country, illustrates a different mode of approaching the subject of modes of identification within the Orientalist ideological landscape. In fact the mode of excessive dis-identification and

identification represents my recent performance work in the field. The relationship to the Orientalist mythos includes complete identification to the point of ridicule, and then slips into dis-identification – neither opting to identify or strictly oppose it. This dis-identification strategy delivers a repetition of the phallogocentric logic found in the Orientalist paradigm and continues to copy to the point of excess which in turn subverts the Belly Dance trope from within. In fact the subversion, in the process of performance, tends to slip towards a new, completely different alternative to the Orientalist mythos, but only fleetingly.

An example of the different modes of identification in performance can be found in my performance of *Tahtil Shibbek* both at Planet Egypt (London, 2011), Casino El Layl (Liverpool, 2011) and Sahara Nights (Nottingham, 2012). The song *Tahtil Shibbek* is a traditional Baladi song, the version used for the performance is sung by the renowned singer Fatme Serhan, whose voice is famously known for its strength and emotional qualities. The music follows the dynamic of *masmoudi* to *maqsoum*, a slow held rhythm contrasted with a fast flowing rhythm (used during the chorus of the song). I enter the space and I walk around on display and, promenading, I gesture sweet pleasantries to my audience and keep eye-contact throughout. Already the performance is simple, there are no turns, complicated movements or sophisticated choreography – I present myself in an all sequined red costume. Then I pick up the *masmoudi* rhythm and continue to introduce myself to the audience, raising my arms to frame individual audience members in my physical sphere of reference and moving my hips or swaying gently to the rhythm. Again there is no complexity in terms of dance technique or volume of different movement configuration. The challenge to the audience is myself, me in costume, and my demands in performance for their total attention. Already, the use of time and music to “set-up” the performer in performance is excessive. Audience members expecting more choreography are

disappointed, others are challenged by my direct gaze back at them and for others the build up of simple movements to the single rhythmic beat of the masmoudi rhythm heightens the anxiety. At first the audience saw the signs of the Oriental in the dancer's costume, the music and the generosity of spirit. That initial encounter turns and changes towards excessive dis-identification with their gaze and need to be reinforced in the certainty of an Oriental mythos – which transforms into a narcissism and deflected humour. The tension is broken by my use of more movement, loose choreography and when I catch the chorus (singing the words *Tahtil Shibbak* [you walk past my window]) the rhythm changes to masmoudi. I use recognisable elaborate and emphatic hip drop movements and raise the pace of my hip work. I then interject the recognisable hip work with expressive use of hand signals, lip-syncing with the song, and hold the movement in dynamic stillness. I approach audience members, signalling, singing, and with a crazy intent in my eyes. I stop close to, almost on top of an audience member, and the audience laugh – the anxiety and hysteria accompanied by release and relief that I don't collide or challenge any further – complicates the performance and in effect counter-identifies with the Orientalist certainty of a pleasant, anxiety-free performance. The *Tahtil Shibbak* performance oscillates between identification towards dis-identification of the Orientalist ideological landscape. There is a running commentary within my performance of the Orientalist ideological landscape. I attempt to resist it, excessively represent it and co-exist with a strategy that works with and against the dominant ideology. It would indicate that there is room to play and it is my foremost performance strategy.

The oscillation, I would argue, is in fact the mode of operating used by Egyptian Belly Dancers, who in fact continually move between identify with their self-exoticisation and also dis-identify with it. By being a Belly Dancer they are in effect is to defy the Egyptian cultural and social

mores expected of a woman (Roushdy 2010 and McDonald 2010) and by default have access to this mode of expression and identification within the Belly Dance trope. A more essential aspect to each Belly Dancer's relationship with these different modes of identification is the dis-identification mode, which illustrates the requirement to co-exist with and within the patriarchal constructs of "femininity" and female-ness.

7.7 Conclusion

A Belly Dancer situates her Belly Dance performance on the intersection of dis-identification and identification with the Orientalist ideological landscape. Explicitly, the Orientalist mythos is "inside" the mix and the performer finds through her own construction of her Belly Dancing-Self a response with which she can amplify and or lessen her identification with the dominant ideology through specific performance strategies. Where Shay and Sellers-Young assert that the Belly Dancer "is found at the intersection of dance vocabulary, media images, the feminist and sexual liberation movements, cultural appropriations and the community of origin" (2003, 25), I emphasise that in practice and representation there is a slippage between ubiquitous use of the Orientalist dominant ideology and the active dis-identification with it in performance and teaching practices.

The Belly Dance trope initially it would seem upholds a dominant patriarchal narrative: the Orientalist ideological landscape which promotes an excessively misogynist and chauvinist perspective of women and ethnicity. However, I would argue that Belly Dance provides a platform with which performance artists are able to engage and attempt to dis-identify with the Orientalist mythos more overtly than is found in other performance genres. Belly Dance offers a site not for sexual and cultural subversion but for an interrogation of the sexual and cultural

Walk Like an Egyptian

Siouxsie Cooper

politics of representing female otherness through the display of an excessive and defiant female-self in performance.

Chapter 8**8. Conclusion: An English Belly Dance past and present****8.1 Introduction**

The research question concerning whether it is possible for an English Belly Dancer to achieve an authentic Belly Dance performance problematises several key issues relating to identity and the performance of another cultural dance form. The issues of being a Belly Dancer, being an English woman Belly Dancing, and the notion that there is some form of Belly Dance that is authentic over another expose the complex matrix of self, identity, ethnicity, gender and post-colonial politics negotiated by a Belly Dance practitioner in England. The research question itself presents the oxymoron English Belly Dance. The research process required a search for a method of understanding the knowledge exchange practitioners' reference in order to construct their practice, the result of which identified no single authenticating source. In actual fact, the cultural exchange of Belly Dance has been active in England and outside Egyptian borders and boundaries for over a century. What is significant is the recent Belly Dance "cultural turn" towards Egypt with the advent of the new Modern Cairo style, easier access to travel to Egypt and access to the internet by Egyptian and non-Egyptian Belly Dancers. When authenticity is seen as a functional exponent, one that is in constant exchange through various levels of transfer, from the exchange of cultural value, the exchange of 'femininity', and the exchange of Orientalist mythos. The research highlights the function of narrative as a functional exponent of what is constructed and narrated by an individual practitioner to denote "authenticity". Through this approach the narratives of authenticity can be examined and relationships between the dance found in Egypt and the construction of a Belly Dance performance in England identified. The

examination of narratives both past and present describes an identifiable English Belly Dance identity, one that presents the various narratives and specific Belly Dancing-Selves each practitioner develops in order to distinguish themselves from others. In reference to the initial research question, there is an identifiable English Belly Dance identity, one that is able to produce an authentic Belly Dancing performance.

8.2 The research methodology and critical framework

With reference to both the research methodology and critical framework, the focus brought to the reflexive ethnographic mode of inquiry by Holland et al's figured worlds and the critical incidents (Bruner 1996) as the unit of analysis offered a close and structured method of observing personal crises relating to the development of a Belly Dance practice. These units for analysis accounted for a changing English Belly Dance identity, revealing the importance of a prior English Belly Dance tradition and the change found in the early 2000s towards an Egypt-focus on Belly Dance instruction. The advantages of this method when dealing with myself as a case study and colleagues in the field was to examine intimate narratives of professional practice not necessarily accessible to an "outsider". Although this form of inquiry does present specific ethical concerns when dealing with informants (with the researcher as one of the case studies the process may become almost narcissistic), but remains productive. When each case study's practice spans at least a decade there needs to be a form of organising this data. The anxiety over the subject of authenticity suggested the need to identify anxiety and crisis in the primary data. The external and internal forces relating to each case study provided a personal/public profile of the communal activity of constructing a Belly Dance identity over time. It highlighted the relational activity of constructing a feminine self in dance, one that requires an exploration of Self in relation to other Belly Dancers. There is no Self in isolation, although there is an elastic

relationship to membership of a shared community of practice, which the critical framework recognises.

It is inevitable over time a practitioner will change allegiances, interests within a dance practice and possibly leave the community entirely. Wenger (1991, 1996, 1998) and Holland et al's (2001) model allowed for peripheral to full membership of a community of shared practice. The sliding continuum describes how practitioners manage their Belly Dancing-Selves and their domestic, work and other lives which may not be related to the Belly Dance community at all. In a sense, the Belly Dance identities found in England are not fixed. They are changing also describing the Belly Dance form itself. Not only does the structure of the dance genre influence the process of finding it but the process of finding it – and at times not finding it – informs the structure of the dance. The critical framework emphasises both external and internal influences that play a major role in the forming of each practitioner's engagement within the field, and resultant Belly Dancing-Self. However, it did not allow for the complexities of gender relations found within the form and the form's relationship to the Orientalist paradigm, whereas Pecheux's (1982) identification trident model offered a simple but effective solution.

There are disadvantages to a logocentric model of identifying the logos by which each practitioner is motivated and narrating their Belly Dancing-Self. Dance research and dance ethnography aims to describe and analyse the movement, and the kinaesthetic and social-political qualities within. The logocentric model emerges from the literary and linguistic culture of criticism, one which privileges language over movement. It would therefore follow that the study of dance movement and the study of language do not concur. With reference to Kaepllar (1972) and Williams (1976) there are exceptions within the dance ethnography field, but still this logocentric method has its bias towards what people say and the construction of meaning through

the signifier and poetic of performance more than it does the movement and felt meaning commonly found in dance studies. Nevertheless, the logocentric method used alongside the kinaesthetic work together to produce a broad perspective on what is being practised and represented in the act of making, training and performing. These actions are not purely kinaesthetic and they are not pure cerebral either. The gap between kinaesthetic and intellectual knowledge is still an area of debate and uncertainty in academia (Sklar 2001), something this project contributes towards.

8.3 Structure of the thesis

By comparison to the case study chapters five and six, the historical case study presented in chapter three is clearly defined. This is due to the relative order and sense made from the literature collected. By comparison the case study work and dealing with primary data collected in the form of interviews, diaries, observation notes and attending performance retains a loose structure and search for sense in the act of writing up the research. The search for cohesion in the non-Western dance form performed by Westerners privileges the cognitive approach of building sense out of disorder. A clash of knowledge cultures (Said 1999), especially dance knowledge cultures, is apparent by the end of the thesis. With a relatively cohesive Belly Dancing identity describing Hilal and Buonaventura's practices in chapter three, this chapter remains the central English Belly Dance axis around which the processes of constructing and identifying current English Belly Dance practice is measured, contextualised and by comparison appears fragmentary.

Points of interest

The Self is a dominant unit of interest, primarily through the use of the critical incidents and the narrative case study methodology. However, the Self also describes the research subject the search for the English Belly Dancer, a solo female performer (more recently male Belly Dancers have included themselves into the frame), but fundamentally the construction of the Belly Dancing-Self is the unit of study. It would appear that the research is heavily weighted towards a feminist interpretation and an almost narcissistic representation of the English female performance artists. It remains that identity, on many levels, is a significant site for Belly Dance inquiry. In this case the actual embodiment, narration and self-absorption are needed to produce a charged Belly Dance performance and persona. In retrospect, it would have been controversial but possibly more productive to use a radical feminist critical framework and perspective which approves of the use of reversals of patriarchal normative as a method of breaking the binary codes and conventions (Daly 1984, Dworkin 1981, hooks 1986, Rich 1976). Keft-Kennedy's (2005) use of Russo's (1994) *grotesque* may have provided another approach that would have complemented the excessive use of the female Self as the unit for analysis in this project.

Baudrillard's (1983) definition of seduction, in which the reciprocal exchange of intimacies leading towards the suggestion of a promise of coitus, on the theme of excess, is an interesting perspective on the exchange performed during a Belly Dance performance. The majority of audience members for a Belly Dance performance in England are women, the opposite is the case in Egypt. Therefore the seduction metaphor and performance of the contagion of a sexual promise may have less impact when studying the field site in England. It also suggests another level of research and analysis – not the scope of this project – in which the prime site for

investigation is the audience responses to movement and the poetics of seduction and pleasure in performance.

The logocentric model used to define the distinctive and distinguishing characteristics of English Belly Dance tradition, current English Belly Dance practice and each practitioner's Belly Dancing-Self lends itself to marketing theory and concepts of branding. These are an intrinsic element found within a predominantly enterprise-based dance community (Cooper 2005). They also appear in the historical case studies of Hilal and Buonaventura, who are some of the first practitioners in England to employ these marketing tactics to ensure a prominent role in the national scene and international ethnoscape. The use of the terms ethnoscape and community absorbs the concept of markets and the underlying economic exchange of cultural value pertaining to any given form of Belly Dance. It is worth noting that there is a presence of marketing practice which underlines the formation of a Belly Dancing-Self, one that needs to compete in an aggressive market globally.

8.4 An English Belly Dance past

The narratives of authenticity adopted by pioneering English Belly Dancers (see chapter three) emphasised a blood-line narrative, one which would eventually be rejected in favour of their emerging practices and resultant Belly Dancing-Selves. The findings also illustrate the differing approaches each practitioner had towards teaching, movement vocabulary and performance work. Their different approaches indicate separate aesthetic and ideological underpinning principles which contributed to their own specific narratives of authenticity. These narratives would be later adopted by their students, providing an inherited tradition with which to build their own Belly Dancing-Selves while avoiding the need for a bloodline narrative of authenticity.

The Hilal and Buonaventura tradition represents the coalescing of an identifiable English Belly Dance community (Wenger, 1996) through their joint, though divergent, efforts to bring Belly Dance to the dance theatre stage. Arguably their ambition to raise the cultural value of Belly Dance, in a cultural context where Belly Dance had little cultural value, did not succeed.

A by-product of Hilal and Buonaventura's ambition was the rise in the social and educational value of the dance. Neither artist worked or taught in Egypt or the Middle East until later in their careers¹³⁷. It still remains that through their educational activities sub-communities of artists and students congregated around one or the other practitioner, seeking guidance and training. This pattern of establishing a dance career in Belly Dance in England persists.

Hilal's frequent changing of collaborative groups of dancers and artistic directors, and her permanent move abroad, indicates the lack of sustainability of Hilal Dance in England. It is questionable that Hilal's ambition was to form a specific English identity in Belly Dance: It was probably more incidental, and due in part to the cultural diversity policy which privileged artists like the Yemini/Egyptian Hilal over an English practitioner like Buonaventura.

The introductory pages on the Hilal Dance website describe Hilal's international ambition by narrating the relationship her contemporary art dance form has with Egypt. It states:

Hilal Dance is the art dance based on all the creative, theatrical and educational work of Suraya Hilal. Avant-garde artist, Hilal, drawing upon her Arab-Egyptian cultural roots and her extensive research, has brought a new culture to the contemporary dance world...[...]Hilal Dance essentially draws upon ancient roots maintaining the 'original spirit', and through refined aesthetics, expands the expressive potential,

¹³⁷ Buonaventura taught on dance holidays conducted in Spain, Morocco and Dahab, Egypt during the 2000s. Hilal did not teach in Egypt but brought her *Beloved* tour to Egypt in the early 1990s to mixed acclaim and interest from Egyptian audiences.

creating a contemporary and progressive language, that reaches beyond geographic boundaries. [Last accessed 10th June, 2012]¹³⁸

Hilal's ambition to compete and be aligned with contemporary dance practice outside the newly forming Belly Dance community England was, in fact, her primary focus. The coalescing of an English Belly Dance community was not. Buonaventura's exile to Bristol and the development of her own group of collaborators was beset by political intrigue and in-fighting. It might seem that collaboration within the Belly Dance community was generally difficult. In fact, there are many instances where this is not the case¹³⁹.

Buonaventura continued to produce dance theatre work for the stage and, later, other contexts and mediums in which dance was becoming increasingly found (film, television, radio).

Buonaventura found value as a writer and commentator of Belly Dance (1989), specifically the dance found in the West rather than in the Middle East (she rarely travelled to Egypt and the Middle East from the early 1990s). Later, her work encompassed other world dance forms in *I Put a Spell on You* (2003) and other dance writing/advocacy ventures.

The scope of entrepreneurial opportunities available for a Belly Dancer exceeds the need to perform, and Buonaventura's example presents numerous instances for a change of focus in a given Belly Dance career. Significantly, Hilal continues to perform, Buonaventura does not. Their legacy also brought forward a culture of assimilation, reaction and rejection, a culture which underpins their working relationship and their own forms of the dance. It seems that Belly

138 See Hilal Dance website for full details and description <http://www.hilaldance.com/hilal-dance/hilal-dance-about.php> [last accessed 10th June 2012]

139 Examples of collaborative work in the Belly Dance field include: The Raqs Sharqi Society, JWAAD collaborations with Farida Dance and Charlotte Desorgher etc

Dance in England is not only an inherited dance but also a method of working with another culture's dance form.

Hilal and Buonaventura's careers describe a particular international pathway, one in which both artists developed their own style and presentation of the dance on the theatre stage, to rival the import to England of American trained Belly Dancers. What they did not account for was the decrease in air travel prices to the Middle East. The next generation of Belly Dance teachers and dance theatre makers were able to access the Middle East, particularly Egypt, for reference, training and other enterprises. The impact of the relative easy access to Belly Dance performances and training in Egypt found Buonaventura devotees encountering aspects of the dance omitted or rejected by Buonaventura previously. A similar experience has transpired for Raqs Sharqi devotees, although it remains the case that a large majority of Hilal inheritors have not travelled to the Middle East; it seems that Hilal's blood-line narrative sufficed.

Buonaventura's omission and the resultant cultural distortion left by Hilal have had a dramatic impact on the next generation of dancers.

With the importation of Egyptian Belly Dance stars to England since the early 2000s there has been a significant "reality check" for each group of devotees. The easy international exchange of Belly Dance over the last decade has brought into sharp focus issues concerning the construction and interpretation of Belly Dance found in England. The "thickness"¹⁴⁰ of the form found in Egypt and the impact of a different cultural context within which to perform Belly Dance are key sites for a revision of both the Hilal and Buonaventura traditions.

140 I am referring to Clifford Geertz's (1993) definition of "thickness" which describes elements of emic ethnography, a perspective of a culture from the inside, that is not translatable or transmissible due to the culturally specific codes and conventions found within.

8.5 English Belly Dance present and closer ties with Egyptian Belly Dance

Present English Belly Dance practice borrows significantly from the pre-1997 Raqs Sharqi tradition, which Hilal formulated and codified into three specific forms of dance found in Egyptian social and urban dance. An example of the transition from the Hilal tradition to a new English Belly Dance tradition is the transformation of Sha'abi, denoted as a folkloric style of dance (commonly associated with Upper Egyptian styles of dance specifically the Saaidi region) in the Hilal tradition but replaced with an urban popular Sha'abi dance style now found in the repertoire of Caroline Afifi. Hilal's influence is substantial, but the traditions led by Hilal have seen current English Belly Dancers alter and modify the dance based on their own experiences and research based in Egypt. Hilal designed the initial template to draw students' attention to the various forms of dancing found in Egypt and that has led to efforts by current practitioners to broaden Hilal's triptych into a broader spectrum of dance styles from Egypt.

Similar borrowing and influence has occurred in Buonaventura's bricolage dance theatre, as epitomised by the fusionist and Tribal Belly Dance styles of Belly Dance found in England. Tribal Belly Dance is again another invented form of dance inspired by the Belly Dance trope. Significantly it is American in design and therefore a global ambition with a pseudo-group dance narrative of authenticity (see Frühauf 2008, Maira 2008 and Sellers-Young 2005). Tribal Belly Dancers utilise Buonaventura's bricolage effect in costuming, musical accompaniment and presentation of the dance. Other dancers, not in the Tribal group, also utilise the exploration and experimentation of Belly Dance in theatres, performance art and other contexts. Buonaventura's permissive position concerning the "purity" of the dance and the permission given to artists to find and state their own artistic ambition has given license to a myriad of Belly Dance-inspired hybrid dance forms and performance styles.

From this earlier tradition English Belly Dance continues to source the dance pedagogy and lexicon inherited from Buonaventura and Hilal. The changes that have occurred in the community concern direct contact and continuing exchanges with practitioners based in Cairo. Initially, the research scope of this thesis included English practitioners based and working in Cairo, Egypt. These practitioners trained in either the Hilal or Buonaventura traditions and then moved to Cairo in search of further training and employment. Sarah Farouk (initially Buonaventura trained and then Hilal trained) continues to work in the field as a trainer, intermittently as a performer and an entrepreneur. She lives permanently in Cairo, Egypt. Yasmina of Cairo (also known as Francesca Wright) established herself as a key figure in the nightclubs and weddings of Cairo during the mid and late 1990s and continues to perform and teach internationally. More recently, Scottish dancer Lorna Gow has embarked on a professional Belly Dance career in Cairo. My access to them has not been consistent enough to build detailed case studies. However, their contributions in interview have proven useful. Yasmina describes her reasons for leaving England in search of a more “authentic” experience of the dance and training in Egypt:

Well in the context of how people dance in Egypt, I was immediately asked why are you bending your knees so much? Why are you doing this? And it was a new way of being taught. It was a combination of being taught a new technique, combined with unlocking the meaning of the songs within the language, watching lots of other dancers, having that experience of the music coming through the body and by the actual experience of living there and that cultural experience coming through the dance. The dance trainers were Raqia Hassan, who is really, with Dina, the founder of Modern Egyptian style. That was a process in itself [the development of the Modern Cairo style]. Those teachers have a background in the Reda Troupe and ballet in their training. They would have an idea of classical dance as a base. [...]..Very early on I had the experience of working with Suraya Hilal, which was not of use later on, but very useful for discipline, you know, learning in a disciplined way. The movements that I discovered in Egypt were very, very

different and I had to learn a new vocabulary. Dance performance, it is a mixture working on strong technique mixed with a deeper understanding of the music you dance to and the culture it comes from.

(interview at JOY, April 2011)

Yasmina is candid about the Hilal legacy in her initial training and also the differences it presented when training and dancing in Egypt. The contextual analysis Yasmina alludes to in her interview offers an insight into the methods of transformation that occurred during her dancing career in Egypt. When asked how long it took to complete the task Yasmina states, “All the time I was dancing in Cairo, I was on my journey, I was learning and learning. Ironically when I stopped dancing it happened” (Ibid, 2011). When Yasmina stopped dancing she had to build a new career, which included teaching and performing outside Egypt. Using her credentials as a professional Belly Dancer in Egypt Yasmina was able to construct her narrative of authenticity to form a distinctive Belly Dancing-Self, one that included the higher cultural and economic value gained by being located in Egypt, but also one that borrowed the higher social and educational value found in England. Yasmina became *The English Rose of Cairo*, a formula now adopted by other European and American dancers based in Egypt, including *Lorna of Cairo*.

8.3 Implications

8.3.1 What are the implications for Belly Dance in England and its future?

One clear result of this research has been the uncovering of an English Belly Dance tradition; one that is not necessarily immediately associated with Egypt, for there clearly exists several narrative strands with the American Belly Dance tradition. With this in mind, it is significant to state that the different pasts from which an English Belly Dance practitioner inherits inform her practice. It is also possible to identify traces of a previous English Belly Dance past through specific styling, movement and framing of the dance in their current practices.

Another significant finding is the intense level of competition for funding, audiences and the need to innovate beyond the boundaries of any particular past influence, in order to build a distinctive contribution to Belly Dance in England. It remains that both Hilal and Buonaventura fundamentally contributed new ideas, new forms and approaches to the dance that may equal or even surpass the work of the American Jamila Salimpour and Egyptian Raqia Hassan. Hilal's influence remains through a specific dance lexicon and triptych of distinctive Egyptian-inspired dance styles. Buonaventura, probably even more than Hilal, had to push the boundaries of innovation, in part, due to a lack of institutional support. Another reason is that her ambition was to create a dance theatre genre, one that not only utilised music and dancing but also writing, poetry, song, movement, actors and other devices of Western theatre and performance practices. Buonaventura took greater risks and, as her work fragmented with the use of different mediums and more current narratives concerning Belly Dance practice, the risks became too great. Even though it would seem that Hilal's influence is more traceable and significant, I think Buonaventura's legacy appears even in this research document more clearly; research, writing and performance-making are the cornerstone of her practice.

Today, Buonaventura and Hilal's strident and early approaches to building a self-brand are still evident in the work of current English Belly Dance practitioners. It is not of sole important to recreate the past: current practitioners are forging *new* links with practitioners across the globe. From these influences and exchanges, new forms of Belly Dance are emerging in England. A prominent example, one that is not fully addressed in this thesis, is the rising influence and formation of American Tribal Belly Dance style groups across the country. The focus of this research is the practitioners who refer to Egypt and Egyptian style Belly Dance as one of the main narratives of authenticity. This in fact becomes the pivot around which debate concerning

authenticity continues – also for American Tribal Style Belly Dancers – as Egypt is the location from which the majority of Belly Dancers source authority in Belly Dance. In fact, Caroline, Anne and I build on the notion of Egyptian-ness in our practice to include specific aspects of the “Egyptian” experience of the dance.

Anne’s example of a madame-like persona, representing a woman of a certain “stature” in the community, enables others to fulfil their Belly Dancing fantasy and is a model of operating within the Egyptian Belly Dance workplace. These women are known as Almeh (singular) or Awalim (plural). Caroline sits squarely on her regular visits to Egypt, her marriage to an Egyptian and her working-class links to a specific popular urban dance style (Sha’abi). She is the embodiment of a tour guide to the Egyptian urban folk development from Oriental to a distinct Sha’abi form of Belly Dance. In the folk ensemble *Funoon Aljezeera Arabia* performed in Leeds 2012, Caroline presented an Egyptian Sha’abi solo alongside Moroccan, Tunisian, Saudi and other folk dance performance. It was announced that the music accompanying her performance was a recent recording of Sha’abi music played live at an Egyptian nightclub, around the time of the Egyptian revolution. My own narrative exists in between Egypt and my affiliation with academia, thereby authenticating my field knowledge of Egyptian Belly Dance through academia.

8.6 What are the implications for the wider field of dance scholarship?

The use of Bruner’s critical incidents in conjunction with Holland et al, Wenger and Gee’s cultural models theory to examine the personal histories, heuristic processes of Belly Dance development and identity formation has brought forward a new methodological approach and critical framing of dance related narrative case study research. The approach illustrated both marco and micro (Desmond, 1997) levels of research material, which allowed for the

examination of the assimilation of another culture's tradition and the subsequent reaction to, rejection of and movement towards forming different case-specific Belly Dancing-Selves. This method of building case study narratives, framed by a social science theory of education and identity formation, represents a new approach in dance research methodology, one in which it is possible to study more closely the personal agency a dancer brings to her practice.

In this case the critical incidents highlighted the personal and creative practice of each practitioner. It appears that not only are these practitioners making a choice concerning their practice but those choices also have an impact on their daily lives. The lives of female dancers are not easily extracted from the daily life of family and making enough money to live on.

Where earlier research, especially that conducted in Egypt (Nieuwkerke 1995), may point out the unfavourable social and cultural conditions of Belly Dancers in Egypt, it has also been brought to the attention of this research that the social and cultural conditions of English practitioners can be just as complicated, difficult and socially excluding in some circumstances.

Another significant contribution to dance studies is the further identification of the Orientalist paradigm that underpins non-Western dance forms; this is particularly evident in Belly Dance practice. The underlying common aesthetic and ideological principle is the Orientalist mythos, as described by Dox (2006). The strategies to identify, dis-identify and counter-identify with the Orientalist mythos have different amounts of risk and compromise. To counter-identify with the Orientalist mythos is to take on risk: the audience has no reference point and the embodiment of another form of female in performance threatens excess (Russo 1994, Rowe 1996 and Keft-Kennedy 2005). By attempting to subvert completely and construct a new identity outside the Orientalist paradigm the Belly Dance performance is unrecognisable and the Belly Dancer risks becoming a pariah in her own community.

The most common identification strategy employed by English Belly Dance practitioners is to dis-identify, which in performance reinforces the Orientalist mythos enough so that it is recognisable, whilst simultaneously in *suis generis* the Belly Dancer exposes the patriarchal construct that is the harem fantasy. The Belly Dancer performs its inherent sexist, chauvinist and racist intensions and binaries in a Belly Dance performance, whilst simultaneously upholding the Orientalist landscape to which the Belly Dancer's existence is rooted. As a consequence, I argue that Belly Dance in England is a feminist action. Belly Dance performance employs high-humour, satire and a *performative* masquerade of alleged otherness simultaneously to maintain order whilst transgressing and subverting the heterosexual normative at the foundation of the performance. Pêcheux's (1982) theory is useful and concurs with radical feminist findings in which the struggle with language and the irresolvable binaries within it complicate the task of describing a woman's experience in patriarchy, in this case in Belly Dance performance.

In terms of the research question concerning how authenticity in the performance of Belly Dance can be achieved by English Belly Dance practitioners, it is important to consider the cycle of the assimilation and rejection of past practice in order to invent and establish a new tradition. As previously argued, authenticity is most successfully described as a narrative (Foucault 1989), a fiction constructed with reference to the overriding Orientalist paradigm associated with Belly Dance practice in both the East and the West (Sellers-Young and Shay 2003), in order to negotiate, claim and brand a particular practitioner's authority and distinctive Belly Dance identity.

The use of narratives of authenticity is a significant method of processing and examining the construction of ownership and tradition in any dance genre. In the case of Belly Dance performed by Westerners in a Western context the concept of "authenticity" is dominant.

Without it incumbent practitioners cannot establish a platform for recognition and distinctiveness in the field. It is a striking mechanism that is applied across the board, in both non-Western and Western dance forms. As Kealiinohomoku (1969) and later Buckland remind us, “All dances are ethnic, just some are more ethnic than others” (1999). Once applied to a dance field like Belly Dance, the notion of narratives of authenticity facilitate a researcher’s attempt to comprehend the processes of building a ‘tradition’. It also offers a method of comprehending the complex issues of an enterprise-based dance genre, one in which specific forms of cultural capital apply to the establishment of a Belly Dancing-Self. Bourdieu (1986) indicates how interrelated cultural, social, economic and educational values can produce purpose, validity, and “authenticity”, and distinguish one Belly Dancer from another. Consequently, narratives of authenticity are the forces found in any given dance practice that reside between the discourses surrounding the production of movement training and performance practices.

The methodological approach is a unique approach, one that has not been utilised before in the dance field. Where dance ethnography maintains a focus on the people in the field (Aull Davies 2008, Buckland 1999, Amit 2000 and Coffey 1999), the social science theories of education and identity formation allow for a closer examination of individual agency beyond the concerns of constructing historical movements (Thomas 1995). With respect to cross-cultural dance practices, the position of the Western practitioner and her assimilation of another, non-Western form is an elusive unit for research. Again, context and the social and cultural milieu in which a dancer and the dance community belong are of primary interest in research projects like this one. However, how we conceive of what constitutes context and how elements of meaning are interrelated (Gee 2001) are of interest for this type of research, one in which cultural and constructed identities are contested. The role of the researcher’s own practice is a key aspect of

maintaining a perspective with regard to examining what is said and what is actually made in an English Belly Dance practice.

8.6 Conclusion

Fifi Abdou made her fortune in Egypt from the 1960s to the early 2000s as a Belly Dancer. Fifi Abdou 's example and the large size of her riches, influence and power gained through her profession stand testimony to the enduring appeal and ambivalence with which Egyptians embrace Belly Dance and the Belly Dancer. As Buonventura states, "In countries where women are obliged by law to cover themselves completely the object is to remove what is considered their dangerous disruptive sexual presence. The irony of course is that what's hidden then becomes the subject of fantasy. What's unavailable becomes all the more incessantly pursued" (1998). This dramatic tension found in the hidden/revealed binary to some extent has its roots in Western theatrical tradition and analysis (Dox, 2006); it also remains a cultural practice in Egypt. Buonventura also points out that the acoustic movements of Middle Eastern dance change from "largely improvised to largely choreographed" when performed on a Western stage. The dramatic tension between what is seen and what is hidden is now designed for a different cultural context. Buonventura is aware of this transition in her work and suggests that one of "the challenges of creating [Belly Dance] performance work is how to move this dance forward and make it work for a Western audience without sacrificing the essential spirit, its emotional expression, its inner drama and quiet self-contained quality" (Ibid, 1998). The value judgement of the importance of "moving it forward" obviously indicates a Western feminist perspective concerning Middle Eastern women, a pertinent bias highlighted by both Dox (2006) and Maira (2008). However, Buonventura's search to retain qualities of the dance that appealed to her aesthetic values and performance ambitions, and at the same time negotiated the differing

cultural performance contexts, movement styling and inherited traditions that accompanied the formation of her unique Arab Dance theatre, continue in the English Belly Dance practices of today. By its very circuitous nature past English Belly Dance practice will inform the practices of future English Belly Dancers and the subsequent inheritors of their future practices. The narratives of authenticity remain the life blood of English Belly Dance traditions with which future practitioners innovate and remember.

Appendices

Appendix A: Glossary of Belly Dance terms

African Dip An unusual Belly Dance movement found in the Buonaventura style. It is a side stepping movement in which the leading leg's hip dips downwards when placed to the side with the following leg joining the leading leg and during this transition the hips return to a parallel/neutral position. The effect of this travelling movement is to present hip embellishment and a low centre of gravity providing an earthy quality to the dancing by placing an emphasis on a downward movement of the hip with the drum beat.

AmCab is the acronym for Amercian Cabaret Style Belly Dance

Assyah An Upper Egyptian stick commonly used by farmers to drive cattle, and dig holes, it is for general farm and household use. It is also a large weighty stick used by male dancers to perform the Saaidi stick dance (almost akin to a martial combative art) known as the Tahtib. Women sometimes use these sticks to perform in Upper Egypt or to signal a Saaidi inspired dance set in an urban Belly Dance show.

Assuite A gossamer net cloth material used for clothing, encrusted in silver or nickel metal and forming patterns and motifs like camels, dancers, flowers and shamadam. Also known as a *tilli* and commonly used in 1920s and 1930s fabrics and costuming in Europe and America.

Baba Koram A name given to a popular social dance from Tehran, Iran. Women collectively dress up in male business suit and trilby, dancing for comedy and a dance satirising the street vendors and gangsters.

Baladi An Egyptian Arabic word to mean of the "land" or "country" (see Roushdy 2010, McDonald 2010) and used to describe folk/country dancing in Egypt. A word adopted by Hilal referring to an urban style of dancing and specific form of music involving percussion alongside lyrical instrumental solos.

BDSS is the acronym for Bellydance Superstars is Miles Copelands international touring Belly Dance company

Bedleh A two-piece Belly Dance costume associated with Hollywood film versions of Belly Dance and the bikini beach wear fashion of the 1950s, and adopted by Belly Dance practitioners in Egypt (Franken 2003, Sellers-Young 2005, Varga Dinicu 2011).

Cane dance The dance theatre version of the Saaidi Assyah stick dance, the cane is a small hooked stick which nightclub dancers use with comical effect. It has been suggested that these hooked canes came from the British colonialisation and it was a subversive act of defiance used by Egyptian Belly Dancers in performance to signal ridicule of British rule in the early 20th century (see Varga Dinicu 2011).

Classical Sharqi The name given by Suraya Hilal to a form of classical court dance technique found in Egypt: expansive arm and torso movement in conjunction with large Anglo-Egyptian musical orchestration of classical Egyptian music. Hilal based the Classical Sharqi dance on the *Golden Era* Belly Dancers of Cairo like Samia Gamal, Tahyia Carioca and Namia Akef. See appendix F for filmed extracts of *Return of Spirit* (1985), *A Charity Show* (1987) and *Jewels* (1989) for examples of this style of dance. (“Sharqi” translates as “East” or “Orient”)

Fatme Serhan A singer from Cairo renowned for a strong voice and small stature.

Fellah Egyptian Arabic word to describe the farming people of the Delta region of the Nile. Also a name given to a simple 4/4 rhythm *Fellahi*

Galabeya An all in one dress found all over Egypt and worn by men and women. The Belly Dance galabeya is usually more revealing with long slits up the skirt, low cut top with jewels and sequins.

Levant A word used to describe the East Mediterranean region of the Arab world: Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine

MADN is the acronym given to the Midlands Arabic Dance Network

Mahgreb A word used in Arabic to describe the North African region of the Arab world: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya

Malfuf A 2/4 rhythm commonly used in Egyptian music

Maqsoum A 4/4 rhythm commonly used in Egyptian music (similar in construction to the Saaidi rhythm)

Masmoudi A 4/4 rhythm commonly used in Egyptian music

Meleya Lef A large cloak worn to cover the body, and used in a Reda Troupe inspired dance from Alexandria. The dancer performs with the cloak wrapped tightly around the body and during the performance the cloak is unwrapped to reveal a brightly coloured sequin costume.

MOSAIC is the name of a UK-based Belly Dance trade magazine, quarterly published, and funded by the Midlands Arabic Dance Network

NADA is the acronym for the Northern Arabic Dance Association which also publishes a quarterly trade magazine for the Northern regions of England

Pendulum movement This is a Hilal stylised hip swaying movement used in travelling and stationary dance work. There is an emphasis on bent knees and the movement of the hip swaying from right to left, describing a crescent moon shape; this is a soft movement with no percussive hip hitting quality. The effect of the soft, low swinging action of the hips produces a pendulum

image of a held upper body whilst the hips swing side to side when travelling or dancing on the spot. The centre of gravity low in the body and the swaying momentum is used to propel the dancer forward.

Khan El Khalili An old historical trade region of Cairo city, famous for the maze of shops and souks where dancers can find an array of Belly Dance clothes and accessories.

Isis veil A common prop found in Belly Dance performance all over the world, and more recently used by Egyptian Belly Dance stars like Rhanda. The Isis wings are an extension of the veil with sticks to give the illusion of longer arms. The name Isis refers indirectly to the ancient Egyptian Goddess Isis. English Belly Dancer Afra Al Kahira performs the Isis wings by covering herself in gold paint and using golden Isis wings and dark eye make-up.

Ruh El Fuad Another well known Egyptian vocalist. Many describe her voice as “dirty” meaning there is a power to her vocals that cuts through the music. She regularly performs to Baladi music.

Sa’aid The Sa’aid region and the Sa’aidi people are located in Upper Egypt with Luxor as the principal city. The Sa’aidi rhythm is a well known rhythm pattern used all over Egypt and popular amongst Belly Dancers world wide.

Sagats Egyptian finger cymbals, they are not necessarily used by Belly Dancers and are more often played by musicians in the orchestra (see The Farha Tour 2005-2006). They produce a very tinny and loud accompaniment commonly associated with Upper Egyptian music.

Scissor movement The Hilal scissor movement places an emphasis on the upper thoracic movement of the spine in conjunction with lower body movement, namely walking. The result is a “swagger” movement, with a criss-crossing action through the abdominals, therefore producing a swaggering sway in the movement. A common teaching method is to get students to walk flat footed in the studio. Then they repeat the walk with the thoracic engaged. Basically when a student places the right foot first the upper body twist inwards from the left shoulder through the thoracic towards the right foot: thereby producing a diagonal relationship from left shoulder to right foot.

Sha’abi A word used to refer to all forms of Upper Egyptian dance in the Hilal lexicon. More recently, Sha’abi is used to describe a genre of political and popular urban music and the outrageous Belly Dancing found in Egypt nightclubs.

Shamadam An elaborate silver or gold candelabra worn by a Belly Dancer for Zaffa (wedding) ceremonial processions (see Franken and Kent 2002). Belly Dancers use this heavy and striking headwear in England to perform for birthday parties, special occasions and weddings. Candles are rarely used due to health and safety precautions. Today dancers employ various inventive strategies like digital torches shaped like flickering candles.

Spiral movement Hilal's spins are the third important shape and movement in the Hilal Dance lexicon. Hilal layers this 360 degree turning movement with a pendulum or a scissor impulse. The pendulum – a deep hip sway – therefore this spiral is a hip-centred turn, which can be large or small in size to complete a full 360 degree turn. By contrast the scissor, with the emphasis placed on the diagonal and the torso twist, 360 degree turn is faster, tighter with a higher centre of gravity emanating from the solar plexus rather than the pelvis in the pendulum turn. Hilal's teaches variations of the spiral theme offering students spiral designs with the arms moving outward or inward, large hip spirals or small tight spins on the spot or during travelling phrases in choreographies.

The Fifi Shimmy Buonaventura used a movement, she called "The Fifi Shimmy" in which she side stepped on one straight leg and the following leg, bent, would shimmy or wobble as the feet came together. The effect is a side to side stepping movement with one buttock presenting a shimmy effect for emphasis and embellishment.

The Panther Buonaventura's panther is a slow stepping backward movement with abdominal undulation. The undulation occurs as the dancer rises onto the balls of her feet before launching forwards. It is a characteristic Buonaventura-style movement, one that apparently her domestic cat gave her the inspiration to create.

Urban Baladi A name used by Suraya Hilal to describe a solo urban dance form (see Adra 2005, Roushdy 2010) based on the Raqs el Baladi found in homes, weddings and social occasions in Egypt. Hilal's dance theatre version includes interaction between instrumentalist and dancer. The structure of the music usually begins with a slow, lyrical taqasim (an improvised instrumental solo), signalling lyrical, winding, circular movements from the dancer. When the tabla player enters the musical conversation, layering the lyrical taqasim with different rhythms, it signals a change in the dance towards staccato and percussive movements. Finally all musicians join the whole ensemble and develop the music, song and dance into a final and emphatic end. (Hilal divided Urban Baladi into Tet (male) and Awadi (female) styles).

Zarr A 2/4 rhythm in which dancers can perform repetitive movements to invoke a form of trance like state (see McDonald 2010)

Zills Turkish name given to finger cymbals played by Belly Dancers (Turkish Belly Dancers use finger cymbals more regularly in performance than Egyptians). Wooden spoons, smooth stones and a form of finger snapping are other percussive methods used by Belly Dancers across Turkey, Levant region, Mahgreb, Egypt and other Central Asian regions.

Appendix B: Methods of observation and generating primary data

- Observations and notes taken from informal contact were recorded in diaries and notebooks.
- Anne was interviewed in 2008, and then 2010. A section of the 2010 interview included participation from Caroline. Caroline was interviewed twice in 2009, in August and then in December. The second interview was suggested by Caroline, who felt we had omitted several topics including male Belly Dancers and *Sabrine*.
- From the dates 2006 to 2012 I have attended live Belly Dance performances from each practitioner and presented performances myself. A selection of the live performances has been recorded by myself and by other parties. Several examples of current performance work can be accessed on the internet. Documentation of performance work includes sound recordings (Sabrine, 2006-7), informants' descriptions, photographs and compositional scores.
- The initial grounded research at the beginning of the research process included participating in several workshops, events and giving performances at regional and national events including: Majma (2005 & 2007), JOY (2005, 2009 & 2010), a NADA AGM (2010), The Fahra Tour (2006), and other events to negotiate a route into meeting prominent practitioners in the community. The documentation of this survey includes collected publicity material, taking field notes and producing articles for publication in NADA and MOSAIC Belly Dance trade magazines.
- During 2005 initial research in Egypt included field research and interviewing practitioners. Another project the following year included a pilot project guiding

English Belly Dance students out to Egypt. The interviews were transcribed and performance work was filmed from both 2005, and 2006. The pilot project collapsed due to practical issues. The pilot project forced the reassessment of the research focus and aims. In effect, the pilot project and its collapse redesigned the project.

- I have written several articles in trade magazines concerning the research I am conducting, inviting participation and publishing reviews, critiques and commentary on research already conducted. These articles also represent my emerging researcher-practitioner status within the community and offer another form of self-analysis as a case study.

Data Collected

Table of Data

Sources \Case Studies & Dates	Siouxsie Cooper	Anne White	Caroline Afifi
Interviews	Yes (2011)	Yes (2008, 2009)	Yes (2009,2010)
Filmed Material	Performances Live art work Student Haflahs	Performances JOY & Nottingham NADA Youtube.com Movement vocabulary	Performances JOY & Planet Egypt Youtube.com Movement vocabulary

Walk Like an Egyptian

Siouxsie Cooper

Sound Recordings	None	None	Yes <i>Sabrina</i> (recorded in 2009)
Diaries	1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2009	No diaries	No diaries
Documents	Various writing, notes, administration documents, and newspaper cuttings, Lexicon Labs (2008)	Emails, workbooks on teaching design, research material, correspondence with Hilal and Hilal newsletters	Email, notes and programs from the Casino events, program and notes from <i>Forbidden Fruit</i> and <i>Sabrina</i> performances
Forum Activity	Yes, bhuz.com and masr360.com Facebook.com	No	Yes bhuz.com, orientaldancer.com and masr360.com Facebook.com
Photos	Yes	Yes	Yes
Publicity Material	Yes, class, performances, workshops, events and tours of Egypt	Yes, Planet Egypt, workshops (NADA, JOY) and live music events	Yes, class (email), performances, Casino el Layl,

Walk Like an Egyptian

Siouxsie Cooper

Website	Yes <u>bellydanceuk.</u> wordpress.com	Yes Planetegypt.co.uk	No Facebook.com/caroline afifidancer
Published Material	MOSAIC (date) NADA (date) Communities in Movement	MOSAIC article concerning the Baladi music of Sheikh Taha (date)	MOSAIC article concerning professional standards on stage (date)
Archive Material	Yes	Yes	No
Workshop data	Workshop design, choreographies, photographs & notes	Observed (notebook)	Observed (notebook)
Other	Conference papers Belly Dance videos	Video's of Hilal Egyptian Belly Dancers 1980s London Belly Dance Performances by Wendy Buonaventura and others	Notes and recordings of seminars given at Majma 2007 and for the NADA AGM 2011

The table below gives details of each category of data and contains issues concerning gaps, distinct offers from the case studies and anomalies.

Interviews: There are three interview audio recordings and transcripts, one for each practitioner, with an additional formal interview with Anne and Caroline in dialogue and on their own. Caroline and Anne's interviews took at least two sittings of at least three hours each. Informal interviews and discussions represent additional interview material written in field notebooks and diaries. I have been in conversation with Anne since 2006 and with Caroline since 2009.

Filmed Material: A selection of videos, digital tapes and internet-based recordings of live performances for each practitioner are sourced. Videos and digital recordings of my performance work cover a period of ten years. Early recordings of Anne's performance work are sourced and her current performances are accessed on youtube.com, with my own recordings of her performances made at JOY 2010 and Nottingham 2012. Early recordings of Caroline include my own archive from *Mimi La Sardine* rehearsals and a television documentary. There is no video or filmed data concerning *Forbidden Fruit* only documents relating to the performance in Bristol (1999). Later recordings of performance work at Casino El Layl include several youtube.com downloads. I have made independent recordings at JOY 2010 and Planet Egypt 2010. I have also filmed both Anne and Caroline presenting movement demonstrations related to their teaching methods and practices. I have notes and analysis from my lexicon labs held during July 2008 but no filmed demonstrations given by myself.

Sound Recordings: The sound recording made of Caroline's dance theatre show *Sabrine* (2006-2007) is the only sound recording made apart from the interviews. Due to lack of filmed evidence and photography of the *Sabrine* dance theatre piece, it was suggested that a sound recording of the

performance score would be sufficient for analysis. The sound recording along with my notes and critique of a showing at Majma (2007) represent the data for *Sabrina*. Recently, several photographs have become available on the internet, which are now included as data.

Diaries: My diaries have been accessed, which date back to 1999, with a personal diary detailing changes in my practice in 2001 (a significant year). The diaries span the years 1999 to 2011. The material found includes personal writing, work related entries and calendars listing performance dates, workshops and events. No diaries are available from Caroline and Anne, each practitioner referred to memory for dates, events and incidents rather than their diaries.

Documents: The majority of documents available relate to my case study. These include: notebooks, research material and newspaper extracts. The material sourced from Anne's archive includes documents concerning early London Belly Dance community activity, written correspondence with Hilal, Hilal Dance newsletters, Hilal interviews in journals and magazines, and documented interviews (conducted by Anne) with old Belly Dance performers and musicians from the 1970s and 1980s. Other documents concerning Caroline's case study are minimal, with only hard copy versions of dance theatre production notes made available. I have kept field notes and documented observations of both Caroline and Anne's activities in the community.

Forum Activity: Caroline is very active on several internet-based forums. Her activity on Bhuz.com commenced in the early 2000s. Several discussion threads detailing her interactions and opinions on subjects ranging from Egyptian Belly Dance styling to her opinions on Fusion Belly Dance are easily accessed on the internet. Anne is not active on internet forums. Anne maintains a facebook.com page but rarely engages with discussions concerning Belly Dance. However Anne is aware of forum activities on the internet and regularly reads discussion threads. This activity is impossible to measure

and record. I am active on the internet, engaging in conversation with A'isha Asar, Leyla Amir, DaVid of Scandinavia, Maria Aya and other ex-members of the closed and short-lived masr360.com discussion forum. We conduct our discussions on facebook.com. I have archived several discussion threads for research purposes.

Photographs: There are photographs and still images available concerning each case study. The collection of photographs concerning my case study covers a fifteen-year period of Belly Dance. Caroline has made photographs of *Sabrine* available and recent professional photographs. Still images from *Forbidden Fruit*, *Mimi La Sardine* and the Buonaventura film *And God Created Devil Woman* are available. There are no still images from *Café Medina* and *Dancing Girls*. I have a selection of official and unofficial photographs I have taken during the research of each practitioner in workshops and performance contexts. There are no still images of Anne during the 1980s and only a handful of rare images of her performing during the 1990s have been sourced.

Publicity Material: A variety of publicity material for each practitioner includes class posters, images and copy. More recently the hard copy versions of publicity have become digitized and are commonly found on the internet. Also included are publicity materials for workshops at regional and national events including Sirocco and Congress material. Caroline's and my Tours of Egypt publicity is used and Anne's live music events and workshops for NADA are included.

Website: Each practitioner has an established presence on the internet: Anne runs a website planetegypt.co.uk and facebook.com page. Caroline maintains several facebook.com pages, one personal and another as an official dancer page, a more recent addition have been a *Sabrine* facebook.com page. I have a new website bellydanceuk.wordpress.com and my old southwest-

bellydance.com page is no longer operational. I too have a facebook.com profile.

Published Material: Each practitioner has published articles in Belly Dance trade magazines. Anne has published in MOSAIC and Magency (E-journal). Caroline has published in MOSAIC and NADA. I have published in MOSAIC, NADA, and in the Sellers-Young edited text *Communities-in-Movement* to be published 2013. The subject matter of the articles includes opinion, debate and research concerning professional practice in the community, performance strategies and the standards of Belly Dance teaching in England. Anne's article presents the musicians in London during the 1980s, and specific attention is given to the work of long term collaborator, Baladi accordionist, Sheikh Taha. My published material includes research work conducted in America, Egypt and England, and performance critiques.

Archive Material: Anne's archive material and my own have been sourced for the research. Caroline's archive is limited to *Sabrina*, no other archive material is available. Anne's archive includes written testimonials from Arab musicians, Belly Dance peers from the 1980s, and films recordings of old Belly Dance stars from Egypt and the Middle East. My archive includes a variety of dance documents including West African dance activities, workshop images, choreographic notes (2001-2011) and miscellaneous diagrams, writings and notes from a variety of dance workshops from the late 1990s. I have an extensive video collection of rehearsals from the *Mimi La Sardine* production. I have documentation from each performance *Tea for Two* (2004) and *Enta Omri* (2005) given at Dartington College of Arts and documentation of my contextual enquiry project in Egypt 2003-2004.

Workshop Data: Workshop data includes choreographic notes, class plans, copies of student reviews, and feedback and solo choreographic work from my workshops and classes. I have filmed Caroline

and Anne presenting workshops (not in their entirety), I have taken field note observations and discussed the content of their workshops in interview and informally. Caroline and Anne's workshop notes and planning are not made available. Publicity material with written descriptions and images for workshops in the community is included.

Other: Others sources of data include power point documents and notes made by me following my conference papers given at the *Creating Frictions* conference (2010) and a *POP Moves* symposium (2011). There are also notes and interviews from two separate seminar presentations by Caroline, one at Majma (2007) and another at the NADA AGM (2011) in Liverpool. A number of videos and recordings of performances by Buonaventura, Hilal and Egyptian Belly Dancers, collected over a period of ten years, represents a form of visual diaries. Anne's archive presented early recordings of Belly Dance within the London community in the 1980s; a Channel Four *Rear View Window* (1991) documentary on Hilal's Sadler's Wells performances; and a recording of a televised South Bank Show showing of a Hilal dance performance (1992).

To formulate a Belly Dance figured worlds from a critical incident

The critical incidents extracted from the data are organized in a chronological list. Each critical incident is organized as follows: i) critical incident, ii) context of critical incident, iii) impact of critical incident, iv) and relevant coda reading of the critical incident summarizing other data sources. The process of obtaining the coda reading, as shown above, involved the close reading and identification through the use of spoken words, terminology, diary entries etc in order to cross-verify sources to obtain the relevant coda for each critical incident. The following exemplars illustrate the detail and analysis of primary source material which was shorten into the

above five points. It is possible to determine from the exemplars below the need to shorten the presentation or the critical incidents due the large amount of data retrieved.

Siouxsie Cooper

Critical Incident No. 22. My first solo performance was at Majma, Glastonbury. I performed a solo accompanied by Tori Amos's *Me and A Gun* song, describing gang rape. The people who gave me a lift to Glastonbury refused me a ride home. Several people in the audience stood up appalled, whilst others in the audience walked out.

Diary entry 3rd April 2001

Like [with] Wendy I'm wowed by the opportunity - flattered and then don't think about the consequences of spending my time, my money and my dreams on their projects and their careers.

*I'm not prepared to do it anymore. **Self-Perception***

*My performance at Majma worked, it was stunning, it was just what I wanted, and I'm so pleased I did it. I had really good feedback. **Social perception***

Wendy Buonaventura didn't see it. {XXXX} compared it to her own work. [XXX] and [XXXX] were much more genuine, so was [XXX]. [XXXX] imploded and not a word from Caroline.

Affinity perception

*How does it work to make it work? How do I get paid? **Professional Perception***

Notes made from a conversation with Anne White June 2006:

The location of the conversation was a café close to Kings Cross Station, London. My initial introduction to Anne White by Juliana Brustik. Anne mentioned knowing of me before, she

quoted Vashti's recollection of my "Me and a Gun" performance, she called it "that" performance. Anne asked whether I was aware that people talked about and still talk about it.

Social perception

Notes from interview transcript (2011, 12):

I did perform my *Me and a Gun* (2001) piece which is quite famous. If I think back to it, in the actual doing of it I had no idea what I was doing, but on reflection I was trying to make sense of what I was doing. The fact that the music did not come from my own culture, so for instance a lot of music had songs, like the Warda piece I talked about earlier, it had words to it which I didn't actually understand what was going on. **National perception and Self perception**

On reflection I was trying to understand the sexuality, the sexual component of Belly Dance.

So *Me and a Gun* was a piece where I danced these movements, which are incredibly sensual from, if you are coming from a Ballet background, you know you are using your torso, you are using your body in a particular way that signals to a lot of people sex. And the song is about being sexually abused, the wearing a red dress, having your sexuality out there in a public space and I performed it. **Identity-in-Practice perception**

Analysis: The critical incident was the *Me and a Gun* performance. The "trouble" found in the incident relates to no longer being a member of Wendy Buonaventura and Company and my changing affinity perception, away from that group of artists.

The diary entries proceeding and succeeding the 3rd April 2001 entry similarly hypothesize a new direction for my dance work, demonstrating a troubled self perception. This entry precedes entries describing my application to Dartington College, indicating actual change took place in

response to the *Me and a Gun* performance.

My self-congratulatory account of the audience response indicates a level of awareness of the impact of the performance related to the social perception coda.

I list the responses from practitioners in the field including Buonaventura, [XXX], [XXX] and Afifi, who were company members of *Mimi La Sardine*. [XXX] a contemporary Persian dance artist, [XXX] a Tunisian folklore dance artist and [XXX] an Algerian folklore dance artist are also included but offered a different response. My changing affinity perception away from with Buonaventura and Company is illustrated here, and it also records social perceptions from other prominent members of the community.

My questions concerning the professional opportunities available as a Belly Dance performer clearly indicate an increasing anxiety over my professional perception.

The note made after an introductory conversation with Anne White is worth noting here. Anne lives and works in London. This was our first meeting, and her discussion point concerning my *Me and a Gun* performance reported to her by Vashti (present at the Majma event in 2001) expands my notion of the social perceptions regarding my performance work in the wider Belly Dance community.

My own notes concerning the divided audience response and the abandonment by my transport provider relate to its impact on my sense of self as an artist in the Belly Dance community. It was my first encounter with rejection and illustrated particular strains of resistance to new interpretations of Belly Dance within the community.

The excerpt from the reflective interview, ten years after the event, suggests a level of self

perception in regards to my ambition and also an underlying concern about the national origins of the dance. It also highlights my experimental use of Belly Dance movement to produce a different and provocative Belly Dance performance relating to the sex and sexuality content therein.

Final CODA reading: Self-perception, Professional perception, Affinity perception, National perception and Social perception

Appendix C: Images from Hilal and Buonaventura archive

Images of Hilal and Buonaventura have been removed due to copyright restrictions.

Appendix D: Critical incidents for all three case studies

Caroline Afifi

- 1) An active member in a theatre group called Yellow House in Liverpool during the 1980s, Caroline develops an understanding between what are extrinsic and intrinsic acting models. By working with an intrinsic model to enact movements and gestures portraying real events and emotions Caroline reflects that these early theatrical acting experiments describe her method of dancing and training in performance. CODA: Self perception and Identity-in-Practice perception
- 2) In 1991 an Egyptian friend danced at a social lunch and Caroline develops an interest in Belly Dance. On finding formal Belly Dance classes in Liverpool Caroline discovers a cultural difference between what her Egyptian friend danced and what was on offer in Liverpool based Belly Dance classes. CODA: Identity-in-Practice perception and National perception.
- 3) Attended workshops and performance around England, including MADN performance platforms most of which were located in the south of England. By traveling outside Liverpool she was exposing herself to a wider Belly Dance community, one that was more developed in the south of England in the 1990s than in the north. She took classes with Suraya Hilal and other teachers. CODA: Identity-in-Practice perception and affinity perception
- 4) In 1995 Caroline started to train with Wendy Buonaventura, she attended annual dance week intensives in Bath and took several one to one private sessions with Buonaventura. By consistently working with Buonaventura Caroline developed her performance and theatre work in collaboration with Buonaventura and also independently. CODA: Affinity perception and Identity-in-Practice perception
- 5) Attended two performances of *Dancing Girls* by Wendy Buonaventura and Jacqui Jamal, the second viewing was in Essex and Caroline took young people she worked with in the Social services to the event. *Dancing Girls* had a profound effect on Caroline's practice and the possibilities of Arabic Dance in the theatre. CODA: Aspirational perception and Self perception
- 5) Invited by Warrington Belly Dance teacher to teach intermediate Belly Dance classes, the workshops were well attended and Caroline became a regular teacher. Due to her extensive travels and knowledge of the English Belly Dance community Belly Dancer's in the north sought her instruction at intermediate and advanced levels. CODA: Social perception and Professional perception
- 6) Invited to join Wendy Buonaventura and Company in the show *Mimi La Sardine*. The invitation confirmed Caroline's dance and performance abilities and working with other Belly Dance artists from England established a professional profile. CODA: Professional perception and Affinity perception
- 7) Travelled to Egypt with collaborator Michelle Pender and formed informal Dance Tours of Egypt from 1999 together. Encountered Egyptian culture and Belly Dance shows that differed to the dance found in England, it also supported their research for their theatre show *Forbidden Fruit*. Michelle was able to develop her new enterprise importing Belly Dance costumes to England. CODA: Affinity perception and National perception.

- 8) Presented the dance theatre show *Forbidden Fruit* at The Blue Coat theatre in Liverpool and the Queen Elizabeth theatre in Bristol and other dates. *Forbidden Fruits* was a collaborative endeavour in which Caroline and Michelle Pender researched and developed a theatre show narrating Western encounters with Middle Eastern dancers in Europe and America. CODA: Professional perception and Aspirational perception
- 9) A solo performance in Jacqui Jamal's *The Secret Life of a Belly Dancer* Caroline presented a vignette in which she portrayed a cleaning woman working with headphones. The music played was Middle Eastern and Caroline performed a Belly Dance routine then continued with her cleaning. Frictions back stage discontinued her collaboration with this group of people. CODA: Affinity perception and Professional perception
- 10) Caroline was approached by the Unity Theatre in Liverpool to deliver a showcase of Merseyside Arabic dancers on an annual basis. Caroline invited all groups of dancers from different traditions and backgrounds to perform alongside each other. CODA: Professional perception, Social perception and Affinity perception
- 11) By the early 2000s Caroline was receiving regular requests from other teachers and dancers to teach them monthly classes in Merseyside. Caroline continues to provide monthly workshops for seasoned teachers and students. CODA: Professional perception and Social perception
- 12) Established the Liverpool Arabic Arts Festival, Caroline hosts international Belly Dancers and artists who present performances and workshops during the week. Caroline continues to be a trustee for LAAF and performs for the event. CODA: Professional perception and Affinity perception
- 13) Revives *Dancing Girls* with Buonaventura for a showing at the Blue Coat Theatre and in Twekesbury 2002. Caroline replaces Jacqui Jamal's role and develops her own solos and duets in conjunction with Buonaventura. CODA: Professional perception, Aspirational perception and Affinity perception
- 14) In 2003 Caroline moved her family to Egypt, a death in the family and changes in domestic and career affairs led to the departure. For three years Caroline lives part of the year in Cairo and part of the year in England. She continued family life, worked as a theatre assistant in Cairo, took dance training in Cairo and established networks within the Egyptian Belly Dance community CODA: National perception and Identity-in-Practice
- 15) Caroline tapped into the expanding internet forums and blogs sites associated with Belly Dance. She became a regular contributor to online Belly Dance forum Bhuz.com. The site expanded her networks and increased exchanges and argument concerning aesthetics and ideology concerning Belly Dance practice in the West and its relationship to the dance found in Egypt. CODA: Self perception, National perception and Identity-in-Practice perception
- 16) Met and married Sherif Afifi in Egypt. Her marriage to Egyptian Sherif included a lengthy application to the British Embassy and eventually led to their repatriation to England. By marrying an Egyptian Caroline gained dual-nationality status. CODA: National perception, Affinity perception and Self perception
- 17) Established the first Shisha Café in Liverpool with husband. The Shisha café became an integral part of

Yemini and Arab life in Liverpool which opened up new associations within the community including dance opportunities. CODA: Affinity perception, National perception and Social perception

18) Worked on a devised site-specific project Café Medina with Kurdish film maker and Moroccan musician at the Blue Coat Theatre, Liverpool. Café Medina explored the issues concerning the Iraqi War in a Arab café environment disturbing Western images of a tranquil Orient and passive Oriental dancing. CODA: Professional perception and Identity-in-Practice perception

19) Performed for Buonaventura's *And God Created Devil Woman* (2004) for film. This was her last collaboration with Buonaventura in which Caroline was unsure of the purpose of the dancing and film. She found the material repetitive and continued Buonaventura's obsession with women and religion. CODA: Professional perception and Affinity perception.

20) 2005 Wendy Buonaventura attends LAAF and disrupts a discussion on Egyptian male dancer. Caroline and Buonaventura's relationship was strained and Caroline discontinues collaborating on further projects. And she discovers a strong "anti-Arab" strain to Buonaventura's philosophy to fusion dance made with Arabic dance that opposed Caroline's ideology and principles. CODA: Self perception, Affinity perception and National perception

21) 2006 Caroline devises her own dance theatre show *Sabrina*. *Sabrina* is featured during LAAF (2006) and at Majma Middle Eastern and North African dance festival in Sommerset (2007). This was Caroline's last dance theatre show incorporating several performers, long term collaborator Venus Saleh with the inclusion and debut of her daughter Aimee Wright. *Sabrina* narrated the complex and troubled lives of Egyptian women who Belly Dance for a living during the 1970s to the 1990s. It represents her research into the dance communities and the social and cultural context of Egypt during her extended stay in Egypt. The show emphasised the social commentary with the inclusion of vignettes of Belly Dancing, her Belly Dance critics suggested there need to be more Belly Dancing. CODA: Social perception, National perception and Identity-in-Practice perception

22) In collaboration with a select group of bloggers from Bhuz.com Caroline creates and becomes a co-mediator on the closed forum masr360.com. The internet provides new opportunities to converse with like-minded Belly Dance practitioners around the world, the focus of masr360.com was to discuss Egyptian culture, society and other Egyptian-based subjects that directly and indirectly concern Belly Dance practice. Caroline became known and outspoken about Fusion dance she suggests that Fusion Belly Dancer's and Tribal Belly Dancers have nothing to do with Egyptian Belly Dance and should be separate from each other. CODA: Affinity perception, Social perception and Aspirational perception

23) A performance and workshops at Belly Dance Congress in Surrey confirms Caroline's status as a Sha'abi dance specialist. The event promotes her work to the wider English Belly Dance community and she gains appointments to provide workshops and performances specialism. CODA: Professional perception and Social perception

24) Casino El Layl, a biannual Middle Eastern dance event in Liverpool is a new project Caroline focuses on in place of dance theatre. The aim of Casino is to pay specific attention to Middle Eastern forms of Belly

Dance, especially Egyptian styles. Caroline features guest artists and her own students. Casino is an event which caters for Middle Eastern dance only not fusion Belly Dance. It is gaining recognition as an international showcase featuring invited artists: Leyla Amir (USA), Shareen el Safy (USA) and DaVid of Scandinavia (USA) (all of whom have become colleagues through internet forums) CODA: Professional perception, Affinity perception and National perception

25) Caroline continues her active engagement with a facebook group who discuss Middle Eastern Dance in America during the 1970s. Caroline believes that her most recent education in the dance has been through internet blog sites and forums. CODA: Professional perception and Affinity perception

26) Caroline is regularly hired by Buonaventura to present workshops and performances at her Sirocco weekend Middle Eastern and North African dance event in Frome, Somerset. The 2010 Sirocco event is Caroline's last due to political strains and differences of opinion. CODA: Affinity perception and Identity-in-Practice perception

26) 2010 Caroline is invited to present workshops and performance in Las Vegas and Seattle, USA. She is gaining international recognition and employment through her internet profile and networks found in Egypt. These appointments continue to confirm Caroline's position internationally as a Sha'abi Belly Dance expert. CODA: Social perception, Professional perception and Identity-in-Practice

27) Working with her husband Sherif on filming Sha'abi dance in Egypt continues her projects on the subject of Sha'abi dance and music in Egypt. CODA: Professional perception and National perception

Anne White

1) During the late 1960s early 1970s Anne spent her childhood travelling internationally with her five siblings and Sargent Major father in the British Military. They were posted in Cyprus and many of her childhood memories return to this Cypriot experience. Anne considers her Mediterranean upbringing informative of her current Mediterranean lifestyle and preference towards Middle Eastern culture. CODA: National perception and Aspirational perception

2) Anne's first encounter with Belly Dance in 1980 on holiday with her twin sister, they visited several Arab nightclubs and found the dance and music striking. Her sister Theresa began Belly Dance classes back in London, Anne soon followed her lead. CODA: National perception, Identity-in-Practice perception and Aspirational perception

3) Theresa's Belly Dance teacher was Wendy Buonaventura; Anne attended a couple classes and then met Suraya Hilal in performance in London. Hilal's physical presence and power in dancing had a dramatic impact on Anne's choice of dance teacher. The dancing presented by Hilal in performance resembled her initial encounter with Arabs Belly Dancing in Cyprus. CODA: Identity-in-Practice

perception and National perception

4) During the 1980s Anne and her sister attended late night Belly Dance shows at the Arab night clubs found in London. Here Anne met Arab musicians and formed lasting professional relationships with the musicians were the first to instruct Anne on the relationship between the dance and the music; specifically the rhythms, melodies, songs and the interaction between musician and dancer. CODA: Affinity perception and Identity-in-Practice perception

5) Anne formed a thirty year collaboration and mentorship with Sheikh Taha (Baladi accordionist, and Ashra Baladi co-founder) who worked in the Arab community in London on a regular basis. He introduced Anne to the complex dance and music structure of the Baladi style of Belly Dance and continues to work with Anne on projects nationwide. CODA: Professional perception, Affinity perception and National Perception

6) Anne studied videos brought into England by Vashti (Cathy Selford) and worked together on developing and making costumes, critiquing each other's performances. Working with practitioners like Vashti, who regularly travels to the Middle East on dance contracts enabled Anne to source current material relating to Egyptian and other Middle Eastern Belly Dancers beyond her Hilal training. CODA Social perception and Affinity perception

7) First experience of teaching Raqs Sharqi formally in collaboration with Anne Ashcroft. Working with another Raqs Sharqi dancer, enabled Anne to begin to formalize her Hilal training and develop a teaching identity. CODA: Professional perception and Affinity perception.

8) With her established contacts within the Arab musician community Anne soon became the Belly Dancer of choice within the Arab community presented solo improvised performances for community events and special occasions. She worked with notable Arab musicians and developed her own style of interpreting the music and leading the show. CODA: Professional perception, National perception and Social perception

9) 1995 Anne gave birth to Alexandra, several domestic and financial circumstances changed during this period. Anne continued working and training in the Hilal tradition although she infrequently attended Belly Dance performance showcases. Started to teach dance for social services and other adult education groups which brought a renewed interest in the social and psychological benefits of the dance, in addition to gaining income through teaching dance for the first time. CODA: Self perception

10) In 1997 completed Suraya Hilal Raqs Sharqi School teacher training, Hilal's was in the middle of changing her artistic direction away from SHRSS towards Hilal Dance. The impact of Hilal's departure was monumental; Anne continued to work with the forming Raqs Sharqi Society. CODA: Identity-in-Practice perception and Affinity perception

11) From the 1997s onwards Anne continued to work with and for the Raqs Sharqi Society after Hilal's departure. She was an advocate, a teacher of choice for the society – teaching dancing to live music – and attended regular business meetings to develop the RSS profile nationwide. CODA: Professional perception and Affinity perception

12) 2003 Set up Planet Egypt with Vashti, and Yvette Cowles but soon became a solo enterprise. The aim of the project was to attract national and international Belly Dancers to London, and to showcase their work, it was also to widen Anne's social and professional networks she was suffering under heightened competitive nature of the dance business – edged out by JWAAD – and needed a new method of gaining a profile, economic value and work opportunities

13) 2004 started to teach nationally at local and regional events including Majma, JOY, Raqs Britannia and MADE. Planet Egypt attracted artists from all over England and in return Anne became a high profile name at Belly Dance festivals around the country. CODA: Professional perception, and Social perception

14) 2007 Saqarah Nights a competing Belly Dance evening competes for audiences and performers in London. Planet Egypt ceases to pay performers and the business model changes to compete with Saqarah Nights. CODA: Professional perception and Social perception

15) Started to train with Egyptian Belly Dance artist specifically male dance artists Khalid Mahmoud and Shafeek Ibrahim. Through Planet Egypt Anne met an increasing number of Belly Dancer's training in Egypt, their dance style and performance differed considerably from her Hilal training and she sought Egyptian instructors, Khalid is a Belly Dancer and Shafeek a Folkloric dancer. CODA: Professional perception, Self perception and National perception.

16) In 2008 Anne performance work included several international dates including one in Hungary performing alongside old Hilal trained dancer Yasmina of Cairo. Anne's international work represents the increasing international profile of Planet Egypt which in turn provided international performance opportunities, raising her economic value and profile as a Baladi dance specialist. CODA: Professional perception and Identity-in-Practice perception

17) The loss of Planet Egypt due to venue changes, a death in the family and Anne presents dancing to live music for a NADA funded project in Nottingham. One of the first workshops and performance with live music Anne presents outside the Raqs Sharqi Society. Several personal and professional

changes herald a change of creative direction. CODA: Self perception, Professional perception and Social perception.

Siouxsie Cooper

1) 11 years old I had dreams of being a dancer, I had recently gained a high award in my Ballet class but due to family financial difficulties and we were unable to afford ballet classes. I used to lie in bed with images of dancers and an image of me dancing in my head. I perceived myself as a dancer from an early age. CODA: Self-perception and Aspirational perception.

2) Clio's statement: "You can dance, you must go to a dance class" I was down on my luck, a new friend introduced me to free dancing and suggested I joined a dance class. I had forgotten my earlier imaginings of myself as a dancer, outside recognition of a dance talent led me to attend my very first adult dance class. CODA: Self-perception and Identity-in-Practice perception

3) First Egyptian Baladi class in Totnes, taught by Alida (Egyptian/Armenian), it was an unexpected surprise that I could isolate different parts of my body with ease. I was in the middle of financial and relationship problems. The impact on my identity as a Belly Dancer was immediate and real. CODA: Self-Perception and Identity-in-Practice perception.

4) First solo performance, in Totnes, at a World dance and music event I performed a solo choreography learnt at a Buonaventura weekend and the audience response was positive. I became known as the local Belly Dancer. CODA: Social perception, and Identity-in-Practice perception

5) Formed a duet with Annabel and worked together on duet choreographies. The duet collapsed when Buonaventura asked me to join her company, Annabel confided that she was jealous of my talent, youth and the opportunities opening up for me. CODA: Affinity perception and Social perception

6) A dance week in Glastonbury, I attend workshops on Salsa, Tango, Belly Dance, Algerian Dance, Brazilian dance, Hip Hop and many more. It was my first solo week

away dancing and I discovered I possessed a strong kinesthetic learning style and ability, I found several dance forms that I pursued subsequently: Salsa, Argentinean Tango and West African dance. CODA: Self-Perception, Identity-in-Practice and Aspirational perception

7) I received an invitation to join the Buonaventura and Company invitation and become a collaborator and performing member of the touring show *Mimi La Sardine* (1998-2001). My first experience of a professional show, including working with prominent artists from around England including participating in a weeklong showing at Edinburgh fringe festival (1999). CODA: Professional perception, Identity-in-Practice perception and Affinity perception

8) Joined Kabudu, a West African dance and music ensemble, performing alongside four other dancers and twelve musicians, both West African and English. CODA: Professional perception, Identity-in-Practice and Affinity perception

9) Attended a Kerry Ribchester Cuban Casino Salsa weekend workshop, she introduced Heller body-work and other biomechanical methods to build awareness of internal physical methods of producing an effective dancing body. CODA: Identity-in-Practice perception

10) Became a popular partner choice at regional Tango Salons where I found the music and the dancing relatively easy. The demand from male partners to partner them increased my social awareness as a dance partner of choice. CODA: Self-perception and Social perception

11) Due to conflict within the *Mimi La Sardine* group, in which the only Middle Eastern participant disputed claims by Buonaventura to fuse different Middle Eastern forms together. I experienced doubt and a crisis of identity-in-practice as a white, middle-class, western woman performing Belly Dance. CODA: Self-perception and Identity-in-Practice perception

12) Performed daily showings of *Mimi La Sardine* at the Edinburgh Fringe, and worked closely with company members. Edinburgh Festival gave me an experience of professional dance practice with a showing every night, socialized with other artists at

the fringe and facing outside critical review of dancing: we were slated by the press.
CODA: Professional perception

13) Late night showing at Glastonbury Festival with Kabudu our tent was empty. We improved audience members by rounding people up and amplifying our live music, the evening drew over 1,000 people. The second show the musicians took drugs and the show was failed to attract the audiences. The experience of performing for large crowds elevated my aspirations for larger audiences and the failure of the second show proved to me the need for a professional code of work. CODA: Professional perception and Aspirational perception

14) Attended Badejo Arts workshops in London, training with West African dancers and choreographers. Met and worked with Zab Maboungou, from Nyata Nyata Congolese/Canadian dance company, her workshop introduced me to somatic studies in dance and Zab's *LO KE TO* rhythmic dance code. CODA: Identity-in-Practice perception

15) Attended a Black Arts ACE meeting (1999) a national meeting to discuss and propose solutions to the lack of funding of black dance. I was one of the few white dancers in the room and it made an impression on me the issues of ethnicity in both Belly Dance and West African dance. CODA: Self-perception and National perception

16) Wendy commissioned a West African dance solo for me for changes to the *Mimi La Sardine* performance presented in Twekesbury, 2000. There was dissent amongst company members, several had left, and this was the first and only paid gig after over ten performances. I was not invited back to perform at later performance dates. I realized the processes of making a performance changes over time, I was also dissatisfied with the lack of training, opportunities to performance, significant financial incentive and political acrimony in the group eventually led to my departure. CODA: Self perception, Identity-in-Practice perception, Professional perception and Affinity perception

17) Neighbours and dance friends requested I teach Belly Dance, stating "You've got that feel for it." I started informal Belly Dance classes and a handful of one to one dance training sessions. Previously, I had not considered teaching as a professional

opportunity. CODA: Social perception and Professional perception

18) I was invited to dance and perform for a rock/pop ensemble *The Joyaa Band*, to be their performance artist. I incorporated Belly Dance, Salsa, Tango and other dance components to accompany the band; eventually I became a backing singer. During this time I was searching for new audiences, new methods of applying my dance and performance aspirations. CODA: Aspirational perception, Identity-in-Practice and Professional perception

19) Received lottery funding to travel to Ghana on a "Return to the Source" project designed to study local dance, music and song traditions in West Africa. It was a group project working with members of Kabudu travelling to Ghana, learning Kpanlogo dance, drumming and song in the suburbs of Accra. It was my first travel experience in Sub-Saharan Africa with a purpose to experience "authentic" West African dance: in fact I discovered a social and cultural West African reality. Also a severe ankle injury shortened my dancing progress and forced me to rethink my dancing career. CODA: Identity-in-Practice perception, National perception and Professional perception

20) The injury forced the issue of whether to continue dancing or not, the in-schools group Shekere gave me an opportunity to use my singing and drumming skills in addition to designing "softer" dance choreographies in West African dance. The regular income from Shekere confirmed the financial benefits of teaching dance and music. Peer review of my work indicated an instinctive ability to teach. It became obvious that I was not physically capable of the athleticism needed in West African dance, and political tensions within the Shekere group led to my departure. I returned to my Belly Dance practice and to develop a teaching role. CODA: Professional perception, Social perception, Identity-in-Practice and Aspirational perception

21) A close colleague of mine gained several performances and employment opportunities I did not; she had previously been a professionally trained athlete and is Anglo-Caribbean. Her speedy rise in the small community of West African arts indicated two significant aspects of the community of practice: i) ethnicity is a key factor ii) physical stamina and youth needed in order to gain employment opportunities. CODA: Professional perception and National perception

22) My first solo performance at Majma, Glastonbury, I performed a solo accompanied by Tori Amos's "Me and A Gun" song describing gang rape. The people who gave me a

lift to Glastonbury refused me a ride home; several people in the audience stood up and appalled whilst others in the audience walked out. The divided audience response and the abandonment by my transport provider had a strong impact on my sense of self as an artist, it was my first encounter with rejection and illustrated particular strains of resistance to new interpretations of Belly Dance within the community. CODA: Self-perception, Identity-in-Practice perception and Social perception

23) In response to the “Me and a Gun” performance friends and dance colleagues suggested I attend Dartington College of Performing Arts. The Belly Dance community did not offer support or training to develop my practice and the College option offered more opportunities. CODA: Social perception, Self-perception and Professional perception

24) To fund my College studies I established several Belly Dance classes in South Devon and an Afrobix class (a fusion of African dance and aerobics). The Belly Dance classes were full and the Afrobix empty. The difference in marketability of the two different dance forms indicated the highly commercial aspect of Belly Dance over West African dance. Within two years the classes attracted over 100 students per week, in three different locations which paid for College fees and a mortgage. CODA: Professional perception

25) Body crisis, according to my naturopath my body was in crisis due to the extensive amount of dance and the lack of good nutrition resulting in a worsening ankle injury and tonsillitis. I commenced a detailed and extensive body-detox regime which brought to my attention to the issues of hydration, muscle recovery and a balanced whole food diet. The body crisis refocused my attention on the body in dancing. CODA: Identity-in-Practice perception

26) With rising numbers of students in my Belly Dance classes I formulated end of year performance platforms. These events were well attended with over 200 participants. The events presented student work, class choreographies and my solo work. The events became regional events attracting Belly Dance teachers and students from

Cornwall, Devon and Somerset. The enterprise demonstrated wider social appeal for the dance, successful methods used to host shows and increasing financial incentives to developing a recognizable Belly Dance practice regionally. CODA: Professional perception, Social perception and Aspirational perception.

27) I found new training methods and material by attending The Raqs Sharqi Society weekend workshops in Winchester (2002) and later in London (2004). My search for dance training was satisfied by their approach to the body and the movement patterns, forms and styles found in the Hilal tradition. It also provided new social and professional networks outside the South West region which was dominated by the Buonaventura tradition. CODA: Affinity perception and Identity-in-Practice perception

28) By early 2003 I had travelled to Egypt three times and began a Dance Tour of Egypt enterprise with my Egyptian colleague and partner Atef Kamel. The first group tour was in April 2003 and I took a group of eight dance students to Luxor, Aswan, Hurghada, and Cairo. The Tour brought together my recent Egyptian travels and experience of the Belly Dance community in Egypt with my own Belly Dance students and community in England. CODA: National perception and Identity-in-Practice perception

29) In October 2003 I lived and conducted field research in Egypt for a contextual enquiry project for my Bachelor's Degree. I lived in Luxor, Dahab and Cairo for three months with my partner and sought Belly Dance performance opportunities. In 2003 the Egyptian government introduced a law banning all foreign Belly Dancers from official employment in hotels and nightclubs. For three months my life in Egypt brought into sharp focus the social and cultural realities of Belly Dance culture in Egypt. I used the opportunity to attend Belly Dance classes with Raqia Hassan and Aida Nour in the process discovered a completely different training regime and movement knowledge. CODA: National perception and Identity-in-Practice

30) In collaboration with Vernon De'Ath, I devised a website publicizing my classes, events, Tours of Egypt and other material (www.southwest-bellydance.com). The website signaled the official launch of my profession as a Belly Dance instructor and entrepreneur in the South West of England. CODA: Professional perception

31) I gained AHRC funding for a Master's Degree, the application drew the funder's attention to my work in the Belly Dance field and my Bachelor's thesis on Belly Dance marketing. The award gave me extra funds to extend my research and dance training to

America (Mendocino Camp 2005) and supported my enterprises within the South West region. CODA: Aspirational Perception and Social Perception

32) My final Bachelor's Degree show was a solo performance "Tea for Two" a conflation of two cultural contexts into one performance. I spliced a tea room environment with attributing tea-room tables, chairs, homemade scones, jam and cream with a Persian-inspired performance of an unruly female waitress who interrupted diners with movement, gesture, outrageous behavior and silence. The mixture of the two indulgent and celebratory cultural activities brought about the emergence of a performance persona in my Belly Dance practice the "unruly woman." CODA: Self-perception and Identity-in-Practice perception

33) Offered a dance scholarship to attend the Arabic Dance Mendocino Camp in the USA. I used the opportunity to train and interview American Tribal Style (ATS) Belly Dance innovators Carolina Nericco and Paulette Rees-Denis. Mendocino Camp introduced me to the American Cabaret Style Belly Dance, a style that differed from Belly Dance fusion found in England. The emphasis on live musical accompaniment and dance was also a key feature. I participated in Dbeke, Persian, Uzbekistani, Armenian, Lebanese, and Turkish dance workshops. The American training experience highlighted weaknesses in my practice and widened social and professional networks. CODA: Affinity perception, National perception and Identity-in-Practice perception

34) Decided to continue my research to Ph.D level. Within the English Belly Dance community it was common knowledge that I was interviewing people, gathering information and produced academic writing. The fact that there was no substantial research in the field other than Bacon's thesis (2003) motivated my choice to continue my research activities. CODA: Aspirational perception and Social perception.

35) DAISI, Devon Arts In Schools Initiative hired me to provide workshops for school children. It is rare to see Belly Dance taught in schools due to the "sexual" content associated with the dance. I worked alongside other artists in the field, notably Zimbabwean Mbira player Chartwell Durito (an old friend from the West African dance days). He witnessed my performance, an Upper Egyptian-inspired piece, and stood up applauded and suggested I performed more regularly. Chartwell's endorsement had a profound effect, his own work in schools and performances nationwide are coveted by the wider African Arts community. His Zimbabwean and artistic perspective I rate highly, which differs from a western, white artistic perspective. CODA: Professional perception, Affinity perception, National perception and Social perception

36) My final Master's Degree performance "Enta Omri" (2005) exploring audience participation and interactive play in a Belly Dance performance. I designed a performance/workshop in which participants were taught basic movements and continued the workshop into a group dance creating a shared moment of *Tarab* (Egyptian for ecstatic communitas). Later reports from Lecturers, who attended the performance/workshop, commented on the heightened exchange felt between participants with the music, and the hip movements. The performance confirmed my research into the essential element of audience interaction and interplay in Belly Dance performance. CODA: Aspirational perception and Identity-in-Practice perception.

37) After several Tours of Egypt, I was hired by a group of eight students to take them to Cairo and then onto Dahab. The Tour was a disaster with several members of the touring group reacting to Egyptian men, and the hassle on the streets, the full extent of the cultural shock and trauma presented itself as litigation in the Small Claim Court. I had never experienced being sued before and it later ceased all Dance Tours of Egypt. On reflection the whole episode proved that there are English Belly Dancers who do not have the capacity or awareness to learn about Egyptian culture, the cultural aspects of Belly Dance are just as significant as the dancing itself. CODA: Self-perception, Professional perception and Affinity perception

38) Starting to conduct interviews with Juliana Brustik of the Raqs Sharqi as a method of consolidating research work, she introduced me to Anne White. Anne became a close friend and advocate of my research she also presented a very applicable case study for the research. By 2007 I started to formulate my research and this incident represents the change in my research focus to English Belly Dance. Meeting people like Anne I was able to identify practitioners who were intent on building new alliances within the community and valued the research work I was conducting. CODA: Affinity perception and Professional perception

39) I wrote a critique of the Farha Tour for NADA magazine, it discussed the relative values of displacing Egyptian Belly Dance culture and touring an Egyptian show in English proscenium theatres. The article "Lost in Translation" received the largest number of responses to an article the magazine has ever received, all of which argued against my opinion. The article published in a popular Belly Dance trade magazine discussed the cross-cultural issues of English and Egyptian Belly Dance cultures, it also posed the question: What gets lost in translation? The response from both the editors and the readers signaled that my initial approach would not engender good relations. CODA: Professional perception and Social perception

40) I attended a workshop given by Sara Farouk in Cairo (2006). Her work on the use of the breath in the movement had a very profound effect on my practice. Her methods of teaching and applying her own research in Egypt provided new perspectives on my practice and its relationship to the dance found in Egypt. CODA: Identity-in-Practice perception and National perception

41) A Belly Dancer based in Redditch, Georgia contacted me after viewing my performance work at a national platform. I presented a weekend of workshops and then returned a year later giving performances and two more workshops. The internet and magazine articles had generated interest in my practice. The Redditch workshops indicated a new emerging national interest in my teaching and performance work. CODA: Social perception, Professional perception and Affinity perception.

42) A major change in my life was a move to Manchester from Devon I left my dance business and networks for the North West. Manchester has a thriving Belly Dance scene and a substantial Middle Eastern population. The recession hit Devon in early 2007 and later in other regions of England, Belly Dance class sizes were diminishing and I needed to find a new career or method of making money from my work. CODA: Professional perception and Aspirational perception

43) Secured a year contract as a Dance Lecturer at Liverpool Hope University, co-coordinating dance and cultural studies, dance fusion and the dancing body modules. The experience confirmed my belief that Belly Dance and Middle Eastern dance forms can be taught at Universities and student respond well to the material on offer. CODA: Professional perception and Identity-in-Practice perception

44) Hired to teach and perform at MADE (Midlands Arabic Dance Extravaganza) by Maria D'Silva and Janet Rose 2008. My first contract to teach at a large regional event outside Devon. The workshop "Meaning and Grace in Belly Dance" was sold out and the material given to the dancers included scissor walks, and using spinal work to expand and transmit expression through the arms and thorax. CODA: Identity-in-Practice perception, Affinity perception and Professional perception

45) A thirty-five ensemble performance by the Liverpool Hope University students studying Dance Fusion, the piece was based on Egyptian and West African –inspired

movement and polyrhythmic music. The performance challenged my own practice and developed a strong devising technique to create experimental choreographic work. CODA: Self perception and Identity-in-Practice perception

46) Attended my first Dance conference in Leicester, it was COD and I found several colleagues discussing the cross-cultural dimensions of performing another dance tradition. CODA: Professional perception and Affinity perception

47) First performance for Anne White at Planet Egypt in London, I performed a version of the Persian gangster dance Baba Koram. The audience reaction was excellent and several Iranian's came onto the floor to dance-joust with me. Several members of the audience asked for my return, Anne's feedback that the performance stole the show, and the Iranian members in the audience declared my dancing and interpretation was better than their usual Iranian dancers. CODA: Social perception and Professional perception

48) Manchester-based Belly Dancer Michelle Pender hosts an annual Belly Dance event in Flixton. I was a guest performer and the audience response was very good. I made contact with local dance students and a local dancer took my name for reference when needing a substitute dancer for private functions and events. CODA: Professional perception and Social perception

49) Manchester workshop (2009) featuring Sarah Farouk and Eman Zaki both presented new material concerning the performance of the dance and Sarah's concept of the "resonance" of the Belly Dancer and the development of presence in performance was significant addition to my practice. CODA: Identity-in-Practice perception

50) Attended a private function in Leeds I met Caroline Afifi for the first time in ten years. She performed to live music from the Baladi Blues Ensemble. After a brief introduction she offered to meet up for an interview. Caroline's performance style had changed towards an Egyptian focus, breaking from the Buonaventura tradition, in conversation I discovered we had a lot in common. CODA: Affinity perception

51) Began to post comments and participate in debates concerning Belly Dance on a small online forum masr360.com (2009-2010). Through masr360.com I met

practitioners from all over Europe, Egypt, England and the United States. The discussions developed my research knowledge of wider issues and themes in Belly Dance discourse the diversity of members and their interest and engagement with my arguments reassured me that beyond my circles of colleagues and friends there were other Belly Dancer's engaged with the material and ideas I was developing. CODA: Self-perception, Affinity perception and Social perception

52) Shared a headline performance with Caroline Afifi at Planet Egypt. The experience consolidated our common interests and experiences in Egypt and with the Buonaventura tradition. Caroline presented Sha'abi style dance, both retro and modern, I presented an Upper Egyptian-inspired and Baladi performances. It was the first performance in which the words from the song were a significant aspect of the performance; this method of performing changed my performance style radically. CODA: Identity-in-practice perception and Affinity perception

53) Nawarra witnessed my Tahtil Shibbak performance at Planet Egypt and requested I performed at a Banat Eshorouk event in Leeds. Nawarra is an international performer working in Morocco, France, Germany, Russia and Israel and her encouragement signaled a level of competence from a Middle Eastern perspective. This competence was further acknowledged by the Arabs in the audience at the Banat Eshorouk event. CODA: National perception, Social perception, Affinity perception and Professional perception

54) After a two year absence from teaching in the community I co-ordinated weekly classes in Sale, Greater Manchester. The material taught focused on dance technique and Egyptian style Belly Dance. The classes reaffirmed my teaching abilities, the wider interest in the dance and also consolidated my teaching technique developed at Liverpool Hope University. CODA: Social perception, Professional perception and Identity-in-Practice perception

55) Attended and presented my first conference paper at the "Creative Frictions" conference, Newcastle University. My panel included a Burlesque dancer and durational extreme live artists. The main question asked of the panel "How did you get a University to agree to your Ph.D subject?" The incident confirmed to me the mixed and ambivalent reviews Belly Dance receives in any context, this one being academic. CODA: Professional perception and Social perception.

56) Nawarra hired me to teach a workshop on Upper Egyptian dance styles in Leeds, she requested I teach my earthy style of dancing. At the end of the workshop Nawarra noted that I had taught her how to teach dancing. CODA: Social perception and Identity-in-Practice perception

57) Attended regular West African dance workshops in Fallowfields and met the Drumroots group. I was invited to perform for the Kajamour Family, a Gambian and Senegalese traditional dance and music ensemble. Sens Sagna recognized my dance and performance talent. Drumroots was an opportunity to be reintroduced to the West African dance and music, after a ten year interval. CODA: Identity-in-Practice perception, Affinity perception and Social perception

58) Due to the demands on the body through fast and athletic West African dance a Sacroiliac joint problem emerged on my left hip. I had to cease my activities in the West African dance group The Kajamour Family. My perception of myself and my body as a dancer was in question and a short-lived engagement with West African dance confirmed I was not suited to this dance style. CODA: Self-perception and Identity-in-Practice

59) An invitation to performance at a Persian cultural night in Derby from Rachel Rafiefar came due to her witnessing performances on youtube.com and in Leeds in July 2011. I took the opportunity to present my Baba Koram performance and the Iranian community present participated on stage with me throughout the performance. Rachel's invitation and the praise from the Derby Iranian community reconfirmed my dance expertise and abilities. CODA: Self-perception and National perception

60) I provided a workshop and performance in Nottingham which led to two more workshops. Several well known teachers and performers in East Midlands attended my workshop and feedback that my material was new and exciting. I quote Janet "Woman you have some power when you dance." CODA: Professional perception, Identity-in-Practice and Social perception

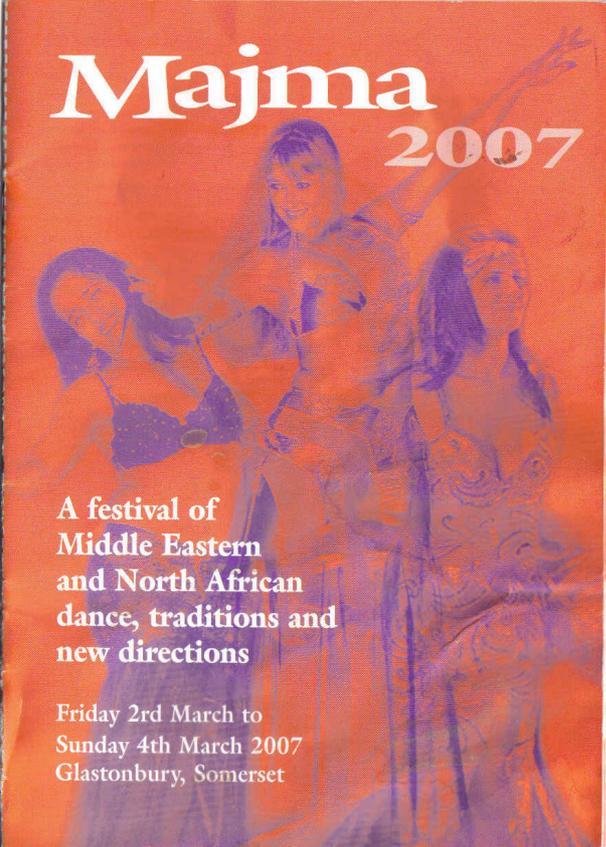
61) The formation of the East Midlands Group consisting of four prominent artists in the field confirmed the initial response to my first workshops and performances. The aim of the study group is to develop the artistic practice of each performer over a period of ten months. The group of artists has confirmed that my methods of teaching and approaching the complex narrative of authenticity in Belly Dance compliments and

inspires their own studies. CODA: Professional perception and Identity-in-Practice perception

62) Prof Sellers-Young and Dr McDonald have accepted my text “Quintessentially English Belly Dance” to be published in their new text Communities-in-Movement which addresses Belly Dance and globalization. The acceptance of the chapter confirmed the value of my research and also my abilities as an academic in the field. CODA: Professional perception and Aspirational perception

63) Training to become a certified Spinning Instructor has brought sports science and knowledge concerning the body, physiology and metabolism into my practice. CODA: Identity-in-Practice perception and Aspirational perception

Appendix E: Anne White, Caroline Afifi and Siouxsie Cooper images and publicity.



Majma
2007

A festival of
Middle Eastern
and North African
dance, traditions and
new directions

Friday 2nd March to
Sunday 4th March 2007
Glastonbury, Somerset

Rakan
A 20 year stage career including work in German contemporary variety theatre and circus, has had a distinct influence on Rakan's performance style. She brings a charismatic presence and innovative approach to Middle Eastern dance, adding principles of modern and jazz dance, while never losing sight of the Oriental tradition.
www.rakan.de



Chas Whitaker, Maren Lueg
Chas Whitaker and Maren Lueg play traditional Middle Eastern percussion and wind instruments superbly. They have a wealth of experience and have studied with artists such as Yusef Dayal, Mohammed Nafez, Hosam Ramzy and Sali Dawson Miller. They teach and perform both nationally and abroad and play in several band projects.



Anne White
Hill trained, the cultural aspects of the dance are very important to Anne. She has established a vibrant, inclusive dance community in London and set up *Planet Egypt* to promote all aspects of oriental dance. She works closely with Arab bands and singers.
www.planetegypt.co.uk



Booking form

The fee for the whole weekend includes evening meals/performance/parties on Friday and Saturday evenings, all seminars and workshops. This fee does not include accommodation or other refreshments. For accommodation contact Glastonbury Tourism Information Centre on 01458 832954.

A limited number of evening tickets for non weekend ticket holders are available and include the meal, performance, and party. **Advance Booking Only.**

Please advise us if you have any special dietary requirements, and then make yourself known to the catering at the event.

Please send me Full weekend tickets at £165 (£145) (conc.). Total £

Please send me Fri evening tickets at £21 (£19) (conc.). Total £

Please send me Sat evening tickets at £21 (£19) (conc.). Total £

I enclose proof of concessionary status. Concessions are for people on a low income i.e. Job Seekers allowance/Full time students/Senior Citizens.

Name _____
Address _____
Postcode _____
Telephone _____ E-mail _____

Send booking form, payment (cheque made payable to Majma and SME). Please mark your workshop and seminar choices clearly overleaf and return ASAP.

Cancellation
As with normal Box Office practice we are unable to refund tickets.

Bookings and Further Information
Majma, Wesley Cottage, New Road, East Hamphill, Somerset TA9 9PT.
Tel/fax: 01278 786307. E-mail: majmadance@fwd.com
www.majmadance.org.uk

Disclaimer
Programme details are correct at time of going to print, but Majma reserves the right to alter any information and apologise for any inconvenience that this may cause. This event is a real celebration of femininity, is open to female participants only and is a chance to take time out for yourself. For this reason partners and children are welcome to attend evening events only and workshops are not open to spectators.

Artists' biographies

Caroline Afifi
Caroline was a member of Wendy Buonaventura's company and has subsequently devised the performance pieces *Forbidden Fruit* and *Café Medina*. She is on the steering group for the Liverpool Arab Arts Festival and works in partnership for the Ministry of Culture in Cairo, co-ordinating arts programmes in Egypt and the UK.



Maria d'Silva
Trained in ballet, jazz, modern and Latin American, Maria took up The Art of Egyptian dance 16 years ago. She has travelled extensively and has performed in both Cairo and Luxor and wooed Arabic audiences in Egypt with her authentic feel of the dance. She is recognised as one of the leading Master teachers in Egyptian Dance and is highly sought after for her teaching and performances.



Megha Gavin
Megha received her initial training from Carolina Nericcio and was a member of Fat Chance Belly Dance. She founded the Deyyani Dance Company and went on to create *Tribal Pura* with Carolina. Using the guidelines of classical art and the science of anatomy, Tribal Pura is an exploration of traditional American Tribal style.



Nawarra
Nawarra grew up in Casablanca, dancing from an early age. She studied theatre at *Alin-Chouk* University and has performed with the Menara dance troupe and Moroccan *Chikhat* master Hajib. She teaches traditional Berber dance in Leeds, and workshops throughout the UK. She is the founder of the troupe *Banat Esborouk*.



Carolena Nericcio
Carolena began dancing in 1974. In 1987 she began teaching and created American Tribal style belly dance. Her company *Fat Chance Belly Dance* has inspired the work of many performance groups working in this eclectic dance form. More recently, she has created *Tribal Pura* with Megha Gavin.
www.fcfd.com



Dr Charareh Pourzand
Charareh was born in Iran and trained from the age of four in Persian folkloric dance. She has also studied classical and contemporary Middle Eastern dance in Europe. She is artistic director of the 1001 Nights Society (Bath University, ICIA), and teaches/performs in the south west of England.



Tracey Pye (Amunet)
A dynamic and naturally talented dancer, Tracey's love affair with Arabic Dance shines through during her powerful and joyous performances. Her unique dance style and a talent for great choreography recently won her the title 'UK National Belly Dancer 2006' in the UK's first National Belly Dance competition.
www.amunetorientaldance.co.uk/



Raheesha
American-born Raheesha has been dancing professionally for more than a decade, including in Las Vegas, Nevada, Arizona and California. She has taught at the Glastonbury International Festival and appeared as MADN's guest star in the 2005 platform. She is also a professional writer.
www.raheesha.co.uk





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Walk Like an Egyptian

Siouxsie Cooper



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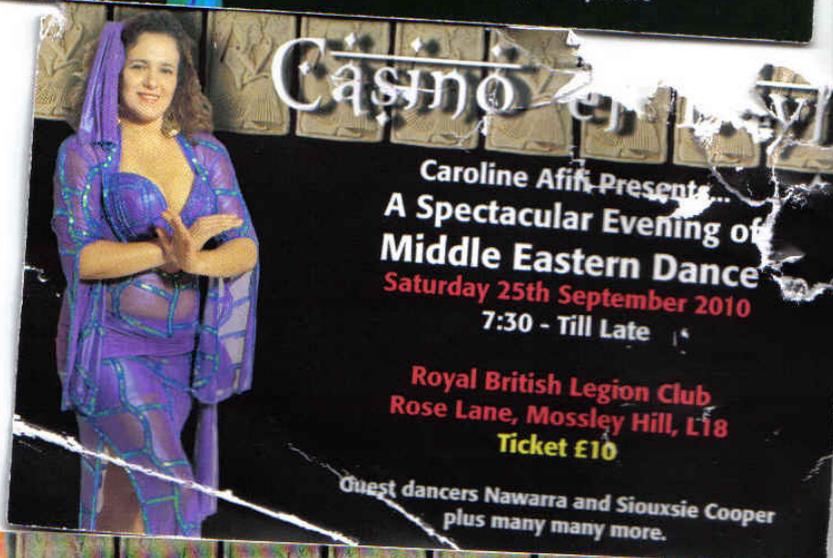
FRI 1ST & SAT 2ND OCTOBER 8PM - £8 (£5.50)

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(SEMINAR SAT 2ND OCTOBER 2PM - £6 (£4.50))



Casino el Layl
A spectacular charity evening of
Egyptian Style Club Cabaret
Friday 25th February 2011
8:30pm - Till Late
Royal British Legion Club
Rose Lane, Mossley Hill, L18
Ticket £10
Guest Dancer DAVID of SCANDINAVIA,
plus many, many more
Ticket No 053



Casino el Layl
Caroline Afifi Presents
A Spectacular Evening of
Middle Eastern Dance
Saturday 25th September 2010
7:30 - Till Late
Royal British Legion Club
Rose Lane, Mossley Hill, L18
Ticket £10
Guest dancers Nawarra and Siouxsie Cooper
plus many many more.



Casino el Layl
A spectacular charity evening of
Egyptian Style Club Cabaret
Saturday 30th January 2010
7:30-midnight
Royal British Legion Club
Rose Lane, Mossley Hill, L18
Ticket £10
Cabaret performances by Caroline Afifi, Tracey Gibbs,
Marco, Nancy and many more
No 040

Walk Like an Egyptian

Siouxsie Cooper



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Walk Like an Egyptian

Siouxsie Cooper



Dancing trip belly-up

EGYPT just did not have the stomach for Dartington student Siouxsie Cooper's belly dancing talents.

The 31-year-old art student, who teaches and performs belly dancing to pay her way through college, had signed up for a three-month trip to Egypt to learn more about the dance and to perform for the locals.

But she ended up walking into a belly dancing ban after the Egyptian authorities barred all foreigners from dance performances.

Instead Siouxsie had to confine her studies to watching home-grown performances and occasionally dancing for free when invited, and the local "dance police" were not watching.

Siouxsie, who lives in Buckfastleigh and is studying for an MA in art, cultural enterprise, management and contemporary theatre at Dartington College of Art, had been looking forward to performing in Cairo and Luxor as part of her visit to Egypt.

But when she arrived she found the government had just passed a law banning foreign dancers from performing in public.

She said that even the Egyptians were uncertain whether the ban had been imposed to protect the country's famous dance culture or to protect local dancers from the economic competition from foreigners.

Siouxsie said she had been looking forward to performing in front of Arab audiences.

"The Arabic audience understand the music more and there is a really strong relationship between dance, musicians and the audience," she explained.

She said she did managed to dance at some parties after she



■ CAIRO CAMEO: Belly dancer Siouxsie Cooper. This image with her name written in Arabic was to be used on billboards in downtown Cairo, until her backers had to withdraw because of the new law. PHOTO: Sam Harley HZS00897.SUB.001

was invited "to perform unofficially and the police did not know".

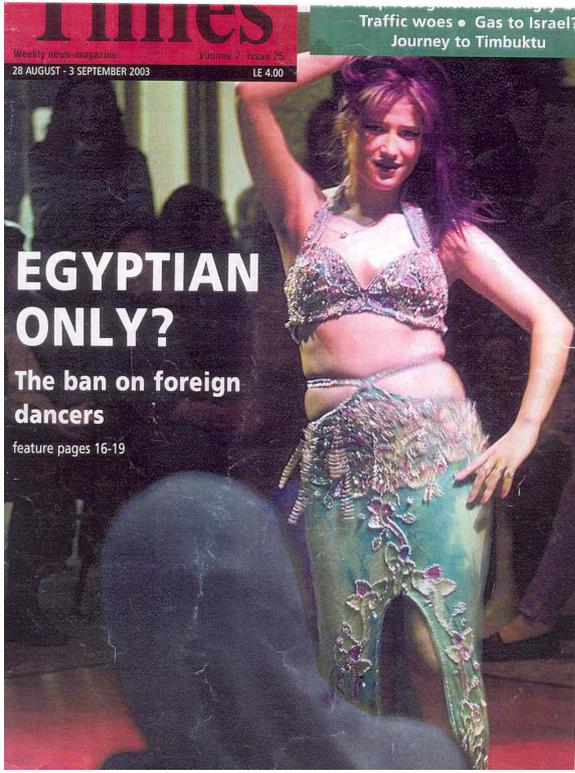
Despite the dancing ban she still managed to carry out her research.

"I went to a lot of classes and went to see a lot of shows, travelled around and collected information about the dance

and videoed lots of stuff," she said.

Siouxsie teaches belly dancing in Plymouth, Exeter and the Totnes area.

She is planning to stage a "Forbidden Fruit" show at Totnes Pavilion on July 2 involving more than 80 belly dancers from across the area.



Appendix F:**Videos, Websites, youtube.com clips, Workshops and Interviews****1. Videologue**

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