

Université de Montréal

**Dance and the Colonial Body: Re-choreographing
Postcolonial Theories of the Body**

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Résumé

Cette dissertation traite la danse comme une catégorie d'analyse permettant de réorienter ou de ré-chorégraphier les théories postcoloniales du corps. Mon étude montre qu'Edward Said, par exemple, décrit la danse seulement à travers le regard impérial, et que Homi Bhabha et Gayatri Spivak négligent complètement le rôle de la danse dans la construction de la subjectivité postcoloniale. Mon étude explique que Stavros Karayanni récemment explore la danse masculine et féminine comme espaces de résistance contre la domination coloniale. Toutefois, l'analyse de Karayanni met l'accent seulement sur le caractère insaisissable de la danse qui produit une ambiguïté et une ambivalence dans le regard du sujet impérial.

Contrairement aux approches de Said et de Karayanni, ma dissertation explore la danse comme un espace où le corps du sujet colonisé chorégraphie son histoire collective que l'amnésie coloniale ne cesse de défigurer au moyen de l'acculturation et de marchandisation. Je soutiens que la danse nous offre la possibilité de concevoir le corps colonisé non seulement dans son ambiguïté, comme le souligne Karayanni, mais aussi dans son potentiel de raconter corporellement sa mémoire collective de l'intérieur de la domination impériale. Ma dissertation soutient que les catégories de l'ambiguïté et de l'insaisissabilité mystifient et fétichisent le corps dansant en le décrivant comme un élément évasif et évanescent.

Ma dissertation inclut plusieurs traditions culturelles de manière à réorienter la recherche ethnographique qui décrit la danse comme articulation codée par une culture postcoloniale spécifique. Mon étude montre comment le corps colonisé produit un savoir culturel à partir de sa différence. Cette forme de savoir corporelle présente le corps colonisé en tant que sujet et non seulement objet du désir colonial.

Méthodologiquement, cette dissertation rassemble des théories occidentales et autochtones de la danse. Mon étude considère aussi les théories postcoloniales du corps dansant à partir des perspectives hétérosexuelles et homosexuelles. En outre, mon étude examine les manières dont les théories contemporaines de la danse, postulées par Susan Foster et André Lepecki par exemple, peuvent être pertinentes dans le contexte postcolonial. Mon étude explore également le potentiel politique de l'érotisme dans la danse à travers des représentations textuelles et cinématographiques du corps.

L'introduction de ma dissertation a trois objectifs. Premièrement, elle offre un aperçu sur les théories postcoloniales du corps. Deuxièmement, elle explique les manières dans lesquelles on peut appliquer des philosophies contemporaines de la danse dans le contexte postcolonial. Troisièmement, l'introduction analyse le rôle de la danse dans les œuvres des écrivains postcoloniaux célèbres tels que Frantz Fanon, Wole Soyinka, Arundhati Roy, et Wilson Harris. Le Chapitre un remet en question les théories de l'ambiguïté et de l'insaisissabilité de la danse à partir de la théorie de l'érotisme postulée par Audre Lorde. Ce chapitre examine le concept de l'érotisme dans le film *Dunia* de Jocelyne Saab. Le Chapitre deux ouvre un dialogue entre les théories occidentales et autochtones de la danse à partir d'une étude d'un roman de Tomson Highway. Le Chapitre trois examine comment l'écrivain Trinidadien Earl Lovelace utilise la danse de carnaval comme espace culturel qui reflète l'homogénéité raciale et l'idéologie nationaliste à Trinidad et en les remettant également en question.

Mots Clés: Corps Colonisé, danse, chorégraphie, théories postcoloniales, érotisme, sexualité, fétichisme, nation, carnaval.

Abstract

Classical texts of postcolonial theory rarely address the embodied expression of dance as they examine the colonial body only through the imperial discourses about the Orient (Said), the construction of the Subaltern subject (Spivak), and the ambivalent desire of the colonial gaze (Bhabha). The Cyprian theorist and dancer Stavros Stavrou Karayanni has emphasised the centrality of dance as a key category of analysis through which discourses of resistance can be articulated from the perspective of the colonial heterosexual and queer body. However, Karayanni adopts the psychoanalytic method according to which the dancing body of the colonised subject has an ambivalent effect upon the Western traveller and / or coloniser who both desires and derides this body.

In contrast to this approach, my study examines dance as a space in which the colonial body choreographs its collective history which colonial amnesia suppresses so as to de-historicise colonised subjects and disfigure their cultures. Departing from Frantz Fanon's emphasis on the relevance of dance in colonial studies, I argue that the colonial body choreographs its collective memories in dance and prompts us to rethink hegemonic discourses of postcolonial identity formation that revolve around ambivalence and elusiveness. I borrow the notion of "choreographing history" from the Western contemporary discipline of dance studies which has integrated cultural studies since mid 1980s and influenced postcolonial inquiry of dance over the last decade.

I include various cultural traditions in my project so as to re-direct today's predominantly ethnographic research which describes dance as an encoded articulation of culture in specific postcolonial societies. I also include different cultural traditions to show that while choreographing silenced memories in various historical experiences of colonial violence, the dancing body allows us to construct discourses of resistance in

ways that postcolonial theory has not addressed before. The re-choreography of postcolonial theories of the body, as developed in this dissertation, articulates an ethical imperative because it shows how the subaltern body not only choreographs memories that colonial amnesia silences but also produces cultural knowledge with a difference.

Methodologically, this study brings together Western and indigenous theories of dance as well as postcolonial theories of the dancing body from both heterosexual and queer perspectives. My study discusses Susan Foster and André Lepecki's contemporary theories of dance and the body in the context of postcolonial theories of Oriental dance and eroticism. It also examines the socially and politically transformative potential of the erotic in dance through textual and cinematic representations of the body. My study equally opens a dialogue between Western and indigenous theories of dance in the context of Canadian indigenous literary work of Tomson Highway. A critical examination of Trinidad Carnival and Calypso in a novel by Earl Lovelace demonstrates that dance is a central paradigm of analysis for a postcolonial critique of the body and the categories of identity that inscribe it.

Keywords: the colonial body, dance, choreography, Postcolonial theory, eroticism, sexuality, fetishism, nation narration, Carnival.

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Dedication

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Preface

In the early stages of my research, I conceptualised my project as a comparative study of the uses and functions of dance in postcolonial literary texts from different cultural traditions. In the course of my research, however, I have realised that a comparative approach would restrict my study to an ethnographic mode of analysis that reads dance as an embodied encoding of the values, beliefs, and ways of thinking and living in a given culture. While ethnographic analysis is useful because it describes the ways in which dance enacts its cultural and value system, it nevertheless defines dance and the dancer's body only as markers of difference through which a culture is distinguished from another according to the politics of identity. Being aware of the historical association of ethnography with the invention of race and ethnicity, I decided not to orient my research towards dance ethnography since it is more descriptive than analytical. Instead, I opted for opening a critical inquiry that explores the multiple ways in which dance produces meanings which allow us to redirect or re-choreograph postcolonial theories that define the colonial body mostly through the Western traveller's desire.

Before reaching this line of thinking, I first noticed that postcolonial theories have, since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* till the mid 1990s, usefully described and contested Western travel narratives which define the colonial body from the position of power and desire. What pulls me most particularly is that dance emerges as a key category of analysis through which postcolonial theory may re-examine its paradigms of resistance such as ambivalence and fetishism in the new millennium. I was more particularly intrigued by the work of Stavros Stavrou Karayanni who brings postcolonial theories of ambivalence and fetishism together with Western contemporary

theories of elusiveness as a way to unsettle colonial narratives of otherness. Indeed, I became more familiar with Karayanni's critical insight when I interviewed him during the IBCC International Belly Dance Conference of Canada in Toronto in April 2008. This interview was published in the *Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies* last year.

Yet, prior to studying Karayanni's work, I had already noticed that Western contemporary philosophies of dance define movement as bodily writing that choreographs history. Susan Foster's concept of "choreographing history," for instance, helps me probe the ways in which the colonial dancing body can choreograph collective memories that colonial amnesia seeks to expunge through acculturation and commodification. My reflection about dance as a mode of choreographing oppressed histories allows me to probe the ways in which the colonial dancing body produces counter-discourses that can unsettle not only colonial discourses of otherness but also postcolonial discourses of ambivalence and elusiveness. For in the process of my research, I have deduced that the body in postcolonial discourse merely mediates the process of psychologising imperial subjectivity. The phrase in my title, "re-choreographing postcolonial theories of the body," therefore does not only aim to show how the colonial body choreographs its history, as Susan Foster says. Rather, the aim of my study is to explain how the body's potential to choreograph its silenced histories prompts us to re-choreograph and rethink the postcolonial theories that incarcerate the body and dance in the dynamic of colonial desire. I thus realise that my research seeks to challenge the limits of the postcolonial theories of the dancing body and try to explore

the ways in which the space of dance may produce forms of postcolonial knowledge that are different from the logic of travel literature.

While I am aware that it is useful to bring together postcolonial and dance theories in a study of the colonial body, I still maintain that dance theories, of elusiveness for instance, need to be re-conceptualised from the position of subjection in which the colonial body is historically situated. Instead of merely describing how the dancer's body eludes the coloniser's gaze, I emphasise the ways in which the dancing body can generate epistemologies that challenge the eroticising and exoticising discourses which construct it as Other. Here, I must confirm that Karayanni's intervention in postcolonial theory of the body through dance has certainly led me towards what Caroline Brown calls "a revised epistemology" (7) about the dancing colonial body. Yet, by reading dance only as a site of delay of colonial desire, Karayanni's work also requires that we revise its epistemologies of fear and desire from the standpoint of the cultural, social, historical, and political complexities and tensions from which the dance emerges and through which the body acquires meaning.

Yet, my critical intervention in postcolonial readings of the body and dance still poses the risk of bringing me back to the ethnographic mode of analysis I initially rejected. For by focusing on the ways in which the colonial body enacts its culture in dance, I validate the ethnographic reading of dance as "a stylised, codified cultural knowledge . . . encompassing cultural history, beliefs, values, and feelings" (Skylar 1991, 6). Still, my focus is neither to identify the stories, legends, and myths that the dancing body tells in dance nor describe the ways it enacts and tells them corporeally. I am instead concerned with unpacking how dance as a bodily mode of telling unsettles

reductive colonial discourses and challenges postcolonial theories of elusiveness in productive ways.

Moreover, I explore literary, cinematic, and theoretical moments in which the colonial dancing body produces meaning that disrupts normative discourses about it. I notice how the dancing body in the dramatic work of Wole Soyinka, the fictional prose of Tomson Highway, the theoretical reflections of Wilson Harris, and the cinematic narrative of Jocelyne Saab both enacts culture and assumes a transformative potential that suspends reductive discourses about it in colonial and postcolonial discourses.

My critical inquiry about the colonial body from the optic of dance has been motivated by Frantz Fanon's statement that "any colonial study should integrate the phenomena of dance and possession" (*The Wretched of the Earth* 56) I have noticed that this statement, which I use as an epigraph of my introductory chapter, remains largely unaddressed and under-theorised by postcolonial critics such as Edward Said and Homi Bhabha who largely engage with the work of Frantz Fanon. In my view, Fanon's statement urges us to "begin again" (Said 1975, 3) a new critical inquiry about the colonial body from the standpoint of dance. By "new" I do not mean a critical inquiry that is unmarked by preceding postcolonial discourses of the body, but one that engages critically the dominant ones. I have noticed that the recent project of "re-routing" postcolonial studies, for instance, still addresses the colonial body and sexuality through the travel narratives of Jean Genet and André Gide, which takes us back to where postcolonial studies started in the mid-seventies. Having observed that the postcolonial re-routing retraces old routes about the colonial body and sexuality, I decided to make of

my project a moment that intervenes in the present need to re-route and re-orient the discipline towards different and into less travelled directions.

My study is divided into an introductory chapter, three main chapters, and a brief conclusion. My introduction “Dance and the Postcolonial Studies of the Body: Theoretical Perspectives” has three purposes. First, it outlines some of the dominant postcolonial theories of the colonial body and dance. Second, it provides a brief description of the recent project of re-routing of postcolonial studies. Third, it accounts for the ways in which my study intervenes in this debate from the perspective of dance. The first chapter of my study “Oriental Dance and the Erotic: Stavros Karayanni and Audre Lorde” re-reads the concept of elusiveness of dance through the category of the erotic as theorised by Audre Lorde. I argue that although the elusiveness of dance is a paradigm of resistance, this paradigm only fetishises the dancing body as an unattainable “postcolonial exotic” (Huggan vii). I problematise this category of elusiveness through Audre Lorde’s notion of the erotic which empowers the body politically. This chapter implements my theoretical intervention through a study of the erotic empowerment of Dunia in Jocelyne Saab’s film *Dunia: Kiss Me Not on The Eyes*. The second chapter “Choreography, Sexuality, and the Indigenous Body in Tomson Highway’s *Kiss of the Fur Queen*” discusses how the elusiveness of dance is politicised in Highway’s narrative since it decentres Canada’s imperial historiography of indigenous bodies and communities. This chapter is remarkably shorter than the other chapters since it has been published as an article in the online journal *Postcolonial Text*. In this chapter, I maintain that by virtue of the politicisation of elusiveness, the novel intervenes in postcolonial theorisations of the colonial body and dance and suggests that elusiveness should be read

within the historical tensions in which the body is located rather than outside of them. The third chapter “Dance, Calypso, and the Narrative of the Nation in Earl Lovelace’s *The Dragon Can’t Dance*” discusses how dance functions as a space that both incorporates the nativist African-Creole narrative of the nation of Trinidad and simultaneously contests this narrative through the dancer’s refusal to dance. The chapter also negotiates the meaning of dance from the perspective of Trinidad’s indentured Indian immigrant population whose voice remains silenced in nationalist Caribbean historiography.

Although the chapters draw from different cultural traditions, they still allow us to read across various experiences of violence and resistance. The cultural diversity of the texts I analysed complicates our linear mode of thinking about identity and prompts us to see how critical reflections of the body overlap from the perspective of dance. These chapters allow us to see how Audre Lorde’s philosophies of the erotic and the pornographic, for instance, offer useful paradigms of reading the sexual dynamic of colonial violence and resistance in Highway’s novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. Lorde’s categories can also help us re-read the photographic and textual display of the colonial body in the postcolonial representation of Malek Alloula, Edward Said, and Stavros Karayanni. Harris’s conception of the limbo dance, in turn, offers a newly choreographed mode of postcolonial reading of the body in which histories and ethnicities blend in the way Pariag attempts to blend cultures through his desire to join Carnival with his sitar in Lovelace’s novel *The Dragon Can’t Dance*.

Introduction

Dance and the Postcolonial Theories of the Body: Theoretical Perspectives

“Any colonial study should include the phenomena of dance and possession.”

(Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 56)

“Postcolonial thinkers need to continue to question the operative assumptions, including those built into the language of politics and culture, which collectively guide disciplinary inquiry, while also developing better ways of collaborating across disciplinary and geopolitical divides to construct imaginaries better suited to the challenges of the new normative universes we are entering.”

(Diana Bydon, “Cracking Imaginaries: Studying the Global from Canadian Space,” 111)

“I have found myself reflecting on the ways in which postcolonial theory might inform my understanding of the power of choreography to affect political change- but also on the ways in which dance can inform our readings of postcolonial theory.”

(Barbara Browning, “Choreographing Postcoloniality: Reflections on the Passing of Edward Said,” 164)

1. *The Colonial Body, Dance, and Postcolonial Studies*

“Dance and the Colonial Body: Re-choreographing Postcolonial Theories of the Body” is a study which examines the ways in which dance produces new epistemologies that challenge postcolonial theories of the colonial body. I argue that dance is a category of analysis that allows us to redirect the postcolonial studies which describe the colonial body through the historical experience of colonialism that marks it and the discourses of race, sexuality, and gender that inscribe it. By the colonial body, I mean the Orientalised

and / or gendered body of the Arab subject, the racialised body of the black subject, and the subaltern body of the Indian tribal woman. Postcolonial and Critical Race theories describe the ways in which the colonial body emerges as a visual object of observation, control, desire, derision, fear, fetishism, and ambivalence for the Western traveller and / or coloniser.¹ Both theories analyse the colonial, racist, and racialised discourses through which the colonial body unfolds as Other which ambivalently stimulates and repels the viewer's desire. The colonial body thus produces meaning in connection with the Western imperial enterprise that overlaps with travel spectatorship and scientific observation of different cultures which include the bodily practice of dance.²

The first epigraph from Fanon's book *The Wretched of the Earth*, published in 1963, calls our attention to the relevance of dance and possession in colonial studies and invites us to probe the ways in which dance intervenes in postcolonial theories of the body. Classical texts of postcolonial theory have either described dance through the coloniser's perspective of power or silenced it as a space of meaning production. For example, Edward Said reads Oriental dance entirely through the colonial gaze of the Western traveller; Gayatri Spivak silences the bodily expressiveness of dance in her analysis of the production of the subaltern as Other; and Homi Bhabha brushes off the role that dance can potentially play in the theories of ambivalence and nation formation. For the last twenty years, postcolonial perspectives of dance have been limited to generic, historical, and ethnographic angles of analysis which, though they integrate theories of otherness, sexuality, and race, remain more descriptive and historical than analytical and critical. (Browning 1995, Daniel 1995, Savigliano 1995, Featherstone 2005, Nava 2007, Sorgel 2007, Reed 2010).³

Nevertheless, the most analytical study that brings together dance and postcolonial theory is Stavros Stavrou Karayanni's book *Dancing Fear and Desire: Race, Sexuality, and Imperial Politics in the Middle East* which was published in 2004.⁴ Karayanni's book, which I will address in detail in the next chapter, reads male and female Oriental dance through the disciplines of queer theory, postcolonial, and dance studies. The latter flourished in the mid-eighties as an epistemological break from the traditional field of the history of dance which describes the evolution of choreographic styles in various traditions.⁵ Contemporary dance philosophers such as Susan Forster, Andre Lepecki, Frank Marco, and Randy Martin are choreographers, dramaturges, dance historians, and literary theorists who interpret dance as unreadable bodily writing in which meaning is as unsettled as it is in verbal language according to the deconstructive method of reading.⁶

Contemporary dance philosophers also conceptualise choreography in terms of patterns of movements that are broader than the sphere of dance. The word choreography, which is derived from the Greek *choreia* or 'dancing in unison' and *graphia* or 'writing,' means a "written notation of dancing."⁷ While this definition describes choreography as an art of composing and arranging dance movements, contemporary performance theory offers an expanded conception of choreography through the mobility of technology, capital, and globalization. Susan Foster, for instance, argues that choreography is a "referent for a structuring of movement, not necessarily the movement of human beings" (*Choreographing Empathy* 20). Foster explains that choreography includes a wide spectrum of movement structuring that includes the ways in which, for example, "cameras choreograph cinematic action" or

“websites choreograph interfaces” (2,3). In this sense, Foster indicates that choreography can refer to dynamic constellation in various systems of movement.

Rick Allsopp and André Lepecki conceptualise choreography through the ways in which capitalism and global mobility produce and condition new patterns of human movement. Allsopp and Lepecki note:

the acceleration of full-blown capitalism and the implementation of the spectacle of full global mobility . . . become essentially choreographic ones: to decide *who* is able or allowed to move – and under what circumstances, and on what grounds; to decide *where* one is allowed to move to; to define who are the bodies that can *choose* full mobility and who are the bodies forced into displacement. (2)

Allsopp and Lepecki argue that global mobility is a choreography which distinguishes between the movement patterns of bodies that are allowed “free circulation,” like the bodies of business people, and the movement of the bodies that are “forced into displacement,” like the bodies of refugees and persecuted people. The choreography of global mobility according to Allsopp and Lepecki varies according to the historical, racial, class, and ethnic markers which inscribe the bodies that are involved in this mobility.

Nearly a decade before Lepecki and Allsopp, Randy Martin describes choreography as a site of both embodied movement and reflection about movement. While exploring the “iterations” of choreography and politics, Martin argues that “movement . . . informs critical consciousness. Dance lies at the point at which embodiment and reflection meet [and] are intertwined” (1). By associating movement and “critical consciousness,” Martin invites us to conceptualise choreography not only in terms of structured patterns of bodily movement in space, but also in terms of the ways

in which we choreograph, design, or structure our critical reflection about the body that dances. Martin's statement recalls Edward Said's conception of "critical consciousness" that is premised on moving and dislodging the closed space of Eurocentrism which reduces discourses of identity to the binary of Self and Other.⁸ Indeed, Martin allows us to use dance and choreography as a space of critical consciousness through which we can re-think or re-choreograph not only Eurocentric politics of identity but also postcolonial theoretical discourses about the body.

Departing from this conception of choreography as a mode of reflection, my project aims to rethink the dancing colonial body less through the imperial desire to which it is subjected, than through the body's own potential to claim its silenced histories as an act of resistance. My thesis argues that the contemporary discipline of dance studies opens the possibility for us to re-choreograph postcolonial theories of the body from the perspective of the unreadability and elusiveness of dance. The word "re-choreographing" in my title means rethinking, re-routing (Brydon 2004 and Welson, Sandru, and Welsh 2010) and / or "relocating" (Quayson and Goldberg 2002) postcolonial theories of the body through the space of dance and choreography that both subject the body to their capture and command and simultaneously contest subjection.

My project of re-choreographing intervenes in the recent debate around opening postcolonial studies towards "new directions" that fit today's increasingly mobile world. The second epigraph, from Diana Brydon's contribution to the re-routing project, insists that postcolonial studies continue to question "the language of politics and culture" such as the discourses of identity and the politics of representation. She also strongly recommends that the discipline of postcolonial studies broaden its crossdisciplinarily

and rethink its facile geopolitical divisions of the world into colonised and colonising territories.⁹ My thesis advances that the category of dance offers “better ways” (Brydon) to reroute postcolonial theories of the body through a cross-disciplinary dialogue between postcolonial and dance studies.

While re-choreographing and / or re-thinking postcolonial theories of the body through dance, my thesis draws upon reflections of dance critics who have already thought about the ways in which dance and postcolonial theory can inform each other. The third epigraph, from Barbara Browning’s essay on the passing of Edward Said, opens the possibility for a cross-disciplinary dialogue between postcolonial theory and dance. Browning’s reflection about “the power of choreography to affect political change” invites us to probe the way in which dance may produce a “change” in the direction of postcolonial theories which hitherto define the colonial body mostly through the identity politics of difference. Although Browning notes that “Said left us to ponder: How will we choreograph the world we want to live in?” (169), she hardly suggests how we choreograph, compose, or design meaning about postcolonial subjects through the empowerment of their bodies in dance rather than “the colonial traces” that are central to Said’s analysis (*Orientalism* 5). Yet, even though Browning does not theorise her reflection about the choreography of the postcolonial world where we live, she nevertheless initiates provocative ways in which to “crack imaginaries” (Brydon) in postcolonial cross-disciplinarity from the perspective of dance and choreography that are useful in my study.

My study departs from two theoretical observations. First, if, as dance critics argue, dance is unreadable bodily writing that eludes complete verbal interpretation, then

the dance of the colonial body can be taken as bodily writing that disrupts colonial interpretations about it. Gayatri Spivak suggests that “the body is a script . . . a ceaseless scribing instrument” (“Translation as Culture”135). Although Spivak’s statement refers to the corporeal experience of menstruation in which the body of the subaltern can articulate resistance, one can still deduce that dance -which Spivak silences as a way of speaking– is also a bodily script that writes collective culture and simultaneously transgresses facile interpretations about it. Given dance’s historical role in enacting local cultural archives colonisers sought to wipe out, we need to account for the ways in which postcolonial texts employ dance as a scriptural site that unsettles colonial knowledge production from within the imminent imperial violence to which the dancer’s body is subjected. For this reason, the discipline of Dance Studies offers a useful theoretical frame work for my analysis of the ways in which dance can “choreograph [collective] history” (Foster 1), defer ready-made constructions about the colonial body, and re-choreograph postcolonial epistemologies of the body. My study describes the resistance of the colonial dancing body not only from the vantage point of imperial fear and desire, as Karayanni does for example, but also through the body’s own modes of empowerment that unfold from within subjection and cultural uprooting.

My second theoretical observation is that dance is a “biopolitical event” in which the colonial body displays the power of its life which resists the “biopower” that administers and produces the body in discourse (Hard and Negri 59). My second observation is grounded in Hardt and Negri’s re-reading of Michel Foucault’s theory of power. Hardt and Negri argue that power for Foucault includes bio-power and biopolitics. They clarify that biopower is the power to let live which produces the body

in discourses of knowledge such as medicine for example. By contrast, biopolitics is the power of life that resists biopower and unsettles discourses about the body. I argue that Oriental dance emerges as a form of biopolitics, or a “biopolitical event” (Hardt and Negri 57) in which the body of the Oriental subject resists the colonial biopower that disciplines, nourishes, and produces it as eroticised Other according to the imperial discourse of Orientalism. For, if, as Said argues, Orientalism is a discourse of knowledge in Foucault’s sense of the word, then the bio-power of this discourse produces the Oriental body, gives it life according to the sovereignty of imperial frame of knowledge, and defines Oriental dance in terms of this knowledge. This is where Edward Said’s analysis has left us. I, however, add to Said’s analysis that by virtue of the elusiveness of dance, which Karayanni examines, the body of the Oriental subject acquires a form of biopolitics through which it resists its orientalised and eroticised life within imperial discourse. Here, I advance that dance is “a biopolitical event” which produces Oriental dancers as “alternative subjectivities” whose lives emerge “as resistance, another power of life that strives toward an alternative existence” (Hardt and Negri 58). My theorisation of dance romanticises neither the dancer nor the dancer’s body but rather insists that they both emerge “from the inside of culture” (59) and / or the system of values that produce and manage them and that they constantly “resist so as to exist” (57).¹⁰

I implement my theoretical reading of dance through postcolonial literary, theoretical, and cinematic texts which draw from various cultural traditions, cross geopolitical and disciplinary divides, and broaden the cross disciplinary project of re-routing postcolonial studies. My first chapter, following the introduction, is about

eroticism in Oriental dance. In this chapter, I argue that the paradigm of elusiveness, which resists the colonial gaze according to Karayanni, also fetishises the dancing body by turning it into a “postcolonial exotic” (Huggan). This chapter suggests Audre Lorde’s theory of the erotic as a way to re-choreograph postcolonial readings of the body in dance. The chapter also explains erotic empowerment in Oriental dance more clearly through the dance of Dunia, the title character in Jocelyn Saab’s in *Dunia: Kiss my Not in the Eyes*. Being inspired by ancient Arabic erotic poetry, Dunia’s dance is “a biopolitical event” because it emerges “from inside [her] culture,” and allows Dunia to resist the biopower through which her body is given life in restrictive social norms. The second chapter “Choreography, Sexuality, and the Indigenous Body in Tomson Highway’s *Kiss of the Fur Queen*,” examines how the elusiveness and unreadability of dance acquire a political force that intervenes in the dominant historiography of Canada which silences and stigmatises the indigenous body and subjectivity. Here, dance emerges as a form of biopolitics and resists the biopower in which the body is administered and produced as Other in colonial discourses of power. I explain that Gabriel’s dance in the novel is biopolitical since it emerges from within the Cree collective memory of the trickster who trespasses times, spaces, genders, and sexualities as a way to resist the colonial discourses of otherness. The last chapter “Dance, Calypso, and the Narrative of the Nation in Earl Lovelace’s *The Dragon Can’t Dance*” presents dance as biopower that nurtures Aldrick’s body through the discourse of nativism. This chapter also presents dance as a biopolitical event in which Pariag, the indentured East Indian immigrant, resists the nativist discourse that alienates him as Other. The texts I discuss in this dissertation thus offer epistemologies of resistance that challenge

postcolonial theories of the body and cross geopolitical, geographic, and disciplinary divides while presenting a “synoptic” pattern of interdisciplinarity (Quayson 2000 25).¹¹ My project uses dance and choreography to crack and / or open “new directions” (Sethi 2011) in the contemporary process of re-orienting postcolonial imaginaries of the colonial body.

My introduction is divided in four sections. The first one outlines different Postcolonial and Critical Race theories which describe how the colonial body unfolds as Other in discourses of power, how it resists these discourses through the paradigm of ambivalence, and how this mode of resistance disrupts the homogeneity of modern discourses of subjectivity, culture, and the nation state. This section also clarifies that the colonial body does not exist in itself but, rather, is kept hostage by postcolonial theoretical discourses of anti-colonialism, nation formation, and subalternity. The second section describes the recent project of re-routing postcolonial studies towards new directions in the new millennium. Although this re-routing project seeks to make the postcolonial agenda fit today’s mobile world, it still discards the body that both enacts and bears the experiences of displacement and migration of today’s mobility.¹² Rather than describing the role of the body in theories of cosmopolitanism, diaspora, or transnationality, my study focuses on dance as an original direction through which I re-route the dominant postcolonial theories of the body. The third section outlines some of the central theories of dance studies and explains the gains and stakes of bringing together postcolonial and contemporary dance theories.

The major gain of dance philosophies is that they allow us to re-choreograph postcolonial theories of the body from the perspective of the unreadability and

elusiveness of dance as sites of empowerment and resistance. However, these categories are problematic because they both metaphorise dance as ‘text’ and fetishise the body as evasive and elusive. The fourth section of my introduction outlines the theoretical perspectives of my re-choreographing project. I read dance as a “biopolitical event” in which the colonial body displays the power of life through which it resists the biopower that manages and produces it in colonial and postcolonial discourses. In the fifth section of my introduction, I lay out the literary and theoretical postcolonial texts in which dance and the dancer’s body manifest a transformative life force, or biopolitics from within the position of subjection to colonial and neo-colonial violence and manipulation.

2. *The Colonial Body in Postcolonial and Critical Race Theories*

Edward Said’s seminal book *Orientalism*, published in 1978, describes the Oriental body through the travel narratives of eighteenth and nineteenth century French and English authors such as Gustave Flaubert, Gérard de Nerval, François-René de Chateaubriand, and William Lane. Said notices that these authors and others depict the body and sexuality of the Oriental subject through eroticised images that overlap with the exoticising features they attribute to the East so as to invent it as Other. In particular Said notes that the body of the Oriental woman unfolds in these narratives as “a disturbing symbol of fecundity . . . unbounded sexuality” (187). He adds that the Western imagination “produces [the female body as] a *spectacular* form . . . [which] remains barred to the Westerner’s full participation in it . . . this was an epistemological difficulty for which the discipline of Orientalism existed” (189; emphasis in original). The Oriental body is accordingly defined through the gaze of the traveller/ coloniser to which it is exposed and displayed as spectacle that is “barred” to the Western traveller

who cannot participate in it.¹³ The remoteness of the body and sexuality of the Oriental subject reflects, according to Said, the “epistemological difficulty for which the discipline of Orientalism existed” (189). This means that inaccessibility is not a feature of the body and sexuality of the women from the East. Rather, it is a constructed image that is epistemologically crucial to Orientalist knowledge formation. The sense of fear and inability to grasp the strangeness associated with Oriental sexuality is accordingly central to the orientalist project of inventing Oriental sexuality as strangely “unbounded,” according to the racialised discourse that distinguishes it from Western sexuality.

The category of race is central to the invention of the colonial body as Other in Western imagination and fantasy. Critical Race theorists notice that race is actually a central category of analysis through which the body of the black subject emerges as an object of Western knowledge. David Goldberg, a major proponent of this theory, maintains that the black body acquires its meaning through the racialised discourses that produce racist attitudes and practices.¹⁴ Goldberg distinguishes between the terms “racialised” and “racist” by arguing that the term “racialised” includes “any and all significance extended both explicitly and silently by racial preference over discursive expression and practice”(1). By contrast, ‘racist’ means “those exclusions prompted or promoted by racial reference or racialised significance, whether such exclusions are actual or intended, effects of racial and racialised expression”(2). Goldberg notes that racialised discourse implies the knowledge and truth claims with which the black body is imbued whereas racism refers to the social practices of exclusion that occur in accordance with the pre-conceived knowledge provided by racialised discourses about

the black body. Goldberg argues that this dynamic of racial constructions is not coincidental but rather historically grounded in “the relations of social subjects to each other and in ways of seeing, of relating to, (other) subjects”(53). Goldberg puts the word ‘other’ in brackets since it does not exist as a thing in itself but rather emerges as an effect by way of which the white observer / viewer defines the black subject’s body.

The body is thus a visual site that historically serves to construct racialised “ways of seeing.” Drawing from Michel Foucault’s theory of the investment of the body in the production of truth, Goldberg affirms:

the distributive management of bodies enabled by some forms of colour racism, for example, extended the space in which capital accumulation, the growth of productive forces, and the massive generation and redeployment of surplus value could take place. In other words it is *in virtue of* racialised discourse and not merely rationalised by racist expression that such forced manipulations and exploitation of individual subjects and whole populations could have been affected. American Indian and inhabitants of Africa were imagined in European representations considerably before their exploitation as slaves took place. Indeed, these images and the discursive rationalisations attendant with them enabled the conceivability of Euro-enslavement of colonial inhabitants. I am suggesting that racist exclusion finds whatever authority it has in the discourse of the body and that this ‘body talk’ (so to speak) forges an underlying, though abstract, unity of the discourse of race. (53; emphasis in original)

Here Goldberg maintains that the organisation of bodies according to racialised truth claims contributes to the growth of capital in the Western world, particularly during the period of slavery. Goldberg asserts that the growth of capital is predicated upon the classification of bodies according to their force and potential to produce labour power. He explains that force is attributed to black bodies which are “imagined” in European presentations as having unusual endurance that allows them to be exploited as slaves. Goldberg insists that pre-conceived ideas, or “discursive rationalisations,” about the black body produce the slavery system which, in turn, helps produce major consumer

goods such as coffee, cotton, rum, sugar and tobacco that were basic to the world trade during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁵ The growth and accumulation of Western capital is contingent upon the accumulation of ideas about bodies of Africans and American Indians (Foucault 1975 221, Harvey 1982, 157. Harvey 2000, 97). Thus, the racialised fantasy both invents the black body as Other and also uses the logic of otherness as an ideology or system of ideas that mediates the economic strength of Western capital.

Western racialised knowledge also invents the female black body as an over-sexualised Other to be observed, scrutinised, and ambivalently desired. Stuart Hall describes the ways in which the body of the African woman Saartjie Baartman, or Sarah Baartman, was exposed publically in London and Paris over five years when she was brought from Africa during the nineteenth century.¹⁶ Hall notes that Baartman's body was

a spectacle, commemorated in ballads, cartoons, illustrations, in melodramas, and newspaper reports; and amongst the naturalists and ethnologists, who measured, observed drew, learned treaties about, modelled, made waxen moulds and plaster casts, and scrutinised every detail, of her anatomy, dead and alive. (256)

Baartman's body was exhibited when she was alive and dissected after her death so as to provide physical evidence for the racist discourse of difference that constructed the black female body. Hall notes that Baartman's body "was read like a text, for the living evidence – the proof, the Truth which it provides about her absolute 'otherness' and therefore of an irreversible difference between the 'races'" (265). The body accordingly provides a physical and material proof for the growth and development of pseudo-

scientific theories of race as a paramount determinant of difference in the Western imagination.¹⁷

Baartman emerges through difference that marks her body and more particularly her sexual organs which were anatomically observed and assessed as being distinct from the standard image Western man forms about the female body. Hall describes how she was

reduced to her body and her body in turn was reduced to her sexual organs. They stood as the essential signifiers of her place in the essential scheme of things . . . she was subjected to an extreme form of reductionism . . . Saartjie did not exist as ‘a person’. She had been dismantled into her relevant parts. She was fetishised- turned into an object. (266)

By virtue of the process of being depersonalised, Baartman becomes a fetish seen through the fantasy of the white observer who imagines her via objects representing her, namely the parts of her body. These parts keep enhancing not only the white subject’s curiosity of knowledge but also his desire for the black body that is simultaneously derided in Western culture. Baartman becomes a presence in absence in the representational strategy of fetishism that allows the viewer to manifest his disavowed desire for her body that is dissected in parts after her death.

Kobena Mercer describes the strategy of fetishism in the photograph “Man in the Polyester Suit” by the American photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. Mercer notices that Mapplethorpe’s photograph eroticises the body of a black man since it focuses on his exposed naked black penis while the rest of his body is dressed. Like the body of Baartmann, the photographed black male body is reduced to his sexual organ since “the penis and the penis alone identifies the model in the picture as a black man”(352). Yet, unlike Baartman’s body which is caged and exposed to the white heterosexual audience

in an age of racial purity, the black man's body in Mapplethorpe's photograph is willingly exposed to the gaze of Mapplethorpe who, as a gay man, is subjected to the dynamic of exclusion implied in the act of gazing.¹⁸ Departing from the politics of exclusion that invents him as Other, Mapplethorpe purposely reveals the hands of the photographed black man and dresses him in white so as to question the aura of racial purity to which Baartman was subjected in the early twentieth century. The elements of the hands and white polyester, which Kobena Mercer brushes aside in his analysis, are historically and symbolically significant. The hands represent the medium through which the black slave serves the white master and produces the growth of the capital of this master. Patricia Collins notices that Mapplethorpe purposely targets the black hands of the model as "objects to service whites" (207). In this sense, by neglecting the historical significance of the model's hands, Mercer appears not to be immune to the reductive reading of which he accuses Mapplethorpe.

Mapplethorpe also uses the white suit to describe the ways in which the meaning of blackness as a sign of race is indeed clothed and embedded in the racialised ideology of whiteness, as Fanon notices.¹⁹ In this sense, Mapplethorpe's photograph emphasises that the blackness of the model's body unfolds only through the white man's perspective that invents whiteness and blackness as race categories constantly haunting the white psyche. Christina Sharpe notices in her comment on Mapplethorpe's photograph that "perhaps the suit itself . . . alert[s] viewers to his [i.e. the photographed man's] race" (137). Sharpe indicates that the blackness of the photographed body is historically defined and epistemologically systematised only from the essentialist perspective of whiteness which the white polyester suit represents. Mapplethorpe's photograph

conveys, according to Sharpe, that blackness exists within the logic of whiteness just as the body of the photographed man unfolds in the white polyester suit. Collins and Sharpe's readings demonstrate that Mapplethorpe's photograph, to borrow David Joslit's words, "occupies the margin that has much to say" to the white racialised historiography and therefore does not merely perpetuate racial stereotypes, as Mercer and other black queer critics contest (19).²⁰ Mapplethorpe has undoubtedly commodified the black body in his photographic industry in ways both Collins and Sharpe fail to pinpoint. Yet, Mapplethorpe's photograph still offers a more complex medium to negotiate the colonial black body than does the medium of print through which Baartman's body is represented.²¹

Rather than examining whether Mapplethorpe presents or endorses a racist fantasy in his polyester photograph, Kobena Mercer focuses on the postcolonial paradigm of ambivalence according to which the photographed black body is both depersonalised and idealised. Mercer asserts that the photographed black male body "presents the spectator with a source of erotic pleasure in the act of looking" rather than identifying the object being looked at. Mercer notices that this paradox of depersonalising the idealised object of erotic desire suggests ambivalence that characterises the mechanisms of colonial fantasy. He notes that "we can see in Mapplethorpe's gaze a re-inscription of the fundamental ambivalence of colonial fantasy, oscillating between sexual idealization of the racial other and anxiety in defence of the identity of the white ego"(67). In Mercer's reading, Mapplethorpe's photograph is genealogically related to the ambivalent colonial imagination which depersonalises, de-historicises, and de-socialises the black body as a way to deride it racially but also

desire it sexually and fulfill this desire only through the inability to attain it. This inability fetishises the object but also keeps the imperial subject anxious to defend himself against the desire he explicitly disavows.

Mapplethorpe's ambivalence and anxiety before the photographed male black body recalls the "epistemological difficulty" which Said sees as a condition in the Western process of orientalising the body and sexuality of the Eastern subject. For both Oriental and black bodies are made into spectacles (Said, Hall) that acquire meaning only in the imagination (Said) and fantasy (Mercer) of the colonial racialising and eroticising gaze that disables the viewer to participate in and possess the sexualities and bodies it eroticises and over-sexualises. Said, Mercer, and Hall inform us that the orientalised, racialised, and sexualised colonial body unfolds as a product of the "epistemological difficulty" and /or "ambivalence" that defines the fantasy and imagination of the white coloniser during its physical or photographic journey to this body.

Moreover, Mercer borrows the concept of ambivalence from Bhabha's reading of the white gaze to which Frantz Fanon was publically subjected in France during the 1950s. Fanon describes the moment in which a white child looks at him on the street of Nantes and says to his mother: "look a black man, I am frightened" (*Black Skin White Mask* 91). Fanon emphasises the sense of disintegration of "the unfamiliar weight that burdened [him and made white] consciousness of the body a negating activity" (110). Yet, Fanon also notes the sense of fear that haunts the white consciousness which reduces the black body to "a genital potency beyond all moralities and prohibitions" and thus sees "the Negro . . . as a terrifying penis" (177). Fanon's statement, which inspires

Mercer's analysis of Mapplethorpe's photograph and which takes its point of departure from Lacan's theory of the mirror stage, notes that the psyche of the white subject incarcerates the black body not only in the imagination of racial disdain but also sexual desire and fear. Fanon adds that this imagination makes of the black subject 'the Other that is perceived at the level of the body image, absolutely as the not-self-that is, the identifiable, the inassimilable' (n. 25 106).²²

Bhabha broadens this Lacanian perspective of Fanon by advancing that the black body turns the coherence and wholeness of white subjectivity and culture into suspension and disintegration respectively. While commenting on Fanon's subjection to the white gaze, Bhabha notices that the white man's authority is located in "the area of ambivalence between [the] race and sexuality of the black body" that stimulates derision and desire respectively. Bhabha also ponders Fanon's statement that "the negro is not. Anymore than the white man" (*Black Skin White Mask* 66) and notes that the negro's body is amputated by the white man's racist gaze, just as the latter's ego and position of racial superiority are challenged before his desire that fulfills itself only through suspension and anxiety. The black body accordingly "is not," that is it is negated from the perspective of the white gaze which disintegrates it, just as the white man "is [equally] not" from the perspective of his desire that is suspended as lack.

Besides, the manifestation of Western desire as lack parallels the manifestation of the wholeness of the Western narrative of identity as suspension through the interstices and fissures that migration and diaspora open in the body of the racially and ethnically homogenous Western culture and nation. Bhabha notes that "the familiar alignment of colonial subjects –black / white, self / other- is disturbed within one brief

pause and the traditional grounds of racial identity are dispersed, whenever they are found to rest in the narcissistic myths of *négritude* or white cultural supremacy” (40). Bhabha argues that Fanon’s above statement marks a moment that questions not only the modernist discourse of race, which Goldberg describes, but also the essentialising narratives of *négritude* and white supremacy which Bhabha interrogates.²³ Bhabha reads this interrogating potential through the body that intervenes in the “continuist, progressivist myth of Man . . . Fanon writes from . . . the time lag of cultural difference . . . [from] the space of . . . the interrogatory, tragic experience of blackness, of discrimination, of despair” (237, 238). Yet instead of romanticising the spaces of discrimination and despair, Bhabha as well as Fanon argue that these spaces regulate the body and also fuel it to disrupt and unsettle essentialising narratives of identity. Still, despite being informative, Bhabha’s reading of Fanon nevertheless neglects the latter’s gendered reading of the Algerian woman’s body and the critical stakes of this reading.

In his article “Algeria Unveiled,” Fanon argues that the veil of Algerian women is symbolically an image of immunity through which the Algerian culture protects itself from westernisation during the period of anti-colonial resistance. Fanon first describes that the veil is a stark marker of the category of gender in the Algerian society. He notes that

for the tourist and the foreigner, the veil demarcates both Algerian society and its feminine component. . . . The masculine garb allows a certain margin of choice, a modicum of heterogeneity. The woman seen in her white veil unifies the perception that one has of Algerian feminine society. Obviously what we have here is a uniform which tolerates no modification, no variant. . . . The Algerian woman, in the eyes of the observer, is unmistakably she who hides behind a veil. (160)

While describing the Algerian woman through the gaze of the “tourist and foreigner,” Fanon emphasises that this woman is totally identified through her veil which marks her gender according to the Algerian cultural norms. Fanon presents the body of the Algerian woman through the normalising cultural and social value system in which the veil marks or, to borrow Judith Butler’s term, “cites” this woman’s gender.²⁴ This citationality of gender through the veil leaves no doubt for the “observer” to deduce that whoever is veiled in Algerian society is a woman. Being himself an outsider who is culturally “foreign” to the society he observes, Fanon performs in his statement the very process of gender-oriented observation he describes as a critic. His use of the first plural pronoun “we” integrates him in the mass of observers to whom the veiled body of the Algerian woman is exposed and identified solely through this exhibition. The body of the Algerian woman, and man alike, is gendered not only by the French coloniser – whom Fanon means by “tourist and the foreigner”- but also by Fanon himself who abstains from providing any material identification of this body away from the veil that makes it both female and Algerian, that is, allegorised as being representative of the Algerian land itself.²⁵

Fanon points out that the national and gender markers of the body are historically situated in the politics of anti-colonial resistance in Algeria. Fanon notes:

The Algerian female body was literally moulded and remoulded in the course of the anti-colonial struggle. Colonial administrators asked Algerian women to shed their veil (and with it, their bondage to tradition as well as their men folk). The nationalist resistance exploited their assumption that an unveiled woman was Europeanized and thus not part of the Algerian resistance by asking women to unveil, conceal arms under European clothes and move across the enemy lines. The Algerian woman had to fashion her body to being ‘naked’ and scrutinized, she had to move ‘like a fish in the western waters’ while ‘carrying revolvers, grenades, hundreds of false identity cards or bombs.’ But such a

woman is not unveiled at Europe's bidding hence she does not signify loss of cultural identity but the forging of a new nationalist self. (160)

The body of the Algerian woman is a site of national and cultural identity since its veil stages not only the resistance of this woman to be penetrated by a man other than her husband but also the national resistance to French colonial power which seeks to penetrate Algerian society militarily and culturally. The body of the Algerian woman is according to Fanon shaped both by the gender identification of the veil and the politics of anti-colonial resistance in which the veil is a medium of resistance. Fanon explains that this discourse of resistance employs the body to play the role of a "bondage to tradition." Yet, Fanon notices that the body of the Algerian woman unveils itself in response to the politics of resistance according to which "an unveiled woman was Europeanized and thus not part of the Algerian resistance [and therefore can] conceal arms under European clothes and move across the enemy lines." Fanon adds that in this case, "the Algerian woman had to fashion her body to being 'naked' and scrutinized, . . . while "carrying revolvers, grenades, hundreds of false identity cards or bombs" (160).²⁶

The colonial body of the Algerian woman accordingly unfolds through the discourses of gender and national resistance which it writes as she wears the veil and takes it off respectively. Fanon notices that this woman takes a risk after having taken off the veil not because she adopts Westernised norms but because she makes of this adoption an alibi to carry bombs and grenades to resist colonialism. Yet, her decision to take off the veil symbolically veils her as an agent since she does not act on her own but under the directions of the male masterminds of national resistance whose commands she executes unconditionally. In this case, the Algerian woman's body is entirely

constructed and manipulated by the discourse of nationalism during the anti-colonial resistance movement. Fanon indeed traces the ways in which the female body in Algeria is physically moulded to fit the discourse of the nation:

The Algerian woman's body, which in an initial phase was pared down, now swelled. Whereas in the previous period the body had to be made slim and disciplined to make it attractive and seductive, it now had to be squashed, made shapeless and even ridiculous. This . . . is the phase during which she undertook to carry bombs, grenades, machine-gun clips. . . . Spontaneously and without being told, the Algerian women who had long since dropped the veil once again donned the *haik*, thus affirming that it was not true that woman liberated herself at the invitation of France and of General de Gaulle. (162)

Here, Fanon describes the power of anti-colonial politics that disciplines the female Algerian body by making it, like the body of the prisoner in Foucault's analysis in *Discipline and Punish*, learn how to regulate itself. While making the transition from wearing a veil to taking it off, then to putting on the *haik*, the body of the Algerian woman is politically motivated. The body in the veil writes its gender to which it disciplines itself in order to unfold as a body. The body without a veil "is made slim" to fit the politics of resistance it enacts for the purpose of liberating the nation. Last, the body which puts on the *haik* is a body which confirms both its traditionally-grounded gendered identity and the failure of the coloniser's project to westernise it according to the colonial project of amnesia and acculturation. In all these cases, Fanon's analysis, which naturalises the *haik* and veil as signs of identity still invites us to probe the ways in which the colonial body both articulates not only the norms of its culture but also the resistance to these norms, as Gayatri Spivak notices in a different cultural context.

Spivak addresses the colonial body of the subaltern in the context of her critique of "epistemic violence" in which both British colonial law and local patriarchy silence low class indigenous women in India during the early nineteenth century. Spivak defines

“epistemic violence” in her article “Can the Subaltern Speak?” as “the orchestrated, far flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other. This project is also the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other in its precarious subjectivity”(A Critique of Postcolonial Reason 266). Spivak describes epistemic violence as “heterogeneous” since it consists of both local patriarchy, which legislates the ritual of *sati* or the ‘good wife’ who ‘willingly’ immolates herself after her husband’s death, and British colonial law which abolishes this ritual without consulting Indian widows. This intertwined form of violence thus produces the Indian widow as silenced “colonial Other” whose subjectivity is effaced through her uneven, or “asymmetrical,” relationship with the local patriarchy and colonial power.

Spivak describes this widow as “subaltern” because she lacks the institutional validation and the sense of collectivity to which individuals are affiliated and through which they acquire agency. Spivak clarifies in an interview that “subalternity is where social lines of mobility, being elsewhere, do not permit the formation of a recognisable basis of action” (“Scattered Speculations on the Subaltern and the Popular,” 476). Being deprived of institutional affiliation through which she can emerge as agent, the subaltern cannot speak, that is, cannot hold a position in the historiography of resistance. Spivak indeed asks rhetorically: “Could the subaltern speak, then? Could it have its insurgency recognised by the official historians?” (A Critique 268) Spivak does not mean that this woman is dumb. Rather, she means that this woman is unable to make herself heard through an institutional mediation in which she articulates her ideas and incorporates them systematically into a discourse of identity. Spivak maintains that “subalternity is a position without identity [and that] the idea of subalternity became imbricated with the

idea of non-recognition of agency” (“Scattered Speculations” 476). The subaltern accordingly has no identity and consequently no agency to articulate her subjectivity and position about the rituals and norms that make her destroy her body.

Spivak however points out the case of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri who, though not a ‘true’ subaltern because of her middle class position, still articulates an attempt to symbolically challenge the *sati* ritual through her body. Bhubaneswari Bhaduri hangs herself because she refuses to carry out a political assassination with which she is entrusted as a member of a group of armed struggle for independence. Although Bhubaneswari leaves a note stating the reason of her suicide, her menstruating body was a material proof that she does not kill herself because of illicit love as it was believed among her relatives. Spivak tells this story to argue that “Bhubaneswari attempted to ‘speak’ by turning her body into text of woman/ writing” her “interventionist practice” into the male-centred project of *sati* ritual, in which women kill themselves for men. (*A Critique* 308) Spivak affirms that Bhubaneswari’s menstruation proves that she does not kill herself for that reason and that therefore she displaces the suicide ritual’s “imprisonment within the legitimate passion by a single male” (307). Yet, Spivak adds that “the message of the woman who hanged herself was one of unrecognisable resistance, an unrecognisable refusal of victimage by reproductive hetero-normativity” of the epistemic violence. (“Scattered Speculations” 477). In this case, the subaltern body is not only a site of epistemic violence, but it is also a corporeal medium of resistance that, though left unrecognised or worse recognised only through the male-dominated discourse of independence, still invites us to probe the ways in which the colonial body could be read a space of resistance from within subjection.

Still, the body of the subaltern nevertheless remains hostage to Spivak's own postcolonial discourse of subalternity. Spivak writes that "I had learnt the importance of making unrecognisable resistance recognisable." ("Scattered Speculations," 476) Spivak proudly claims that subaltern body and subjectivity would enter into history and acquire agency solely through the agency of Spivak's discursivity or postcolonial reasoning that makes the unrecognised recognised. By virtue of her globally acknowledged and recognised "institutional validation" (Spivak), Spivak speaks for and validates a critical discourse about subaltern subjectivity and body as Other. Spivak reminds us that the "message in her body [i.e. in the body of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri] led outside disciplinary limits" (477). Yet, ironically enough, Spivak negates her own claim by incarcerating Bhubaneswari's body inside the limits of both her [i.e. Spivak's] critical discourse and Jean-Francois Lyotard's philosophical conception of the "differend." The latter helps Spivak to make us recognise Bhubaneswari as someone who "suffers from the wrongs of not being able to be put into phrases right away" (13). Apart from the politically disempowering effect of the passive voice in Lyotard's sentence, the fact of identifying Bhaduri in language and making her "heard and read" in Western philosophical metaphors contributes to obliterating her subjectivity and de-materialising her body further and further.²⁷

Spivak admits that critics often silence the subject on behalf of whom they speak by turning this subject into an object of critical inquiry. Spivak points out that "it is important to acknowledge our complicity in the muting . . . all speaking . . . is at best . . . an interception" (*A Critique* 309). Spivak clarifies here that speaking for someone means intercepting, cutting off, interrupting, or even freezing the one of whom we

speak. Yet, should this awareness allow Spivak, Said, and Bhabha to mute the represented in a manner as totalising as the colonial mode of representation, as Aijaz Ahmad notes in his critique of Said?²⁸ The totalising category “all” in Spivak’s above statement should not escape our critical attention simply because it reiterates the rhetorical power we are used to in colonial discourse and we become used to again in the postcolonial discourses of knowledge about knowledge construction. The colonial body is a hostage of sweeping postcolonial generalisations about orientalisation, racialisation, ambivalence, fetishisation, and nation formation. While incarcerating the body in theoretical discourses, postcolonial knowledge formations emerge as instances which certify that “to theorize over the body is a violation. It is a dominating and power-laden act, like rape, it is about disregarding the subjectivity of the other in an enforcing of one’s own beliefs about what is appropriated and desirable” (Granek, 45). The body has undoubtedly been a central concern for postcolonial studies since it is a space of both imperial violence and resistance. Fanon and Bhabha show how the black body, for instance, produces ambivalence and incoherence in the discourse of power and dominance to which it is subjected. Spivak also shows how the subaltern can write her resistance with her body from within subjection to violence. Still, postcolonial studies nevertheless violate the integrity of the body by making it hostage to its discourses of knowledge formations.

Postcolonial theory has kept the body in discourse without opening venues through which the body can resist its discursive entanglements. In this regard, the body is, to borrow Anne McClintock’s words, “historically voided” since it is embedded in “academic clout and professional marketability [in which it] run[s] the risk of . . .

invisibility” (Imperial *Leather*, 11). For the body gains discursive credibility in postcolonial studies only to lose its material visibility as a represented which cannot represent itself. Although “representation . . . is a fundamental concept of postcolonialism . . . [and] . . . one of the most important contributions of the field and its associated theories, but it can also be stifling if we cannot get beyond its power” (Borche xvii). As it stands, the body of the colonised or / and neo-colonised subject cannot interrupt the postcolonial permission to narrate it through the rhetoric of hybridity, in-between spaces, nation formation, subalternity, and other postcolonial discourse formations. Yet, if classical texts of postcolonial theory confine the body to the discourses of postcolonial knowledge formations, does the body have the same epistemological fate in recent debates of postcolonial studies? Do recent postcolonial studies include the category of the colonial body in their new millennium project of re-routing? If the answer is no, then how can dance allow us to rethink, re-direct, or re-choreograph the project of re-routing postcolonial studies from the perspective of the body? In order to answer these questions, it is first useful to identify the recent concerns in which postcolonial studies relocate itself in the new millennium.

3. *Postcolonial Studies: Recent Critical Concerns*

Over the last decade, postcolonial debates have been concerned with the cultural effects and institutions of globalisation, the dissolution of the nation state, the phenomenon of cosmopolitanism, and the ways in which these global changes have shaped the construction of meaning about local cultures. While commenting on the new concerns of postcolonial debates in his book *Postcolonialism: A Guide for the Perplexed* published in 2010, Pramod K Nayar notes that

Newer concerns for the postcolonial have emerged in the age of economic globalization, neo-colonialism, and cultural imperialism in postcolonial societies. Dissolving nation state boundaries, transnational linkages and transnational terror have tested postcolonialism's emphasis on territoriality. The rise of cosmopolitanism as both an ethic and political philosophy challenges the theme of nativism even as 'vernacular cosmopolitanism' proposes a postcolonising of the very idea of the cosmopolitan. (191)

Nayar notices that the main objects of postcolonial inquiry today are the dissolution of the sovereignty of the nation state, global mobility of capital and free trade, and the commodification of local products in global consumer culture. Nayar also notes the notion of cosmopolitanism as a main feature of recent postcolonial interests. For him, cosmopolitanism is both ethically recommended and politically reflective of the neo-colonial power relationship between Western powers which manage global capital and global migrants who only serve the de-centred expansion of capital.²⁹ Nayar adds that postcolonialism is equally interested in the phenomenon of global terror in which war has become as decentred and deterritorialised as global capital itself.³⁰

More than a decade before Nayar, Hardt and Negri had described de-centred global capital in terms of Empire which, unlike imperialism, transgresses territorial boundaries and undoes the binary of centre and periphery. Hardt and Negri argue:

In contrast to imperialism, Empire establishes no territorial centre of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a decentred and deterritorialising apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers. (xii)

Yet although Hardt and Negri distinguish Empire from imperialism, Nayar still insists that the decentred aspect of globalisation is an "accelerated and a new version of imperialism" (193) since it merges various lands throughout the world under one

imperial power and uses land not only as resource of raw material but also as markets of mobile goods.

Nayar's reference to cosmopolitanism as an ethically suggestive paradigm recalls the recent initiative of re-orienting postcolonial studies towards cosmopolitanism as a site of resistance to de-centred modes of power such as capitalism. In a recently published collection of articles entitled *Rerouting the Postcolonial: New Directions for the New Millennium*, critics such as Simon Gikandi, Diana Brydon, Bill Ashcroft, Robert Spencer, and others discern various ways through which the discipline of Postcolonial Studies moves towards new "utopian cosmopolitan spaces" which emerge as "alternatives to hegemony and imperial rule"(Wilson 2). While classical postcolonial studies addresses issues it initially contests such as discourses of otherness and representation, new directions in postcolonial studies examine "not what the discipline is against but what it is *for*" (19; italics in original). Simon Gikandi, for instance, sees that cosmopolitanism is a "redemptive narrative of globalisation, which is the contrapuntal relationship with the condition of being stateless" (26). Gikandi uses the religiously suggestive word of redemption to suggest that cosmopolitanism can salvage, recover, and rescue the disparities which globalisation produces between the consuming global north and the consumed global south. Gikandi thinks that the discourse of cosmopolitanism can establish a contrapuntal relationship between stateless subjects such as migrants, and refugees and the people of the countries where these subjects are displaced. Gikandi's metaphor of the contrapuntal draws from Edward Said's humanistic promise of the ways in which the experience of imperialism produces intertwined and overlapping relationships between the histories, cultures, and literatures of the colonised

and those of the coloniser.³¹ Although Gikandi is aware that the discourse of cosmopolitanism produces its own other, namely “the postcolonial migrant of the south” (17) his statement still shows that this discourse is “a more inclusive and ethically nuanced term with an implication of an improved citizenship” in the reality of “transnationality” or the dissolution of the nation-state. Gikandi’s critique is thus part of what Janet Wilson calls “revisionist cosmopolitanism” (17), which equally unfolds in the works of other critics who re-route postcolonial studies today.

Bill Ashcroft also suggests re-routing postcolonial studies from the vantage point of “transnationality” because the latter transgresses the sovereignty of the nation state and unsettles the nativist myths of fixed identities through experiences of migration and diaspora. Ashcroft uses the term “transnation” as a space of utopia and contingency which is occupied by local mobile subjects who remain “beyond the geographical, political, administrative and even imaginative boundaries of the state” (73). Ashcroft’s concept of the transnational meshes well with Robert Spencer’s idea of “multivalent postcolonial cosmopolitanism” which aims towards “reconciling local attachments and global allegiances” (40). Still, while Ashcroft’s space of the transnation is a utopic space, Spencer’s ‘postcolonial cosmopolitanism is critical and politically conscious since it seeks to ‘unmask the textual concealment of injustice’ (42) which characterises neo-liberal globalisation discourses of free trade. The form of cosmopolitanism which Spencer suggests is morally and politically conscious of the challenges in today’s world that is dominated by disparities between “global market . . . elite consumers and hyper-exploited producers of goods” (Aldama 40).

Being concerned with the disparities between the local and the global, Diana Brydon constructs the project of re-routing postcolonial studies on the basis of a “renewed postcolonial pedagogy” grounded in the

renewed attention to the local on the one hand, and re-conceived notions of the global on the other. The trend towards the local (at regional, national and sub-national levels) can take at least two forms. It can represent a turn towards an intense engagement with the particular or retaining some autonomy from global currents or it can mark a renewed awareness of how local and global are now intermeshed in ways we are still struggling to understand. (112)

Brydon’s “renewed awareness” suggests that we see local cultures either through their autonomy from the global or in relation to it. Brydon favours the latter option because she defines local “culture and community as constantly under construction rather than primordial or fixed in their nature” (114). Here, Brydon implicitly expresses her rejection of the nativist perspective of culture as immobile and suggests instead that cultures are “constantly under construction.” Brydon means that local cultures are always in the process of acquiring new meanings through the economic, social, and political tensions produced amid power relations between classes, races, ethnicities, sexualities, and genders.

Brydon insists that the cultural is constantly conceived in relation to the political rather than in isolation from it. She explains that “the scope and meaning of the cultural today” lies in our determination in “bringing it more closely into dialogue with the political” (113). By “the cultural,” Brydon means literature and the arts whereas by “the political” she means the power relationships reflected through the categories of gender, class, race, sexuality, and national identity. Although Brydon neither specifies nor defines these terms in her own words, she still allows us to infer that such cultural

products as the novel, film, dance, painting, or music are ultimately located in temporal and spatial frames of reference predominated by relations of power. Besides, Brydon's idea about the dialogue of the cultural and the political also implies that cultural practices assume a political transformative role through which they interrogate and transgress the hegemonic and dominant norms of the culture in which they are situated. Still, how does all this relate to her project of re-routing postcolonial studies? In what way does the discipline of postcolonial studies question its own norms that constitute the culture of postcoloniality? Isn't this discipline already grounded in the questioning of the politics of representation that invents the discourse of otherness in the first place? If so, in what political direction does Brydon take the postcolonial process of questioning itself?

Diana Brydon indicates that a postcolonial imaginary should open unexplored theoretical horizons which reflect the fractures that characterise today's world and unhinge the binary of the colonised and the coloniser. Brydon suggests a

cracking of the modern world system imaginary, a cracking to which postcolonial theory has made significant contribution but which is also affecting how the postcolonial imaginary understands itself. New spaces for thinking have been opened by these cracks. (103)

Brydon's metaphor of the cracks describes the openings of the critical imagination about the interconnected world of global mobility and cosmopolitan citizenship, for instance. Brydon notes that postcolonial theory has played an enormous role in constructing a critical imagination of these cracks. Yet, she notices that the cracks and fissures that are open in the world system still require that postcolonial studies become aware of its present limits and future need to open further critical reflection through a "renewed

pedagogy.” Brydon actually informs us about the cracks she opens in her own project of re-routing postcolonial thought through globalisation studies in Canada.³² She suggests that these “cracks [such as community, local and global ‘cross talk,’ and environmental studies] open new possibilities for dialogue across Canadian postcolonial and globalisation studies” (105). Yet, isn’t this mode of opening, cracking, or fissuring reminiscent of the postcolonial project of worldliness through which cultures crack each other and consequently cease to exist as closed spaces?

The re-routing trajectories that Gikandi, Spencer, Ashcroft, Brydon, and other critics suggest are still grounded in the premises of colonial discourse analysis which they interrogate. Gikandi and Ashcroft’s notions of the cosmopolitan and transnationality reiterate Said’s conception of “worldliness” and the “secular interpretation” of cultures. Gikandi uses the conception of the contrapuntal exactly as Said employs it to describe the ways in which cultures overlap and intertwine through the experience of imperialism. Besides, Said’s notion of the “secular interpretation” of culture is also central to the recent theorisation of cosmopolitanism as ethically useful in the re-thinking of postcolonial studies. Cosmopolitanism, as Gikandi and Spencer see it, is contingent upon the humanistic optic of coexistence from which Said reads culture. Ashcroft also grounds his notion of the transnation in Homi Bhabha’s critical study of the Western narrative of nation formation. Bhabha’s analysis of “migration” as the newness that enters the space of the nation state paves the ways also for Brydon’s analysis of the cracks in the world system imaginaries of the glocal in which the category of embodiment still has little relevance.

By contrast, other recent studies of cosmopolitanism and postcoloniality focus on the body as a central category of analysis, particularly through feminist, disability, and globalisation perspectives. For example, Fiona McCulloch's recent study of cosmopolitanism in contemporary British fiction examines the ways in which the body is a place of desire "without frontiers . . . beyond the death-dealing binaries of nation states" (45). Although this image of the lack of frontier romanticises the body, it still presents it as a tool of analysis through which we can re-read Ashcroft's notion of cosmopolitan "transnation," for instance.

Recent concerns with the body also include Ato Quayson's work on disability from the perspective of postcolonial studies.³³ In his analysis of the "imbalances" in the postcolonial world, Quayson notes that "the presence of disabled people in postcolonial writing marks more than just the recognition of their obvious presence in the real world of postcolonial existence and the fact that most national economies woefully fail to take care of them" (36). Quayson notes that disabled characters in postcolonial fiction, such as Saleem in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and the amputee in Anosh Irani's *The Cripple and His Talismans*, remind us not only of their existence in postcolonial societies but also of the unresolved social crises that haunt the resolution of independence in postcolonial societies. Quayson invites us to see disability in postcolonial literature as a sign which contests the sense of fulfillment of postcolonial nation formation. Being representative of the marginalised other of the postcolonial nation, the disabled body, I would add, makes us sceptical of the postcolonial discourses of transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, and mobility. Thus, Quayson's analysis of the "encounter with the disabled in the postcolonial literature" (39) allows us to see the body

both as a marker of the ways in which global consumerism cripples national economies and as a category through which recent debates on cosmopolitanism can be questioned and challenged.

Quayson's intervention makes us not only contest the exclusion of the disabled from the choreography of "global, or transnational mobility" (Allsopp and Lepecki 2), but also reflect on how the category of choreography and dance, as spaces of embodiment, can allow us to re-choreograph postcolonial reflections about the body. This project indeed requires that we ask the following question: How does dance feed a newly choreographed postcolonial awareness of the colonial body which bears and enacts the mobility and displacement of our cosmopolitan world in which the local and global intermesh? Yet, before I engage this question, I first need to describe the contemporary discipline of dance studies and explain the gains and stakes of re-routing or re-choreographing postcolonial theories of the body from the vantage point of these studies.

4. *Dance Studies: Interventions in the Postcolonial Theories of the Body*

Dance Studies is a recent Western academic discipline which has flourished since the mid 1980s as part of the field of cultural studies since it examines the ways in which the dancing body enacts the social and cultural currents that inscribe it and subverts ready-made interpretations about it.³⁴ Unlike historical accounts of dance which describe the evolution of choreographic styles in various cultural traditions across history, dance studies draws from contemporary literary theory by interpreting motion as bodily writing that reflects cultural inscriptions and resists readily made verbal translation. Susan Leigh Foster's book *Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in*

Contemporary American Dance, which is pioneering in this field, uses concepts from structuralism and semiotics to read dance “as an act of writing”(237). Foster notes that her “study approaches both writing and dancing as sign systems” (232) in which a dancer’s movement is a “text” that choreographically relates to other “texts” in culture. She adds that dance is “elusive” and “unreadable” bodily writing since it promises no translation in verbal language (“Choreographing History” 12). Foster’s conception of dance as unreadable text becomes influential among contemporary dance theorists who embrace the deconstructive method according to which meaning is “always in flux or in motion” (Goellner and Murphy 1).

Dance critics also emphasise that the practice of dance is not idealised since it enacts the cultural, social, and historical contexts in which it takes place. Foster draws from Roland Barthes’ idea that “the ‘naturalness’ with which . . . art and common sense dress up reality . . . is undoubtedly determined by history” (*Mythologies* 11). Foster accordingly insists that dance is not naturally given but is rather grounded in historical and cultural realities that unfold in its movement. Foster admits that “following Barthes, I have attempted in *Reading Dancing* to disengage the body and the dance from their ‘natural’ habitat and to reconstitute them as part of a cultural and historical situation” (229). Foster challenges the symbolist interpretation of dance as non-verbal embodiment of a timeless idea and focuses on the “conventions [which] situate the dance in the world and among dances that have preceded it” (59). Foster uses conventions or codes to read dance in the same way structuralists and semioticians read texts. Foster thus demonstrates that literary theory allows her to show how choreographers, dancers, and

audience interact with dance in the same way readers and writers interact across the cultural codes used in writing.

Furthermore, Foster explains that the dancer's subjectivity and body are not naturally given but rather culturally constructed and inscribed by the discourse of dance and choreography. Foster argues that

I have used the term 'subject' to refer to the 'I' or the 'self' of the person dancing. I have chosen to speak of the dancer's subject rather than the more commonly used 'dancer's self' to signal a theoretical position that holds that the self is not a natural or fixed entity but rather a process constituted by various cultural and historical circumstances . . . [this] is an attempt to 'de-naturalise' our notions of the self and our assumptions about the body . . . I try to show how the body and the subject are formed – how they come into being through a participation in a given discourse, in this case the dance classes, rehearses, and performance of a particular choreographer. (endnote 3 237)

Foster argues that dance is a space in which the categories of self and body are de-naturalised since they unfold through specific “cultural and historical circumstances” that define them and the discourse of choreography that regulate them. Foster's theory of de-naturalising dance recalls the feminist critique of the binary opposition between 'nature' and 'culture' in the construction of gendered identities of 'man' and 'woman' as essences rather than products of dominant social and cultural discourses. Foster's analysis also recalls Michel Foucault's conception of discourse “that is a form of power which makes individuals subjects” (“The Subject and Power,” 212). Following Foucault's theory of discourse, Foster argues that dance is framed in and / or formed by the disciplinary space of choreography classes, rehearses, and performance constituting the discourse through which the dancer's body becomes intelligible. Foster confirms that her analysis of dance draws from Foucault's theory of the disciplined body when she notes that “my reading of dance borrows heavily from Foucault's work . . . like

Foucault, I am interested in the epistemological underpinnings of choreography in each historical period” (end note 2, 248). Choreography is accordingly a space of critical reflection through which we “ask of dance the kind of questions raised in contemporary critical theory about other cultural phenomena” that are regulated by power relationships rather than detached from them. (*Choreographing History* 15).

André Lepecki, the contemporary dramaturge and dance theorist, also examines dance as a site in which the body’s unreadable movement represents a crisis of meaning in postmodern thought. Lepecki maintains that

the body, this visceral matter as well as socio-political agent, discontinuous with itself, moving in the folds of time, dissident of time, manifest its agency through the many ways it eventually smuggles its materiality into charged presence that defied subjection. Dance as critical theory and critical praxis proposes a body that is less an empty signifier (executing pre-ordained steps as it obeys blindly to structures of command) than a material, socially inscribed agent, a non-univocal body, and open potentiality, a force field constantly negotiating its position in the powerful struggle for its appropriation and control. (6)

Lepecki argues that the body in dance is “discontinuous with itself” since it “constantly negotiates its position” of subjection to the disciplinary powers that make it tangible as body. Lepecki describes dance as critical praxis since it is a human activity which regulates the body through the choreographic structures of command and simultaneously puts into question the body’s relationships of subjection to the norms that defines its social and cultural identity. Like Foster, Lepecki de-naturalises the body by reading it as visceral matter, material, and social agent “constantly negotiating” the conditions of control that regulate it and oppress it. Lepecki’s definition of the body as a socio-political agent explains that dance is not only a space of display in which the body unfolds through the viewer’s gaze but rather a site in which it moves and challenges its

subjection to the facile meanings viewers construct about it. The dancing body, according to Lepecki, undoes fixed meanings as it manifests itself through its “open potentiality” that constantly unsettles resolutions about it.

Although Lepecki reads the dancing body through the poststructuralist perspective that complicates Foster’s structuralist and semiotic approach, both Lepecki and Foster intervene in postcolonial theories of the body since they allow us to see how the body can elude reductive definitions. Dance Studies helps us probe the ways in which the colonial body can manifest its materiality and open potentiality in dance from within subjection, trauma, and the memory of cultural uprooting that haunt it. While contemporary dance theorists note that “dance informs critical consciousness [and] . . . lies at the point at which reflection and embodiment meet” (Martin 1), they open the possibility for us to probe the ways in which the movement of the postcolonial body in space informs the choreography of a new critical consciousness about it. The contemporary philosophy of dance as deferral implies that imperial discourses, through which postcolonial critics define the body, are not permanent but rather subjected to the subversive potential of the body in dance. Foster for instance maintains that choreography is “a theorisation of relationships between body, self, gender, desire, individuality, communality, and nationality . . . [this shows] how the crafting of moving bodies into dance reflects the theoretical stance towards identity and all its registers” (*Corporealities* xiii). Foster here reminds us that choreography is a regulating system of ordering that situates the body within the limits of its markers and also opens avenues of reflection about these registers from the standpoint of the crafting of dance.³⁵ Still, one

may wonder to what extent the image of dance as text, which dance philosophers postulate, still metaphorises the dance.

The contemporary conception of dance as text and bodily writing is problematic because it metaphorises both the dance and the body and puts their social and cultural materiality into question. By metaphorising dance, I mean to describe it as a symbol or representation of an idea that is outside of itself. Elusiveness, unreadability, and deferral do not literally unfold in the physical space of dance but are drawn from the deconstructive philosophy of language and meaning construction to interpret the corporeal movement of the body in terms of the abstract paradigms of this philosophy.³⁶ Although the contemporary conception of elusiveness of dance can open up useful moments in the process of rethinking the dancing body, it still needs to be politicised when applied to the colonial body, otherwise the latter will unfold as a fetish filled with secrecy just as Western travelers and pseudo-scientists imagine it. For, as I will argue in my next chapter, elusiveness overlaps easily with the over-eroticising paradigm of sexual un-boundedness since the adjective elusive means the limitless and indefinable that has no boundaries.

Dance theorists are aware of the risks of implementing deconstructive philosophy of dance without emphasising the historical materiality that inscribes the dancing body. Lepecki, in a moment of rethinking the Derridean model of analysis he adopts, argues:

Dance's self-erasure is contained within fields of representation, disciplining, and embodiment that must be taken into serious and profound consideration. Configuring the conditions of dance's embodiment destabilizes the play (fullness) of the trace by anchoring the dance in the dancer's historical, material body." (*Of the Presence of the Body* 136)

Indeed, in order to take the experience of embodiment into serious and profound consideration, we must contextualise it, that is, see it through a definite historical and cultural frame of reference in which the body is both regulated and disruptive of the norms that regulate it. I thus suggest that we discern this contextualisation through literary and theoretical postcolonial texts in which the dancing body both acts and is acted upon in anti-colonial and postcolonial contexts of resistance.

5. *Dance and the Colonial Body: Literary and Theoretical Postcolonial Re-choreographies.*

5.1. *Frantz Fanon: Dance, the “Occult,” and Anti-colonial Violence*

In the first essay “On Violence” of his book *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon describes dance as a space in which the body of the colonised subject resists colonial oppression through a non-Manichean pattern of violence. Written in the context of the anti-colonial struggle for independence in Algeria in 1961, the essay argues that the body of the colonised is produced not only through Manichean violence inculcated by colonial oppression and resistance, but also internal violence that finds its outlet in ecstatic dance and possession. Fanon notes that dancers accordingly exorcise the spirits and “invisible keepers who are in an unbroken contact with the core of [their] personality” (56). He adds that the

emotional sensibility of the native is kept in the surface of the skin like an open sore . . . [this] emotional sensibility [is] exhausting itself in dances which are more or less ecstatic . . . the native’s relaxation takes precisely the form of a muscular orgy in which the most acute aggressivity and the most impelling violence are canalised, transformed and conjured away. (57)

Fanon demonstrates how dance mediates between the dancing bodies and the unseen forces, which both frighten the native and integrate him in his tradition (55). This mediation shapes itself when the unseen forces possess the dancing body and simultaneously liberate it in dance. The liberating force of dance also marks a point of fusion between the personal and the communal since the whole native community shares the same concern to “liberate itself [and] explain itself” in motion (57). Here, the native’s dancing body unfolds through its own “emotional sensitivity” drawn from the culture in which the dance takes place rather than the colonial discourses of knowledge and power. Unlike Said who describes the dancing body of the Oriental subject through “the colonial traces upon” it (6), Fanon depicts this body through the traces of the “emotional sensitivity” that marks the native’s skin and exhausts him in physical motion.³⁷ This motion and sensitivity are still subjected to Fanon’s own observing eye and / or foreign ‘I’, yet the elements of muscular orgy, aggressivity, relaxation, and impelling violence of possession nevertheless constitute paradigms of a different order of knowledge and masculinity.³⁸

Fanon emphasises that these paradigms are grounded in the occult sphere of the community that both pre-exists and disrupts colonial knowledge formations. Fanon argues:

the atmosphere of myth and magic [that pervades the dance] frightens me and so takes on an undoubted reality. By terrifying me, it integrates me in the traditions and the history of my district or of my tribe, and at the same time it reassures me, it gives me a status, as it were an identification paper. In underdeveloped countries, the occult sphere is a sphere belonging to the community which is entirely under magical jurisdiction. (55)

Although Fanon's description perpetuates the essentialist discourse of nativism he challenges, it focuses more on the cultural complexity of the occult which both "terrifies and reassures" the native. Fanon notes that the occult symbolically gives individuals their "identification papers" since it provides them with their cultural identity, particularly through the practice of dance. The occult is liberating as it keeps the colonial body immune to the colonialist project of acculturation that seeks to "decerebralise" and culturally alienate the colonised subject.³⁹

Nevertheless, this process of liberation in Fanon's view is illusory and disempowering since it only compensates for the physical violence which the colonised is denied in the colonial oppressive system. Fanon clearly states that "violence, though kept very much on the surface all through the colonial period, yet turns in void [since] . . . it is canalized by the emotional outlets of dance and possession by spirits"(58). Here dance emerges as an outlet through which the colonised subject internalises the violence which resides on the "surface of his skin . . . like an open sore." The experience of possession, according to Fanon, distances the dancer from his reality since it posits him only in the world of spirits which makes the violence of his bodily movement unfold as "waste and void." Fanon insists that this form of internalised or wasted violence is "invalid" and empty insofar as it does not serve the cause of resistance. Dance, according to Fanon, is politically disempowering because it produces surrender and submission among colonised subjects.

Nigel C. Gibson explains that dance for Fanon alienates colonised subjects rather than unifies them in their struggle for liberation. Gibson notices that

in contrast to the zonal limits of colonialism, the dance [in Fanon's analysis] offers no limits. Like the unconscious, it transgresses boundaries and allows for

complete possession and disintegration of the personality. This apparent self-liberation is just another symptom of colonialism, because it is, in fact, only a symbolic and controlled release that returns peace and calm to the village and changes nothing. (111)

Gibson explains that dance plays no political role in Fanon's analysis since it provides an obscure sense of release, calm, and peace in the lives of oppressed villagers. The parallel Gibson draws between dance and the unconscious recalls Fanon's idea that the body of the colonised subject enjoys free movement only in his nightly dreams in which he penetrates such intimate spaces of the coloniser as his wife's body. Fanon also employs Freudian psychoanalytic concepts in his interpretation of dance when he argues that during performance, the natives' purpose in "coming together is to allow the accumulated libido, the hampered aggressivity, to dissolve as in a volcanic eruption" (57). Here, Fanon explains that the sexual energy and eroticism that the afflicted body displays in dance and possession merely channel the repression and frustration rather than liberate them.⁴⁰

Other critics reject Fanon's psychoanalytical interpretation of dance since it focuses more on the alienation of the colonial body than the mobility of people in anti-colonial resistance. Emmanuel Hansen states that

Fanon's attempt to explain the effect of colonial violence on the native by recourse to the Freudian concept of compensation is inadequate. African dances cannot be explained simply in terms of overcoming violence through the release of muscular tension . . . during the fight for independence, the native begins to revive all the old traditions and cultures as a way of validating their culture and authenticating their existence. It might even be a strategy for mobilising the people for the liberation struggle . . . It has been claimed that the dance and the rituals associated with them were sometimes employed as a form of resistance to colonial authority. (89, 90)

Hansen shows that Fanon defines dance only through the “effect of colonial violence on the native” but not the effect of dance as “a strategy for mobilising people” in their struggle for independence. Hansen problematises Fanon’s notion of “alienation [that] . . . is observed” in dance during the struggle for freedom” (*The Wretched* 45). Dance, according to Hansen, does not alienate people, as Fanon claims, but rather unifies and energises them since it is a culturally “reassuring” space and / or “a bond cementing solidarity between the people” to resist oppression (Fabre 39).

Yet, despite offering an instructive critique of Fanon’s psychoanalytic perspective of dance as “inertia,” Hansen frames dance in the nativist discourse of tradition and cultural authenticity which Fanon challenges. Fanon associates the emotional and spiritual outlets of dance with void because they derive from the “inhuman voices” of tradition and authenticity that incarcerate the body and intensify racial hatred. (*Black Skin White Mask* 208). Fanon describes dance in disempowering terms because he sees it from the vantage point of essentialism that overlaps with the colonial ideologies of separatism. For this reason, he silences the elements of worshipping and divinity that strengthen the dancers’ social connectivity through possession in the Arabo-Islamic culture where he lives.⁴¹ Nevertheless, one can still ask the following questions: how can Fanon’s evocation of dance and possession inform our process of rethinking and / or re-choreographing postcolonial theories of the body? In what way can possession emerge as a disruptive site that interrogates colonial and postcolonial categories of analysis of both the body and dance?

When Fanon calls for the integration of dance and possession in colonial studies, he opens the possibility for us to read them as paradigms of a counter-discourse that

disrupts colonial and postcolonial narratives of the body from within subjection and cultural uprooting. Johan Dayan reminds us that possession in dance is

a moment when the god inhabits the head of his or her servitor – articulates the reciprocal abiding of human and god . . . [in which] the possessed gives her up . . . in a social and collective drama. This experience of election, its shock of communion, is not evidence of psychic disruption, or proof of pathology [as Fanon argues], but rather a result of the most intense discipline and study. Not everyone can be possessed, for not everyone can know how to respond to the demands and expectations of her god. (36)

Dayan invites us to ponder the phenomenon of possession in colonial studies without recourse to the Freudian paradigms that Fanon uses. Her statement that possession is not “evidence of psychic disruption” requires that we challenge the psychoanalytical categories through which Fanon reads dance in the colonial context of Algeria. Instead of defining dance and possession as a case of pathology, Dayan calls for a more “intense study” in which possession and dance generate discourses of survival and subject construction which unsettle the hegemony of Western psychology in colonial and postcolonial studies. While defining possession as “a social and collective drama [manifesting] a shock of communion,” Dayan indeed proves that possession acquires meaning through epistemologies and knowledge formations drawn from the cultures in which the dance takes place.⁴²

Seen through Hardt and Negri’s re-reading of Foucault’s “biopolitics” and “biopower,” possession in dance assumes the role of a “biopolitical event” that emerges from “the inside of culture” and articulates resistance to colonial bio-power which manages the colonial body and produces it systematically in knowledge. Possession in dance accordingly acquires its empowering potential by virtue of its “shock of communion” that unfolds in the “social and collective drama” of the dance. For the

colonial body dances while being possessed by gods emerging from the “inside of the culture” which inscribes the dancer’s body and allows the dancer to surge as “an alternative subjectivity” re-inscribing her culture differently from the exoticising and eroticising modes of colonial knowledge. Yet, this subjectivity of the dancer is immune neither to the colonial biopower that manages the body and administers it, nor to the biopower of the local cultural norms that, in Foucault’s terms, constitutes his subjectivity. The subjectivity in dance possession is “alternative” since it resists the above forms of bio-power from within its subjection to it as is also noticeable in the dance of the female black body.

Caroline Brown explores the role of possession dance as a site of reclamation and re-memory for the black female body that Fanon silences in his analysis. While examining Avey’s possession dance in Paule Marshall’s novel *A Praisesong for the Widow* (1983), Brown notes how the female “dancer participates in community, asserts identity through . . . her individual mode of self-expression and is psychically healed through the ritual drama of performance”(126). Despite being located in the historical experience of the black diasporic female body in African American literature and art, Brown’s analysis intervenes in Fanon’s theory of dance from the perspective of the black female body. The latter, Brown invites us to reflect, also dances to preserve collective memory which colonial or neo-colonial project seeks to expunge, construct as barbarity, or else commodify as exotic and erotic site of attraction.

Possession dance in both Brown and Fanon’s analyses is a “bio-political event” since it emerges as a space of survival and subject formation that attributes to the body a sense of agency mediated through physical motion. Possession is also a biopolitical

event because it subverts Euro-centric modes of seeing the body as static and mystic object of desire or derision. Possession dance thus produces forms of knowledge that unsettles euro-centric modes of seeing and invites a different choreography or design of postcolonial paradigms of resistance as we notice in Soyinka's theatrical representation of the body and dance.

5.2. *Wole Soyinka: Dance as a Medium in Comparative Cosmologies*

The work of the Nigerian author, playwright, and critic Wole Soyinka illustrates the relevance of dance as a key paradigm of analysis in postcolonial drama. Being deeply immersed in Yoruba culture, Soyinka's plays use dance as a visual idiom to invoke the gods who are closely connected to the world of the living. Soyinka's play *Death and the King's Horseman*, for instance, shows the ways in which trance dance mediates between the world of the living and that of the ancestors. The play draws from a real event in Nigerian history when Elesin, the official horseman of the king of Oya, disobeys the ritual of taking his life to join the dead king in an act of sacrifice. Elesin only kills himself out of shame when he learns that his westernised son Olunde takes his life to save the communal sacred ritual his father disrespects. Dance is introduced in the play through Elesin's trance while celebrating his forthcoming death during the sacrificial ritual. We read in the stage direction of the first act how

Elesin executes a brief half-taunting dance. The drummer moves in and draws a rhythm out of his steps. Elesin dances towards the market place as he chants the story of the Not-I bird . . . he performs like a born raconteur infecting his retinue with his humour and energy. (14)

While dancing to the beat of the drum, Elesin casts himself at the borderline between the living and the ancestors. This transition is crucial in the Yoruba world view since it reflects what Soyinka calls the “gulf that exists between one area of existence and another . . . [this gulf] must constantly be diminished by the sacrifices, the rituals, the ceremonies of appeasement to those cosmic powers which lie guardian to the gulf” (144). Elesin’s dance is part of the ceremonies of appeasement through which the gulf between the area of existence of the living and the dead diminishes.⁴³ Dance, along with the music of the drums, unfolds as a ritualistic mode of conciliation between the gods or “cosmic powers [that] lie guardian to the gulf”, and protect the chasm between the two areas. In this regard, the play indeed performs the “devotional” aspect that characterises dance in the African culture.⁴⁴

Soyinka’s use of dance and music in his play recalls not only Yoruba cosmology but also the Hellenic worldview through which Soyinka reads his Yoruba cultural archive. Soyinka argues that “our course to the hearts of Yoruba Mysteries leads to its own ironic truths through the light of Nietzsche and the Phrygian deity . . .” Soyinka more particularly points out “Apollo’s resemblance to the serene art of Obatala. . . [and] Ogun in a parallel evolutionary relationship to Nietzsche’s Dionysos – Apollo brotherhood” (“The Fourth Stage” 27). Soyinka suggests a comparative cosmology in which Yoruba and Greek worldviews intertwine through the resemblances between Ogun and Obatala on the one hand and Dionysos and Apollo on the other. Soyinka’s play integrates elements that pertain to both cosmologies, namely the overlap of the worldly space of human beings and otherworldly space of the dead and the gods, the plot structure that is grounded in the tragic fall of the main character, and the theatrical

devices of dance and music. Nietzsche reminds us that Greek tragedy employs “singing and dancing [as ceremonial sites through which] man expresses himself as a member of higher more ideal community” (82). Here Nietzsche refers to dance and singing as part of Dionysos “intoxicating . . . [and] narcotic excitement” (*The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings* 120) which recalls Elesin’s excitement while dancing to the drum beat in the sacrifice ritual.

Soyinka nevertheless points out differences between Hellenic and Yoruba cosmologies, yet he still brings the two cosmologies together as a way to contest nativist and essentialist views of culture. Soyinka notes that the virtues of the Yoruba myth, namely the creative urge and instinct of creativity through which Ogun relates to Nietzsche’s Dionysus, “place Ogun apart from the distorted dances to which Nietzsche’s Dionysiac frenzy led him in search for a selective ‘Aryan’s soul, yet do not detract from Ogun’s revolutionary grandeur” (“The Fourth Stage” 439). Unlike Dionysos dance, Ogun’s dance initiates the celebration of the resolution of the crisis which true devotees follow through their transition of the gulf between the human and the gods. Soyinka notes:

poised on the heights of the physical mountain home of Ogun he experiences a yawning gulf within him, a menacing maul of chthonic strength yawning ever wider to annihilate his being; he is saved only by channelling the dark torrent into the plastic plight of poetry and dance; not, however as a reflection of illusion of reality, but as the celebrative aspects of the resolved crisis with his god. (446)

Whereas Dionysos’s dance in Greek mythology reflects reality as elusive, Ogun’s dance channels harmonious resolution of the crisis with the gods. Yet, although the dance of Dionysos does not characterise the journey of Ogun’s virtues, the two gods still share “revolutionary grandeur” (343). Soyinka’s awareness of the distinction between these

two cosmologies does not prevent him from reading them across each other. This proves that his philosophy of culture and dance is particularly contingent upon believing in diversity without suppressing difference.

Soyinka's comparative reading of cosmologies draws from the Yoruba god Ogun whose artistic creativity is predicated upon a combination of various constituencies and not on an intrinsic faculty of intuition. Soyinka notes that

we must not lose sight of the fact that Ogun is the artistic spirit, and not in the sentimental sense in which rhapsodists of *négritude* would have us believe the negro as pure artistic intuition (bourgeois meaning of individual insight). The significant creative truth of Ogun is affirmation of the creative intelligence. This is irreconcilable with naive intuition. The symbolic artefact of his victory is metallic ore, at once a technical medium as it is symbolic of deep earth energies, a *fusion of elemental energies*, a *binding force between disparate bodies and properties* . . . [his] principle of creativity when limited to pastoral idyllism, as attempted to limit it, *shuts us off* from the deeper, fundamental resolutions of experience and cognition. (442; emphasis added)

Soyinka emphasises that Ogun's creative powers lie in the fusion of various elements and properties rather than individual insight. Ogun's sense of diverse creativity inspires and orientates Soyinka's mode of reading the Yoruba cultural archive in ways that include other cosmologies, philosophies, and worldviews.⁴⁵ For this reason, Soyinka rejects the *négritude* philosophy that interprets culture entirely from the perspective of inner properties of mind, race, and tradition, which "shuts us off from . . . the . . . experience of cognition." For Soyinka, both Yoruba cosmology and the process of thinking about it involve processes of combination and blending that are deeply embedded in Yoruba morality. His use of Yoruba cosmology actually tends to negotiate the relationship between cultural modernity and tradition as a way to unsettle the binary opposition between the two. Soyinka reminds us that "Morality for the Yoruba is that

which creates harmony in the cosmos, and reparation for disjunctions within the individual psyche” (444). Therefore, in contrast to négritude’s discourse of nativism, Soyinka defines the human psyche through the relational principle of harmony.

Dance unfolds from within the principle of relationality that is paramount to both Yoruba cosmology and Soyinka’s critical thinking.⁴⁶ Relationality is the governing principle in Yoruba cosmology in which the fate of the living intertwines with that of the dead and the unborn in a temporal cycle where the present, the past and the future fuse. Relationality is also central to the conception of Ogun’s creative art which combines various elements together and suggests combination as a mode of thinking about creativity. The principle of relationality also provides a key concept for Soyinka’s own reflection in which “the will of Zeus is as conceptually identifiable with that of Dionysos as the elements of fragmentation of Oisa-nla can be recognised as the recurrent consciousness within Ogun” (445). Dance stems from this relational principle, or “relational differentiation” which contests the nativist mode of defining identity from the perspective of racial and ethnic difference (Jeyifo, *Perspectives on Wole Soyinka: Freedom and Complexity* 206).

Dance is embedded in Soyinka’s relational philosophy that paves the way for a mode of cosmopolitanism ethically profitable and intellectually useful for today’s project of re-routing postcoloniality. Soyinka’s play dramatically presents the ways in which the local intermeshes with the global. The global in Soyinka’s play and Yoruba philosophy does not mean the de-centred capital of “empire,” but, instead, refers to the inclusive and overall mode of reading cultures across each other through intercultural communication. Dance acquires its political meaning not only because it enacts Yoruba

cultural survival from within colonial violence, but also because it mediates intercultural communication between Hellenic, Yoruba, Hindu and other cosmologies Soyinka brings together as a better way to understand his local cosmology. In this sense, dance enunciates the construction of Soyinka's pattern of cosmopolitanism and channels the intercultural communication between various cosmologies. Soyinka thus contributes to what I call the project of re-choreographing postcolonial theories of the body as he makes the latter an agent in the enactment of Yoruba world views rather than being merely the object of colonial desire, power, fetishism, or ambivalence. Soyinka uses the dancing body as a site through which he re-choreographs the postcolonial project of cosmopolitanism from the vantage point of locality. The role of the body is central in this context because it performs the dance through which Soyinka reads various cosmologies across each other and visualises the cosmic harmony that his cross cultural reading implies. Soyinka thus allows us to see how the dancing body initiates reflection not only of the travelling Western mind or global capital but also of the dynamism of cultural images and myths as the Guyanese writer and critic Wilson Harris explores through a different postcolonial context.

5.3. *Wilson Harris: Limbo Dance and the Philosophy of History*

In his article, "History, Fable, and Myth in the Caribbean and the Guianas," The Guyanese writer and critic Wilson Harris reflects on Caribbean history and identity from the perspective of the limbo dance. Harris observes that the limbo dance is "a well known feature in the Carnival life of the West Indies today" (55). He reminds us that the limbo originates in the slave ships of the Middle Passage. Harris also emphasizes that the limbo relates to African Vodun where the dancer becomes

possessed by the muse of contraction [through] a trance [in which] . . . all memory is erased and yet in this trance of overlapping spheres or reflection a primordial or deeper function of memory begins to exercise itself within the bloodstream of space . . . [the trance] is an intense drama of images in space, which may assume elastic limbs. (157)

Harris clarifies that although memory is erased in Vodun trance, it still unfolds at “a primordial or deeper” level which inhabits the body’s motion as it “may assume elastic limbs.” Harris implies that memory in Vodun dance is not merely a process of remembering specific events but rather a return of various images, spaces, and temporalities which overlap in the powerful moments of trance. This complex manifestation of memory constitutes for Harris “the sphere of reflection a primordial or deeper function of memory.” Unlike Fanon, who relates the “sphere of the community” to the Freudian notion of compensation and unconscious dreams, Harris uses the word “sphere” to refer to the “deeper function of memory” surging forth in dance so as to disrupt Western historiography which misrepresents the dance of the colonial body. While describing his theory of the limbo dance, Harris challenges Western representations of Caribbean history and subjectivity. Harris points out “the stasis which has afflicted the Caribbean for many generations” (152) most particularly in the racist discourses of the nineteenth century British historians who defined “Haitian Vodun and other primitive manifestations . . . [as] a relapse into devil preaching and children-eating’ ” (“History, Fable, and Myth in the Caribbean and the Guyanas”159). Yet, instead of merely analysing colonial and / or racist discourses that construct the Caribbean subject as Other, Harris explores the ways in which dance enacts the indigenous collective memories which Western colonisers seek to wipe out. Harris examines how limbo and Vodun dances can be

part and parcel of the arts of the imagination. In this respect I believe the possibility exists for us to become involved in perspectives of renaissance which can bring into play a figurative meaning beyond an apparently real world or prison of history. I want to make as clear as I can that a cleavage exists in my opinion between the historical convention in the Caribbean and Guiana and the arts of the imagination. I believe a philosophy of history may well lie buried in the arts of the imagination ... my concern is with epic stratagems available to the Caribbean man in the dilemmas of history which surround him. (150-151)

Dance for Harris is both a cultural practice and a paradigm through which he formulates a conception of history out of the “historylessness” of the Caribbean subject.⁴⁷ Harris maintains that dance is an art of the imagination in which a philosophy of Caribbean history is buried. He notes that dance encompasses intertwined histories and overlapped cultural territories that are inscribed on the limbo dancer’s body.

Rather than seeing the breaking or dislocation of African cultures, of Ibo, Arada, Congo, etc, as cultural loss, Harris sees it as a chance for the reconstruction of the limbo imagination, that is a renaissance taking shape through the very experience of rootlessness caused by the Middle Passage. Harris argues that

the apparent void of history which haunts the black man may never be compensated until an act of imagination opens gateways between civilisations, between technological and spiritual apprehensions, between racial possessions and dispossessions . . . limbo and Vodun are variables of underworld imagination – variables of phantom limb and void and a nucleus of stratagems in which limb is legitimate pun on limbo, void or Vodun. (164)

Harris describes Vodun and limbo as elements that make up for the lack of history the black subject suffers in the new world to which he is transported. The movement of the limbo dance symbolically represents, according to Harris, a gateway between various cultures and histories crossing the body of the black subject. His reading of the limbo through the phantom limb and Vodun through void illustrates his metaphoric employment of dance to construct a new narrative of history from within the sense of a

historical void that the colonial project seeks to establish in the black body and subjectivity.

Harris's analysis of the limbo recalls the poem "Limbo" by the African Caribbean poet and critic Edward Kamau Braithwaite. In a comment on his poem, Braithwaite asserts that limbo dance actually brings out memories of a communal history still silenced in mainstream historiographies. Braithwaite explains that

limbo teaches me a great deal about the Middle Passage which I can never get in a so-called history book . . . the limbo stick and the slave ship deck and the dance – its play and sprawl, agony of contortion of body - becoming a memorial, a kind of *Rosetta Stone* for all these centuries of apparently forgetting - of the way this voyage is. The constantly lowering stick representing the increasingly crowded belly of the trader, the bodies lying face-up and cross-crab like the limbo dancer, packed in, as the accounts say, like sardines, until all that's left for the dancer / captive to scuttle long is the floor or ground of his or her rhythmic thalassian drumbeat memorial midnight, still seeking always survival, even at this nadir of the physical imagination. (300)

Braithwaite explains that dance teaches history as affect and physical materiality since it enacts both the suffering and survival of the black body in the Middle Passage which is deeply ingrained in the collective memory of black people in diaspora. Braithwaite adds that mainstream history overlooks the symbolic significance of the Middle Passage for the limbo dance. Like Harris, Braithwaite sees that the limbo enacts a counter narrative in which the stick, under which the black body passes, represents the crowded belly of the slave ship. Both Harris and Braithwaite consider the limbo as a liminal space indicating hell and purgatory. The limbo also implies a transitory space from which one escapes through redemption. In that sense, limbo is a symbol of survival of the black body. Besides, the act of writing about this survival is a form of resistance that challenges mainstream historiographies.

Nevertheless, although both Braithwaite and Harris address the limbo dance symbolically as a space of survival and resistance to hegemonic historiographies, they frame their arguments differently. Braithwaite relates the limbo dance to the lost African roots retrieved through “rhythmic drumbeat memorial,” whereas Harris reads the dance as “gateway” through which various cultures connect in a postcolonial narrative of Caribbean history and identity. Harris’s postcolonial narrative rejects the discourse of nostalgia that laments the dismemberment and deracination of the black body from its African roots. Harris insists that the gateway is a mode of re-membering the body with African as well as other cultural currents that cross its movement. He clearly states that “limbo is not the total recall of an African past . . . Limbo was rather the renaissance of a new corpus of sensibility that could translate and accommodate African and other legacies within a new architecture of culture”(152). While citing the spectrum of cultures that construct the Caribbean identity, Harris adds that the idea of the limbo suggests a view of history predicated upon motion between African and Amerindian legends, fables, and myths as “variable of imagination” (378) that constitutes Caribbean identity and cultural history. Harris includes in this variable the “pre-Columbian primitive and ornamental Latin symbolism [which] carries with it nevertheless a new latent capacity, a caveat or warning we need to ponder upon deeply and to unravel in our age” (“The Amerindian Legacy” 162). Limbo is thus a mode of bodily movement that invites reflection about history and culture as dynamic rather than static and frozen in the reductive myth of origin.

Furthermore, the paradigm of the limbo dance allows Harris to rethink the conception of the native he rejects. Harris contends that the conception of the native in

the Caribbean context is not predicated on original identity and fixed tradition but implies an “inner universality of the Caribbean man” (375). Despite being inextricably tied to the spectre of fragmentation and dislocation that is recurrent in Caribbean writings in general, Harris’s conception of the native is actually grounded in his de-centred image of the limbo dance as gateway. Harris’s use of “the term native appears to signify a certain gracelessness or tirelessness” (Mackey 67) which meshes well with his philosophy of the limbo. In that sense, Harris’s philosophy of dance produces a new choreography of postcolonial history in which bodily movement comes to designate an epistemology of resistance.

Critics have pointed out that Harris builds a constructive rather than a negative view of the fructuous experience of the Middle Passage. Nathaniel Mackey argues that

Harris views this breakage [of the African peoples by the Middle Passage] or amputation as fortunate, an opportune disinheritance or partial eclipse of tribal memory which called creative forces and imaginative freedoms into play. He relates the word Vodun to the word void, to the emptiness or “historylessness” left by the collapse of tribal coherency and sanction, the dissolution of ancestral rule. Limbo and Vodun are characterised by a phantom extension into the novel ‘inarticulacy’ brought about by the Middle Passage, into imaginative reassembling, resourceful acts of bricolage. (66)

Mackey explains that Harris reads the Middle Passage as a productive experience in which a new conception of collective Caribbean history emerges. Although Mackey does not explicitly state the role of the body in the process of this emergence, his comment still implies that the body enacts the “creative forces and imaginative freedoms” that take shape in the ship dance. The dancing body is thus a pivotal agent since its dance motion initiates what Harris calls “the strongest capacity for renewal

away from the apartheid and ghetto fixations” (57) implied in discourses of identity politics.

Harris’s idea of renewal also draws from Dante’s notion of purgatory in *The Divine Comedy* where he imagines himself travelling through three spaces of discovery guided by the Roman poet Virgil. These spaces include hell, an image in which the human soul is trapped in the sin it has willingly chosen. They further include Purgatory in which the soul struggles to free itself from sin so as to become felicitous, and Paradise which is the stage in which the soul reaches joy and union with god. The limbo is the first circle in the fourth canto of the Inferno in Dante’s narrative. This circle is located on the far shore of the Acheron dangerously suspended at the border of the abyss, where Dante hears a continuous mournful sound coming from the melancholy valley of hell. Dante tells us how Virgil “sets out and . . . had me enter on that first circle girding in the abyss” (Inferno 4.23.4). Virgil describes the states of people in limbo in the Inferno as a life of hopeless longing by saying “we have no hope and yet we live in longing” (Inferno 4.42). Longing in the midst of lack characterises the state of limbo in *The Divine Comedy* and turns suffering into a chance for renewal or longing for life in which dance becomes desire.

This conception of renewal and purgation which features in Dante’s work recurs in Harris’s description of the limbo dance. Gordon Rohlehr notes that the limbo dancers re-entered the void, “the ordeal already endured in order to emerge triumphant and purged of past horror” (*Pathfinder*, 202). Rohlehr’s description of how the black body emerges purged and triumphant in limbo dance recalls the idea of purgation Dante describes in the limbo circle in hell. Assuming the image of “a noxious underworld

inferno,” the space of slavery represents the inferno from which the black body comes out purged through the dance. Although the idea of purgation Christianises the limbo dance, it still echoes the idea of redemption and transformation through the dance. Paul Griffith maintains that

the ritual dance configures the Middle Passage as transformational space: a complex conjunction of forms, forces and identities. It is a void, a characterless waste or interval of death but also a substantive sphere that separates and connects Africa and the New World. . . Rereading history as a casting off the ego, the dance enables psychic descent to a new threshold (entrance) that leads to the regenerated personality . . . the dancer emerges with both the uncertainty and the potential of the newly born. (41)

Griffith actually de-romanticises the ritual of dance in the Middle Passage by relating its purgatory and regenerative effect to the sense of void, waste, and abjection that overwhelm the uprooted bodies of the slave dancers. The ship is purgatory and dance is redemption, which ironises the Christian narratives of legitimating slavery and suffering. For the liberating philosophy of dance is constructed from within the depth of the disease-ridden slave ship represented as literal and symbolic death. The sense of life that the dance produces recalls Dante’s idea of purgatory that emanates from within the sense of loss in hell.

Griffith further clarifies the regenerative dimension in Harris’ use of dance when he notes that

Harris theorises this resistance in terms of Ananse’s protean identity, his flexibility a polyvalent alterity that counteracts ruthless intolerance. Adapting the trickster god’s mutability and resilience, the limbo dancer elevates from a state of reified reduction to celebrate his spiritual amplification. The spider’s mercurial guises make manifest the irrepressible resources of the spirit that defy colonialist predatory restrictions. The literal and figurative burial in the ship’s belly is declared a death the slave endured and vitally transformed. (17)

Here Griffith clarifies that the limbo dance communicates and enacts myths and legends such as the trickster which are part of Harris' vision of cultures as being reversible rather than irreversible and permanent.⁴⁸ Being symbols of flexibility, liveliness, and survival, these legends suggest the transformative potential through which the dancing body unsettles the "predatory restrictions" of colonial greed and voracity.

Critics have pointed out that dance is pivotal in Harris's discourse of liberation.

Paul Sharrad notices that for Harris,

the limbo bar or the high-jump posts serve not only as reminders of a factual history of oppression (the cramped space of the slave ship or the gallows) but also can be taken as gateways, doorways or windows into other ways of perceiving history and as a witness in themselves to the recreative human imagination transmuting historical tyrannies into affirmations of possible freedom. (98)

Although the word "freedom" may imply an idealised view of history, it nevertheless means that the body in dance acquires the potential to construct meaning about itself despite the chains of slavery and the agony of up-rootedness. Dance displays a mode that "will repopulate history with invisible presences never quite completely destroyed" (97). Here Sharrad means the memories of ancestors, gods, legends, and myths which inscribe the body in Vodun and limbo motion. This motion, I would add to Sharrad, makes the history that is buried and made invisible by colonial amnesia both known and knowable. As a paradigm of claiming and rethinking history, dance requires that we recognise the legitimacy of the body as teller and reminder of the culture and history that colonial discourse brushes off by means of exoticising and eroticising discourses which the classical postcolonial text of *Orientalism*, for example, only describes but never suggests ways to dismantle. Sharrad notes how Harris integrates dance in his art of memory to imagine a counter-architecture of history predicated upon what he calls "a

poetry of de-centred being” (59) through the image of the limbo as a gateway. Sharrad allows us to see that unlike Said, Bhabha, and Spivak who describe the ways in which the colonial body is “otherized” (Aldama 22), Harris uses dance to weave a texture of history which de-centres this postcolonial figure of Otherness. Harris’s de-centred architecture of history is indeed a choreography in which a counter-narrative of Caribbean history is designed from the perspective of dance that is both a cultural practice and a paradigm of collective resistance and survival.

Still, Harris metaphorises the dance by reading it through something outside of itself, namely the gateway and re-assembly of cultures and civilisations. Dance, in Harris’s discourse, is not only a literal practice but also a symbol implementing an abstract idea or a world view. I would argue that Harris continues rather than disrupts the Western symbolist and modernist traditions in which dance plays a central role as allegory, or expanded metaphor.⁴⁹ Dance for Harris is a tool through which he conceptualises his narrative of the ways cultures and civilisations are intertwined rather than isolated from each other. Having said that, Harris still focuses on a materialised description of the oppressed colonial body of the African slave which is threatened by neo-colonial forces of multi-national consumerism. For the colonial exoticisation starts from the moment white traders turn the limbo dance into a spectacle. Yet, Harris brushes off the ways in which this event develops through history into neo-colonial exploitation of the dances as spaces of entertainment and leisure consumed in global capitalism and mass-tourism and destined to be a source of energy, fitness, and sexual vigour for white consumers. Indeed, this prompts me to explore how postcolonial literature alerts us to the neo-colonial investment of the colonial body and dance in ways that classical

postcolonial theory does not. I suggest to engage this question through a literary text from a different postcolonial cultural tradition.

5.4. *Arundhati Roy's The God of Small Things: Dance and Neo-colonial Commodification*

Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* presents the dancing colonial body from the postcolonial culture of India. Roy's novel presents the dance of Kathakali which originates in Kerala State, or dance-drama, as a non-verbal and pre-novelistic mode of telling.⁵⁰ Like Bibhutibhusan Banerjee, the Bengali novelist who employs the all-night entrancing dance-play performance within his novel *Pather Panchali*, Roy exploits a similar method when she uses the all-night dance performance of Kathakali as a performative marker of identity and collective memory. Kathakali is "India's major traditional dance-drama from Kerala State . . . [It] is a synthesis of many arts and periods of development built upon the framework of the Sanskrit tradition in theatre and strongly influenced by the indigenous Dravidian culture of the South" (Jones and True Jones, 8). *The God of Small Things* integrates this dance as a visual mode of telling that overlaps with the verbal mode of the narrative and consequently dismantles the binarism between the corporeal and the textual. Roy writes in her novel that "the Great Stories [in the dance] are the ones you have heard and want to hear again . . . They are as familiar as the house you live in . . . Or the smell of your lover's skin. You know how they end yet you want to listen as though you don't" (229). Roy's intimate and / or erotic way of describing the closeness and familiarity of these stories evokes the role the body plays both in the novel and in the dance performance that is an event in the novel.⁵¹

The novel tells the story of two twins, Rahel and Esther, who develop a peculiarly intimate and erotic relationship through which they heal the wounds of betrayal and scars of trauma that mark their lives and the lives of their family members. After being sexually molested as a child, Esther has lost his voice and become secluded in a family network in which the mother Mamu divorces the father Babu who wants to proposition her for sex with his boss so as to keep his job. Mamu was banished from the family because after her divorce she had an affair with Velutha the Untouchable Paravan who, though representing a good father figure for Rahel and Esther, is beaten to death by authorities as a result of his cross caste relationship with Mamu. After her mother's sudden death, Rahel fails to have her architecture degree in Delhi, immigrates to the United States where she marries an American man, but divorces him soon after, and returns to Ayemenem after she felt an instinctive connection with her brother whom she had not seen for twenty three years. The bond between Esther and Rahel develops so deeply that it leads to an incestuous sexual relationship in which their bodies express the grief over the loss of Ammu and Velutha.

The non-linear plot of the novel, the diversity of its characters' attitudes, and the overlap of the verbal and bodily modes of its narrative reflect the cultural diversity and historical complexity of Kerala State in which events take place. Roy's story meshes well with the story of Karna which the kathakali performance in the novel re-enacts about a man born in poverty who dies at the hands of his own brother. Yet, rather than being narratives of lamentation and despair, both the story in the novel and the story in the dance are verbal and corporeal narratives that emerge from within the neo-colonial projects which de-historicise Kerala state and symbolically infect the body of its culture

and society. The dancing body in the novel is both inscribed by the ‘Great Stories’ it tells and inscribing these stories through its very motion. The novel’s narrative explains that the story in the dance represents the dancer’s

colour and his light. It is the vessel into which he pours himself. It gives him shape. Structure. It harnesses him. It contains him . . . His struggle is the reverse of an actor’s struggle – he strives not to enter a part but to escape it. But this is what he cannot do. In his abject defeat lies his supreme triumph. (231)

This passage is pivotal to my argument about dance and the dancing colonial body in the novel in three ways. First, it illustrates how the dancer’s body emerges through the cultural memory that heavily inscribes it with markers such as intensive physical training, make-up, and costume.⁵² Secondly, the quotation implies that the dancing body, although marked by its culture, actually inscribes its “Great Stories” through motion. I mean that the dancing body’s motion is itself a form of bodily writing that inscribes its culture to save it from erasure and loss. Thirdly, this quotation illustrates that the bodily writing of dance, or what Helen Gilbert calls “the rhetoric of embodiment”(49), choreographs its “Great Stories” from within the neo-colonial reality to which it is subjected and which looms large in various spaces of Kerala state.

The novel describes the ways in which the kathakali dance is exposed to the industry of global tourism which commodifies the local spaces that represent the historical heritage of Kerala. When Rahel returns to Ayemenem, she notices how

Kari Saipu’s house had been renovated and painted. It had become the centrepiece of an elaborate complex . . . The cold colonial bungalow with its deep verandah and Doric columns, was surrounded by smaller, older, wooden houses – ancestral homes – that the hotel chain had bought from old families and transplanted in the Heart of Darkness. Toy Histories for rich tourists to play with . . . ‘Heritage’ the hotel was called” (126).

The novel here describes the ways in which global tourists buy “ancestral homes” and convert them into expensive leisure attractions such as the Heart of Darkness hotel. This global process of transplanting local spaces shows that collective histories and “heritage” of Ayemenem turn into “Toy Histories” through which tourists entertain themselves and expand global capital growth alongside this entertainment. Kerala’s cultural markers accordingly lose their meaning as spaces of identity and belonging since they become transmogrified spaces that merely guarantee the “regional flavour” global tourists seek.

Kathakali dance in the novel is equally reduced to a commodity of the rampant multinational consumerism that sweeps over Kerala’s cultural heritage. While performing before the “mock[ing. . .] lolling nakedness” (231) of foreign tourists in the hotel swimming pool, the dancers present only a “truncated Kathakali performances” (229) as a way of “turning to tourism to stave off starvation”(229). These dancers are aware that in such packaged versions of performance, the Kathakali dancer generally “hawks the only thing he owns. The stories that his body can tell” (229). At this point, the dancers abbreviate and renovate the stories which their bodies tell so as to suit the tourist demand according to which the old ancestral houses are renovated and transformed into defamiliarised spaces for foreign fun. The use of the word ‘hawk’ is very significant indeed because it illustrates how the dance-story telling art of kathakali, which is a spiritually charged ritual, becomes a call in public through which the body offers its performance as a commodity for sale. Here, I do not read the dancing body as an allegory of the physical space of ancestral wooden houses. Rather, I illustrate the ways in which the dancer’s body in the novel is implicated in the neo-colonial project of

amnesia that uproots and delinks the Kerala community from its cultural and historical memories.

The dancers are aware of their complicity in the amnesiac neo-colonial project which they know they promote though not out of choice but still out of economic need. We see how the dancers “on their way back from the Heart of Darkness [hotel] stopped at the temple to ask pardon of their gods” (229) since they feel duped by their own act of using the cultural heritage of dance as a commodity for the global tourist industry. Rahel and Esther watch in the temple how the dancers perform their all-night story of Karna as a way to turn to their gods and “apologise for corrupting their stories. For encasing their identities. Misappropriating their lives” (229). This moment of regret reflects that the dancers are conscious not only that the dance which they have truncated is closely related to their organised faith of Hinduism, but also that their mistreatment of their sacred ritual may kill this ritual through the body of those who are meant to preserve it. Indeed, the Karna dance story, about the death of a poor man at the hands of his brother, symbolically illustrates the ways in which kathakali dance resists its own spiritual death at the hands of its own dancers who themselves resist alienation in the globalised world of mass consumerism.

Critics have pointed out that although Kathakali dancers ask pardon from their gods, they will always sell their dance to survive in their postcolonial nation. H.S. Komalesha describes how these dancers are trapped in “the end of living and the beginning of survival [since] . . . they are left with no option” (134). Komalesha goes on to argue that these dancers “face . . . the central paradox, the ethical dilemma of the postnationalist, cosmopolitan phase: the awareness of cultural commodification, and a

hope for economic liberation. This is also incidentally, the price that a society has to pay for moving out of the confines of the nation” (134). Komalesha describes the difficult situation in which the dancers find themselves as they both sell their dance to survive and simultaneously realise that their survival is predicated upon the spiritual death of their culture. Komalesha adds that this dilemma is historically conditioned by the nation’s desire to open itself to the global market in which the nation not only sells its cultural products but also becomes culturally alienated in the process of this selling.

Alex Tickell has also described the ways in which dance in Roy’s novel is commodified in the age of global consumerism to which the novel itself is equally subjected by virtue of its global circulation. Tickell notes that “Kathakali performance itself operates as a commentary on the politics of cultural commodification” (161). Tickell means that the Kathakali dance performance is a moment through which the novel illustrates the expansion of global commodification and cultural imperialism in postcolonial cultures and societies. Yet, he adds that Roy’s novel, like the dance it describes, is subjected to global consumerism too. Tickell argues:

Like [Roy’s] internationally successful ‘cosmopolitan’ Indian-English novel, the Kathakali performance [in the novel] is caught between two culturally distinct constituencies: a reduced indigenous audience at the temple and more lucrative foreign tourist audience at the Heart of Darkness hotel. (161)

Tickell informatively notes that Roy’s novel is itself part of this global consumerism because of its globalised commodification. Tickell argues that Roy “employs dance to remind the potentially non-Indian reader of her tourist-like unfamiliarity with and potentially exoticising enjoyment of this colourful subdrama” (43). Tickell’s implied distinction between the drama in the story and the sub-drama in the dance evokes a

narrow sense of binarism which I problematise as I argue that the dance is indeed a performative mode interwoven with the textual mode of Roy's narrative. Despite that, Tickell allows us to probe that Kathakali dance is a cultural icon Roy's narrative indeed exposes to the gaze of consumer, traveller and / or reader.

Tickell confirms that Roy's "return to the indigenous" is complicit with the novel's global commodification. Although I do not disagree with Tickell's reading, I nevertheless think that the novel lends itself to the Fanonian idea of the sphere of the community in which indigenous dancers are aware of their journey between exile from one's culture into global politics and the recuperation of this culture. I would argue that Roy's "return to the indigenous" is a strategy that presents us with the homogenising epistemology of motion as Fanon describes it in the anti-colonial context of the Algerian indigenous circle dance. Although it is not located in the anti-colonial period of India, Kathakali in the novel still unites the dancers and the native audience with their communal sphere and simultaneously disrupts the truths neo-colonial travellers project onto the dancers. While it risks romanticising the indigenous through the nationalist and nativist rhetoric of "great stories" and / or traditions, the novel still presents dance as a potential counter-discourse in which the body thrusts itself into the murky spaces of globalised postmodernity where to dance kathakali is to write survival through global consumerism.

Nevertheless, although Komalesha, Tickell and other critics describe the complex representation of dance in the novel, they still have not addressed the ways in which this representation intervenes in postcolonial theories of the colonial body and dance.⁵³ While pointing out that the Kathakali dancer "hawks" the stories his body tells

in dance, the narrator implies that the dancing body is an agent which emerges from within its entrapment in the neo-colonial wave of consumerism so as to willingly turn its performance into a commodity without being culturally alienated in this process. Unlike postcolonial theory which limits the dancing colonial body to the murky space of elusiveness, Roy's novel describes how this body dances and / or choreographs its collective memory from within the historical tensions that regulate it and intensify its resistance to keep dancing to his gods. The dancer's decision to go back to the temple and dance their rituals appropriately reflects that the colonial body neither loses its control in the volatilising postmodern images of India that neo-colonialism fabricates nor merely subverts the tourists' meaning formation. The novel describes how the dancers choreograph their collective memory through the postmodern amnesia that seeks to wrench them from their history by defamiliarising this history before their very eyes and making them contribute to the very process of this defamiliarisation. In this case, the novel uses dance as a strongly productive paradigm of analysis through which the colonial body resists the power that produces it as entertaining "informant" particularly at the moment when the dancers decide to dance in the temple.

Rather than enacting a nativist gesture of idealising their culture, the dancer's return to the temple enacts a moment of biopolitical power that resists the biopower of life that produces them as local entertainers. Being a source of survival for the dancers, global tourists represent for the Kerala dancers bio-power, that is "the power over life – or the power to administer and produce life – that functions through the government of [Kerala] populations, managing their health, reproductive capacities and so forth"(Hardt and Negri 57). The management of the lives of the Kerala population is, as Komalesha

reminds us, historically conditioned by the intrusion of the global market in the Indian nation state. Thus, neo-colonial power of global capital manages the life of Kerala population since it provides a source of their survival by granting jobs for them and allowing them to be able to produce and reproduce. The tourist industry in Kerala thus produces the dancers as subjects through their very subjection to the economic norms that define them and guarantee their social and economic safety and security.

Nevertheless, these dancers also assume a bio-political power of life through which they resist the neo-colonial bio-power since they know that this bio-power simultaneously robs them of their cultural identity while producing better lives for them. Hardt and Negri point out that “there is always a minor current that insists on life as resistance, another power of life that strives towards an alternative existence . . . the bio-power against which we struggle is not comparable in its nature or form to the power of life by which we defend and seek our freedom”(57). The novel uses dance as a context thorough which it dramatises the struggle between being bound to the power that produces us as subjects and the power that produces our resistance for the fulfillment of our freedom. The novel shows how the dancers make the transition from the first type of power to the second at the moment they shift from the dance at the swimming pool to the dance in their temple. This shift visually shows us how the dancers move from their confinement to the bio-power over life in which their dance is a labour that brings them money and keeps them from starving, to the bio-political power in which their dance is a moment of freedom in which they trance as a way to articulate their cultural heritage and collective memory globalisation impels them to banalise and de-historicise.

Michel Foucault explains that every manifestation of power is predicated by resistance to it and revolt against it. Foucault argues in a statement which Hardt and Negri quote in their reading of power, that

when one defines the exercise of power as a mode of action upon the actions of others, when one characterises these actions by the government of men by other men . . . one includes an important element: freedom . . . At the very heart of the power relationship and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom. (221-222)

Foucault argues that the exercise of power that produces life, through disciplining individuals to adapt to the norms according to which life is produced, is always governed by resistance and recalcitrance to the norms of this production. Dance in Roy's novel is an "action" through which the neo-colonial power manifests itself but simultaneously keeps being resisted through the sense of freedom implied through the very action of dancing. That is why dance for Roy emerges as a bio-political event that "disrupts the normative system" (59) imposed by neo-colonial bio-power from inside the culture which is subjected to this power. The dancer's return to their temple to dance and / or pray is culturally and epistemologically loaded because it enacts the subversion of the bio-power through "will and recalcitrance" (Foucault) to be free of this power from within subjection to it.

Yet, the novel complicates Hardt and Negri's polarity by showing that the transition from bio-power to bio-political power produces a residue of violence in the bodies of the dancers who, soon after finishing their dance, go back home "to beat their wives" (224). This recourse to violence against women illustrates not only the patriarchal ideology in which the dance is socially situated but also the internal violence that is inscribed in the dancer's body as a result of its transition from the bio-power that

produces the dancer as subject to the bio-political power that guarantees his freedom within subjection. Here the novel complicates Hardt and Negri's interpretation of the Foucauldian paradigm of power through the sense of aggression that the post-nationalist entrapment leaves in the dancing body of the neo-colonised subject. I am not simply implying that this aggression of the cultural entrapment of the dancers is exorcised against their wives, whom the novel reflects as silenced subalterns. Rather, I am advancing that while the novel suggests dance as a site through which the global capital encounters local postcolonial cultures, it illustrates that the effect of this encounter on the dancers' body cannot be reduced to ready-made theoretical binary of power. The novel does not romanticise or idealise the historical situation of the dancer's body by leaving it unexplained and interpreted theoretically. The novel instead calls for a more complex re-reading of Hardt and Negri's conception through the perspectives of gender that shapes the entrapment of the dancing colonial body in the complexity of the post-nationalist era in Kerala state. This means that Roy's literary text uses dance as a paradigm through which it not only contests globalisation but also challenges theoretical reflection that resolve the complex ways in which the colonial body is situated in the postcolonial and globalised context.

Roy's novel dramatises the fact that dance is a site in which the colonial body enacts its collective memory exactly as it is subjected to the forces that consume both the dancing body and its memory as commodities in the global market. The novel suggests dance as a biopolitical event in which the body resists the bio-power that produces it as a consumable commodity and consequently allows dancers and indigenous audiences to emerge as "alternative subjectivities" (Hardt and Negri 61), resisting their subjection to

modernisation. Kathakali dance in the novel operates as “biopolitical event” also because it paves the way for relationships of intimacy between the dancer and her body on the one hand and the dance and the community on the other. This relationship symbolically interrupts the social and cultural alienation that modernity brings with it to postcolonial societies so as to cultivate the seeds of social antagonisms among its classes. So, although Tickell rightly points out that Roy’s novel advertises the colonial body and the dance to the global reader/ traveller, the novel still contests global consumerism through this very display that symbolically evokes resistance and the will to exist. This will is translated through the dancers’ initiative to apologise to the gods without whom the cultural identity of the dance will perish. Roy may assume the role of what Spivak calls a “complicit” “native informant” in the act of speaking for and displaying its colourful dance culture to the global market. Yet, this reading of the novel and its author would only keep us incarcerated in the postcolonial logic of travel literature which proves unable to see the colonial body outside of the colonial gaze, sexuality, and psychology. Roy’s novel, like Soyinka’s play, Harris’s theory of the limbo and Fanon’s analysis of possession and the occult, invite a deeper reflection of the role of dance in postcolonial studies. It re-choreographs postcolonial epistemologies of the body more through the complexity of the cultural and political tensions in which the dance is located than through the deconstructive metaphor of deferral in which the historical materiality of the body evaporates. Indeed, in this introduction, I sought to show that theories of dance emerge less from postcolonial theory than from its representation in literary and decolonisation texts. I now turn to the erotic as a category through which the dancing body displays its sexuality in movement, subverts the gaze to

which it is subjected, and initiates a new choreography of postcolonial readings of dance from within the cultural context of Oriental dance.

Chapter One

Oriental Dance and the Erotic:

Stavros Karayanni and Audre Lorde

“Surely her [i.e. Kuchuk’s] performance was an economic exchange that earned her a living . . . there may even have existed an element of auto-exoticism in her performance, an effort to offer the wealthy visiting patron the product that he expected to receive. In fact, in this context of auto-exoticization, it seems to me that Kuchuk’s striking gesture of squeezing her bare breasts together and tying her jacket around them could perhaps indicate a performativity intended for consumption.”

(Karayanni, *Dancing Fear and Desire: Race, Sexuality, and Imperial Politics in Middle Eastern Dance* 54)

1.1. Stavros Karayanni: Oriental Dance and Eroticism

This epigraph, from *Dancing Fear and Desire: Race, Sexuality, and Imperial Politics in Middle Eastern Dance* by Stavros Karayanni, describes how the nineteenth century Egyptian dancer and courtesan Kuchuk Hanem eroticises her dance for Gustave Flaubert so as to “earn a living.” Karayanni notes that Kuchuk squeezes her bare breasts in order to perform a sexually arousing dance for Flaubert. Karayanni explains that Kuchuk’s eroticised gesture “could perhaps indicate a performativity intended for consumption,” that is her movement reiterates the eroticising practices and norms through which a courtesan transforms her body from a living and breathing body into a commodity. Consumption and profit constitute, according to Karayanni, the regulatory norm through which Kuchuk’s dancing body becomes tangible as an eroticised product manufactured to meet the needs of the patron, Flaubert.

This materialist interpretation of eroticism in Oriental dance challenges Edward Said's textual analysis of the erotic encounter between Kuchuk and Flaubert. In his book *Orientalism*, Said overlooks the economic perspective of this encounter and instead contends that Kuchuk remains silent in Flaubert's narrative just like the East which is depicted as submissive in Western discourse and knowledge. Said maintains that Kuchuk

never spoke for herself, she never represented her emotions, presence or history. He [Flaubert] spoke for her and represented her. He was foreign, comparatively wealthy, male, and these were historical facts of domination that allowed him not only to possess Kuchuk Hanem physically but to speak for her and tell his readers in what way she was 'typically Oriental.' My argument is that Flaubert's situation of strength in relation to Kuchuk Hanem was not an isolated instance. It fairly stands for the pattern of relative strength between East and West, and the discourse about the Orient that it enabled. (6)

Said's words, "wealthy," "male," "domination," "possession," "speak for," and "situation of strength" clarify that Flaubert symbolizes the patriarchal and imperialist Western belief system according to which the male subject is a coherent and self-sufficient source of meaning. Said actually follows the logic of structural binary oppositions as he shows how Flaubert's strength emerges through Kuchuk's weakness in the same way the dominance of the West contrasts the weakness of the East, according to the colonial / Orientalist "patterns of strength." As Joseph Boone argues "for Said, Flaubert's transformation of Kuchuk's *material flesh* into an occasion for poetic reverie forms a paradigmatic example of the mechanisms of Orientalism: the masculinised penetrating West possesses for its own purposes the East fecundity, gendered as female in Kuchuk's sensuality" (92; emphasis added).

Like Boone and other critics of *Orientalism*, Karayanni rejects Said's representation of Kuchuk as an image of the East.⁵⁴ Yet, unlike other critics before him, Karayanni suggests that Kuchuk's dance is a site of resistance since it eludes Flaubert's gaze. Karayanni notes:

Concerning Middle Eastern dance, Said avoids the challenge of a closer focus on Kuchuk's movement, relying instead on a formulaic treatment of the activity in colonial discourse, The East, totally objectified, performs for the West. Kuchuk is not an individual or even an artist but a figure as vague as far-reaching geographically and temporally as the Orient in Said's work. Said avoids the challenge also because dance often inhibits with its evanescence . . . Observing its motion, the gaze struggles to fix and secure those rapid frames of movements that form only to vanish upon appearance. Indeed, *the dancing body eludes capture in any material terms*, hence the reluctance of . . . Said . . . to discuss the movement itself. (45, 46; emphasis added)

In contrast to Said who defines the body and sexuality of Kuchuk through the Orientalist discourse of power, Karayanni focuses more particularly on the ways in which Kuchuk's dance "movements . . . form to vanish upon appearance . . . [and] her body eludes capture in any material terms." Still, does not this notion of elusiveness or vagueness in Oriental dance contradict Karayanni's idea of "economic exchange" in which the dancer's eroticism and "material flesh," to borrow Boone's words, are captured? Could elusiveness then be another way of eroticising the Oriental dancing body and making it prone to consumption from within the postcolonial discourse of resistance?

Noticing that Karayanni's elusiveness is a mystifying category of analysis, I examine in this chapter how the Oriental dancer's body unfolds as a fetishised commodity in postcolonial studies and how eroticism can still empower the dancer in ways that intervene in postcolonial readings of dance. I draw the conception of erotic empowerment from the Caribbean-American lesbian critic and poet Audre Lorde who

defines the erotic as a “an assertion of the life force of women; of that creative energy empowered, the knowledge and the use of which we are now reclaiming in our language, our history, our dancing” as a way to resist various forms of oppression (55). In order to examine how the notion of erotic empowerment intervenes in postcolonial theories of the Oriental body and dance, I first wish to clarify that Karayanni integrates dance as a category of analysis in postcolonial theory. Taking his point of departure from his queer and postcolonial perspective as a belly dancer and dance critic, Karayanni borrows the concepts of elusiveness and ambivalence respectively from postmodern philosophies of dance and postcolonial theories of the body to show how Oriental dancers turn colonial desire into “lack.” Secondly, I argue that although Karayanni addresses dance as a site of resistance, he still fetishises the Oriental dancer’s body through the paradigm of elusiveness, just as Malek Alloula and Edward Said fetishise the Oriental body through images of lack and unattainability in *The Colonial Harem* (1986) and “Homage to a Belly Dancer”(1999) respectively. The Oriental body is a fetishised commodity in the works of these critics since it acquires value not through the social and cultural tensions that materially define it but through its exchange value, that is the value or the money for which it is exchanged on the postcolonial market and the profit it guarantees for this market. After that, I problematise this postcolonial understanding of the Oriental body through Lorde’s theory of the erotic as power. I argue that despite articulating an essentialised world view of the erotic, Lorde’s theory invites us to associate eroticism in Oriental dance with its socially transformative value rather than with the desiring gaze of the viewer. I provide a concrete example of the transformative value of the erotic through the dance of Dunia, the title character in

Jocelyn Saab's film *Dunia: Kiss Me Not in the Eyes* (2005). I conclude that Saab's film offers a cinematic intervention in the mystifying metaphors through which postcolonial critics eroticise the Oriental body and dance while contesting the colonial eroticisation of them.

1.2. Karayanni: Oriental Dance and the Elusive Dancing Body

Karayanni draws his conception of the elusive dancing body from Western contemporary philosophers of dance who interpret the body in terms of both the cultural discourse that inscribes it and the bodily discourse, or corporeality, that eludes verbal interpretations. The American theorist, dancer, and choreographer Susan Leigh Foster contends that "the sense of presence conveyed by a body in motion, the idiosyncrasies of a given physique, the smallest inclination all form part of a corporeal discourse whose power and intelligibility elude translation into words" (*Choreographing History* 9). Departing from her position as a dancer and a choreographer who discerns "the smallest inclinations of the body movements," Foster notices that dance forms a bodily discourse that remains unreadable since it evades verbal translation. This reading of the body intervenes in the historical interpretation of dance which focuses on a period-based study of the evolution of various genres of dance through time without neglecting the social and cultural contexts within which this evolution takes place.⁵⁵ By contrast, Foster's work emphasises instead the elusiveness of the body in movement and therefore opens for us the possibility to ponder the ways in which the dancing body of the colonised subject eludes the colonial gaze to which it is exposed.

Foster's conception of dance is useful for Karayanni's project of contesting Western eroticising assumptions because it defines dance as unreadable bodily writing

that challenges verbal interpretations. Foster's philosophy of the elusiveness of the body must have called Karayanni's critical attention to the role of dance movement as a space of meaning production. Indeed, while interpreting Kuchuck's dance, Karayanni focuses on the "rapid frames of movement that vanish upon appearance." This interpretation immediately recalls Foster's analysis of "the idiosyncrasies of a given physique [and] the smallest inclination [that] all form part of a corporeal discourse whose power and intelligibility elude translation into words"(9). Foster's philosophy of the dancing body allows Karayanni to probe the ways in which Oriental dance unsettles Orientalist mappings which tend to reduce the dancer's body to a mere vessel of erotic desire.

Karayanni's interpretation of Oriental dance also recalls the contemporary theories of the body developed by the dance theorist and dramaturge André Lepecki. The latter examines "the epistemological and choreographic tension [that] revives the force of dances and bodies . . . allowing them to initiate their resistant notions as they configure the limits and potentials of presence" (*Of the Presence of the body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory* 5). Lepecki presents choreography or bodily writing in motion as a mode of knowledge formation in which the dancing body resists irreducible truths about it. He describes the totalising meanings, that the body resists in dance, through the philosophical concept of "presence." Unlike Foster's use of presence in the above quotation, Lepecki uses the concept of "presence" in Jacques Derrida's sense of a "metaphysics of presence," which is, according to Derrida, "the enterprise of returning . . . to an origin or to a priority thought . . . this is the metaphysical exigency which has been the most constant, most profound and most potent" in the history of Western philosophy (*Margins of Philosophy* 159). Derrida's deconstructive method of critiquing

the metaphysical conception of origin is useful for Lepecki's examination of how a dancing body transgresses the supposed originality of meaning through the elusiveness of its movement in space. Lepecki clarifies that "it was thanks to Jacques Derrida's critique of 'metaphysics of presence' that the issue returned to the field [of dance] . . . under the Derridean notion of the trace, it is the very notion of 'the body' that must be recast" (5). Thus, the dancing body according to Lepecki reflects presence not as return to "original or priority thought" (Derrida) about the body, but as transient, always potentially vanishing trace. Lepecki maintains that "dance . . . attends to . . . its presence as vanishing" (151), since, like a Derridean trace, it promises no final semantic resolution but rather continuously erases meaning along movement in the same way Derrida's trace becomes legible as it erases itself in the endless play of *différance*. Derrida's textual movement of *différance* is therefore pivotal to Lepecki's conception of corporeal movement in dance which suspends all promise of meaning resolution.

Lepecki's poststructuralist perspective of dance shapes Karayanni's analysis of Oriental dance and allows him to describe the ways in which bodies of Oriental dancers are more than eroticised images of the East. Unlike Said who reads the Oriental dancer's body through the Orientalist discourse of knowledge, Karayanni explains that dance dismantles the power of this knowledge since it emerges as "frames of movement that [like Derrida's trace] form only to vanish upon appearance"(45). Karayanni actually draws from Derrida's terminology when he examines Oriental "movement as text" that "remains a signifier without a referent" (51). Karayanni thus approaches the Oriental dancing body in terms of the vanishing and disappearance of meaning that both haunts

the presence of dance and defines it, exactly as Lepecki describes the dancing body in Derrida's deconstructive terms.⁵⁶

Therefore, contemporary theories of unreadability and elusiveness in dance deeply inform Karayanni's ways of interrogating Orientalist politics of representation and Said's complicity in this politics. Foster and Lepecki's concepts of dance allow Karayanni to infer that choreography is a site of transient meaning in which, to borrow Jane Desmond's words, "identities are signalled, framed and negotiated" (2). Taking this philosophy of choreography as a point of departure in his analysis, Karayanni confirms that he takes "the risk of focusing on a non-verbal text - choreography - that is elusive and evanescent [so as] to challenge the usual silence or even complete disregard that greets Kuchuk's choreographies in [Said's] critical work" (64). Karayanni associates the study of Oriental choreography with risk because this choreography stimulates the male viewer's desire only to suspend it, just like language which produces meaning only to defer it through different signifiers, according to deconstruction theory.⁵⁷ Such ambivalence of Oriental dance strikes Karayanni as crucial and worth exploring through a postcolonial theoretical perspective that is different from Said's.

1.3. *Karayanni: Oriental Dance and the Ambivalent Colonial Desire*

In the introductory chapter of his book, Karayanni notes that the Middle Eastern dance situates itself in a space of ambivalence since it is subjected to the colonial viewer's desire and derision. Karayanni argues that Middle Eastern dance

offers that space where transformation is possible but is curtailed by the perils that such deviation may engender, perils that are intrinsic to the process of transformation. What I argue is that this dance is adored and eroded . . . precisely because of its ambivalent construction. This profound ambivalence is

what marks the typological relationship of the Middle Eastern dance and Western spectator's gaze. (22)

Being an erotically charged site of embodiment, Oriental dance entails the "transformation" of the dancing body into an object of the viewer's sexual desire and possession. Yet, Karayanni clarifies that "this transformation is curtailed by the perils" of the viewer's unfulfilled desire. He justifies this claim by quoting a passage from Flaubert's letter in which he writes that he "sucked her [i.e. Kuchuk] furiously, her body was covered with sweat, she was tired after dancing. . . [yet] I scarcely shut my eyes. My night was one long, infinitely intense reverie . . . I thought of her dance . . ." (*Letters* 117). Karayanni purposely integrates this passage to illustrate Flaubert's unfulfilled desire to possess the Oriental body which, by way of subjection to his vehement desire, suspends his quest for totalising meaning and desire for full gratification. Flaubert remains "alert, self-gazing, watching his ineffectual presence beside this woman, unable to formulate any meaning, his imperial subjectivity incapable of securing him a safe arrival at the site he yearns for. While Kuchuk's body makes space and time, his body is inert" (Karayanni 51). Karayanni not only uses the perspective of the body to reverse the power relationship that *Orientalism* describes in the Kuchuk / Flaubert encounter, he also emphasises how Kuchuk's body becomes an agent producing Flaubert's inertia, "ineffectual presence," and inability "to formulate meaning" about it. Kuchuk's body subverts the imperial subject's position of power as "male, relatively wealthy, and Western" (Said 6) and consequently urges this subject to gaze back at himself and realise that his sexual dominance, which Said reads as emblematic of the Western dominance over the East, is contingent upon a disavowed lack.

In order to frame his argument theoretically, Karayanni draws from Homi Bhabha's concept of ambivalence which characterises, in Bhabha's view, the colonial discourse about the stereotyped or /and fetishised Other. Bhabha maintains:

the fetish or stereotype gives access to an 'identity' which is predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defence, for it is a form of multiple and contradictory belief in its recognition of difference and disavowal of it. This conflict of pleasure / unpleasure, mastery / defence, knowledge/ disavowal, absence / presence has a fundamental significance for colonial discourse. (The Location of Culture 75)

Arguing that Bhabha's terms are "useful in the examination of dance" (Karayanni 21), Karayanni describes Kuchuk as the "fetish" or the unobtainable object of Flaubert's desire rather than merely a silent one as Said contends in *Orientalism*. Accordingly, Kuchuk unveils Western identity not as coherent and homogenous, but rather split between mastery and pleasure on one hand and anxiety and defence on the other. The Orientalist traveller accordingly reflects this ambivalence when he describes Kuchuk both as "poetic" and "machine [who] makes no distinction between one man and another" (*Letters* 181). Flaubert's "contradictory" descriptions illustrate that Kuchuk's body is, in Bhabha's terms, the fetish / stereotype showing how the colonial subject is fragmented between a sense of "pleasure" that shows the Oriental subject as "poetic" and "unpleasure" that dehumanises this subject and turns her into a "machine." This fragmentation in colonial discourse continuously prompts the colonial subject to attain that object of desire which not only eludes him but divides him. Karayanni uses Bhabha's critical logic to infer that "Flaubert's stereotypical concept of Kuchuk embodies mastery and anxiety simultaneously as it divides him internally" (52). Bhabha's method therefore offers a mode of resistance that is useful enough for

Karayanni's approach to Oriental dance as a site of unsettling Western eroticising constructions of the colonial body.

Moreover, Karayanni has taken into account Bhabha's response to Said's one-sided understanding of Western power. Bhabha notes that "it is difficult to conceive of the process of subjectification as a placing *within* Orientalist or colonial discourse for the dominated subject without the dominant being strategically placed within it too" (72; italic in original). Bhabha notices that when Said describes the Oriental subject entirely in terms of Orientalist dominance, he never imagines that the Western dominant subject is also placed within the dynamic of dominance and / or power. Bhabha explains that the colonial subject is far from being unaffected by the dynamic of colonial control since his subjectivity is split once his gaze at the colonised body is an avowed fear and derision of this body and a disavowed sexual desire for it. Bhabha's theory of the fetish and stereotype elaborates that the colonial disavowed desire to see oneself through the colonised Other is haunted by the fear of this Other, which makes the idea of unity and coherence within colonial subjectivity fallacious. Bhabha's above reading of colonial subjectivity within the dynamic of power deconstructs the binarism between the below and the above and the high and the low that Said elaborates in *Orientalism*. Bhabha's critical response to Said is thus productive for Karayanni who describes how "the Oriental dancing body influenced the trafficking in emotions and how its choreography was really a necessity to the Empire" (44). The word "necessity," as I read it, has two implications: On the one hand, it implies a critique of Said's assumption that the Orient is a necessary Other for Western empire to sustain itself. Yet on the other hand, it implies that the Oriental body's dance movement is a form of resistance Empire

strategically needs to disclose the internal rift fissuring its sense of integrity and coherence, most noticeably in relation to the male Oriental body as Karayanni shows in a different section of his book.

1.4. *Karayanni: Male Eastern Dance and Orientalist Homoeroticism*

Unlike Said who remains silent about homoeroticism in the Western construction of Oriental subjectivity, Karayanni describes male dance in the East through the homoerotic narratives of Western travellers. Departing from his position as a queer belly dancer and dance critic who contests the mainstream view that belly dance is “exclusively female” (71), Karayanni states that “constructing modern Oriental dance as a female fertility ritual silences the widespread custom of male dancers in the East” (70). Karayanni clarifies that male dance has existed in the narrative of Western travellers to the East since the late seventeenth century. He also adds that male dance in the Orient develops more particularly in nineteenth century Egypt when,

following Mohamed Ali’s edict and the departure of large numbers of dancers and courtesans to Upper Egypt, the Cairo scene became inundated with khawalas, dancing boys called gink, or cengi and kocek in Turkish. Rather amusingly, the ghawazee were sent away so as not to offend morals, yet as Moore Berger informs us, the male dancers who came to prevail in their wake presented an even more relentless challenge to Western mores ‘the number of male Oriental dancers increased and they . . . were often more audacious and salacious than the girls.’ (70)

Karayanni notices that male dance becomes prevalent in Cairo when the Ottoman governor in Egypt, Mohammad Ali Pasha, evicts female dancers from Cairo and sends them to Upper Egypt so as to appease religious authorities and modernise the country according to the standards of European investors. Yet, although female dancers are evicted, Western travellers notice what Berger describes as overt moral offence,

indecent, lasciviousness, and disgust among male dancers in Egypt than previously struck them in female dance. This gender distinction in the Oriental dance triggers Karayanni's attention particularly as it complicates the colonial gaze which is "the province" of Karayanni's critical project (72).⁵⁸

Although Orientalists describe both female and male Oriental dancers as being ambivalently "indecent" and "lascivious," Karayanni notices that the effect of Oriental male dance on Western viewers is problematic since it unsettles their discourse about gender and threatens their hetero-normative conception of desire.⁵⁹ Karayanni notes that the Eastern male dancer who is dressed and made up like a woman sexually arouses Western viewers but also makes them feel fear and disgust since this arousal menaces their heterosexual morals that are specific to Western culture.⁶⁰ Karayanni notes:

the [Western] encounter with the khawalas [i.e. homosexuals in Arabic] forces him [i.e. Western viewer] into that most awkward and discomfiting space between genders where he realises a particularly tantalising desire. (exciting, alluring, teasing, provoking) Enclaspd in this space, the imperial subject is impelled to confront a liminal identity, one that becomes the most vivid, shameless, and lurid embodiment of his taboos . . . even if they [i.e. Western viewers] felt any enthusiasm over the kocek, the khawalas, or the batchas, their enthusiasm had to be closeted off in the narrative . . . since homosexual desire or its concomitant acts are present only through unnameability and silence. (81)

Karayanni perceives how various Western travel narratives about male Oriental dance display a homoerotic desire manifesting itself through a sexual enthusiasm kept silent and unnamed. Karayanni notes that Sigisbert Charles Sonninni and Edward Lane, for instance, are ambivalently fascinated and offended by male Oriental dancers' "unnatural passion" (163) and "unnatural profession" (389). Karayanni also depicts this ambivalence in Flaubert's narrative which describes Egyptian male dancers Flaubert encounters few years before he meets Kuchuk Hanem. Flaubert finds that male dancers

in the Orient are “quite ugly but charming in their corruption, in their obscene leerings and the effeminacy of their movements. I doubt whether we shall find the women as good as the men; the ugliness of the latter adds greatly to the thing as art” (110, 111). Flaubert’s narrative here illustrates what Karayanni describes as the “discomfiting space between genders” which makes Flaubert feel a “tantalising desire” but remains silent about it.⁶¹

As it debunks gender binarism, Oriental male dance not only threatens the Western viewer’s heterosexual norms but also presents a queer mode of resistance to colonial constructions of the feminised East and masculinised West. Karayanni’s evocation of this point is so crucial that I quote him at length:

the liminal space these dancers occupied, a space in between genders, may have tantalised, titillated, or appalled the Western bourgeois traveller, but it never inspired an openly expressed feeling of comfort. Policed by their cultural taboos, these [Western] travellers needed a firm foothold at either the masculine or feminine threshold, even when they relished sexual experiences with cross dressed performers. The dancers were not isolated in inciting curiosity and hate, attraction and repulsion, the East as a whole generated the same emotional effects. The white European emotions regarding the spectacle of dance - fear, shock, disgust- set in motion those mechanisms that reinstate in the traveller’s gaze the superiority of European culture and its elite embodiment. The Middle Eastern male dancer, with the made-up eyes and the lascivious movements, posed- indeed continues to pose - a particular threat that had to be contested and its injurious effects exorcised. However, the male dancer would not be entirely censored from the narratives since his form, constantly shifting in the condition of dance, is necessary in the Empire’s constant redefining of itself against the Oriental Other. (97)

Karayanni confirms that although male dance titillates Western viewers, it nevertheless destabilises their power position as it generates in them a queer desire that transgresses their culturally inherited heterosexual norms of desire. Karayanni uses his queer reading of Orientalist homoerotic desire to infer that the East is neither submissive nor silent as Said suggests in his analysis of Flaubert’s heterosexual encounter with Kuchuk. Rather,

the East in Karayanni's analysis is a transgressive space since its cultural practice of male dance subverts the paradigms of power and knowledge through which Empire constructs the Western man as masculine agent and the Oriental man as feminised Other.

Moreover, Karayanni's analysis of the liminal and cross-gender space of male Oriental dance emanates from his queer perspective from which he broadens the scope of both postcolonial readings of the colonial body and poststructuralist philosophies of the elusiveness of dance. Karayanni first critiques Homi Bhabha who "elides gender difference, thus implicitly ratifying gender power" (22) in his postcolonial interpretation of the colonial body. As opposed to Bhabha, Karayanni shows that the category of gender both perpetuates the cultural politics of difference and unsettles it through such elements of dance spectacle as make-up, cross dressing, and bodily movement. Karayanni notices that the spectacle of male Oriental dance in the East constitutes a moment of erotic transgression through which the dancer's body eludes the Western gaze, resists the hegemonic discourse of identity as difference, and implements Bhabha's above mentioned postcolonial reversal of the dominant – dominated relationship of colonial power. This postcolonial framing of elusiveness in male Oriental dance complicates the poststructuralist description of elusiveness and / or deferral since it presents it through the categories of gender and sexuality which capture the body, inscribe it, and mark its identity as a body. For although Karayanni claims that the body in dance "eludes capture in any material terms," the bodies of cross-dressed male Oriental dancers are still marked by the materiality of gender reflected performatively through their spectacle. These dancers illustrate, in Judith Butler's words, a moment in

which cross dressing indicates “both denaturalisation and idealisation of heterosexual norms” they ostensibly dismantle (*Bodies that Matter* 125).

Yet, Karayanni is not interested in deciphering how Oriental male dance idealises heterosexual norms of gender. Karayanni focuses instead on how male dance in the Orient represents a space of in-between gender identities that destabilises the Western viewer’s heterosexual desire and troubles his position of power and dominance. Karayanni deploys queerness as space of resistance since it eludes the colonial project of constructing the Oriental body as Other. Thanks to its elusive and evasive eroticism and desirability, the Oriental male dance - like the female one, is the object of desire which emerges only through its impossibility to achieve and resolve itself in verbal interpretation. The male Oriental dancer’s eroticism comes out, according to Karayanni, through its constant obfuscation in the interstitial space of gender in-betweenness which cuts across the integrity and coherence of what Said calls Western discourse of power and knowledge. Still, isn’t elusiveness a metaphor of secrecy in which the body is estranged from itself as a material entity? Can we say, then, that Karayanni’s analysis transgresses Said’s?

1.5. *Karayanni and the Oriental Dancing Body: The Critical Stakes*

Despite reacting to Said’s allegorical reading of Kuchuk, Karayanni still interprets the Oriental dancing body in terms of certain images of the East. Karayanni maintains:

the availability and promise of these women [Oriental dancers] are the very qualities identified with the East and paradoxically the qualities that generate anxiety in the Western traveller . . . by choreographing a complex relationship to the Western gaze [i.e. through the above described ambivalence of the fetish

that turns desire into lack] the ghawazee embody their own tense dynamism and potency as well as that of the East. (75, 76)

Karayanni argues that although Oriental female dancers and their Eastern space display erotic and exotic qualities that lure Western travellers, these dancers also embody the potency and dynamism of the East which complicate the relationship between their dancing bodies and the traveller's desiring gaze. Karayanni implies that potency and dynamism are inherently Eastern qualities which inscribe the bodies of dancers, empower them to resist Western eroticising and /or exoticising stereotypes, and generate anxiety amid the Western traveller's desire to penetrate the East. In this way, Oriental dance unfolds as a mode of resistance to the eroticising constructions that reduce the body of the Oriental subject to a static object of Orientalist scrutiny.

However, while reading the Oriental body through the space of the East, Karayanni erases this body's materiality by metaphorising it and depersonalising the dancer.⁶² Karayanni does not describe the ways in which these women dancers acquire the qualities of dynamism and potency, nor does he specify the ways these qualities differ from an individual dancer to another according to the factors of age and health that are inextricably related to a dance performance. Instead, he provides a stereotypical and generalised image of these qualities as he relates them to the East rather than to the potential states of the dancing body. I would argue that Karayanni's analysis unwittingly falls into orientalising the Eastern dancer's body by constructing it through the "true" and "typical" features that define its "Easternness," namely, "sexual promise," "potency," and "dynamism." More than that, by constantly presenting these elements of dance

movement, eroticism, and sexuality through the Western gaze, Karayanni overlooks the specificities of the Oriental culture which precedes and exceeds this gaze.

Karayanni thus refuses, just like Said does in *Orientalism*, to let us see how Oriental dance unfolds and evolves as an embodied cultural practice prior to and / or away from this gaze. Even while reacting to Said's silence about Flaubert's "homosexual experience" in the East (Karayanni 87), Karayanni surprises us when he notes that "Edward Said picks on Flaubert's heterosexual narratives and elaborates on them theoretically. In such interpretations, the ghaziya's body has been read, *correctly I think*, as a trope for the earth that is ploughed and tilled" (87; emphasis mine). This moment is critical because it unveils the paradoxes that are inherently embedded in Karayanni's analysis. Karayanni not only reiterates Said's interpretation of the dancer's body as a "trope" or a "figure" which he previously rejects, he also unwittingly invites us to question the paradigm of elusiveness that is central to his conception of Oriental dance. While Karayanni claims that Oriental dance "eludes capture in any material terms" (45), he uses the spatial category of earth and / or East as "material terms" that symbolically capture the dance and the body of the dancer. Here, Karayanni shows that the dance acquires its political significance as spaces of resistance not through elusiveness, as he claims before, but rather through the dancers' sense of affiliation to their Eastern culture which they display in movement. Yet again, Karayanni metaphorises the Oriental dancer's body and sexuality through both the images of "the earth [that] is ploughed and tilled" and "the temptations of the erotically excessive Orient embodied by the ghawazi [i.e. female Oriental dancers]" (42). This image of erotic excess more particularly brings no empowerment to the body thus described since

it recalls the Orientalist image of excess Karayanni himself contests in the writings of both Flaubert and William Curtis.⁶³ Karayanni's description dematerialises the body and obfuscates it in the very act of depicting it and claiming its potential to resist.

Karayanni also reads the body of the male Oriental dancer through the image of the East when he argues that this body generates the same feeling and emotion in the Western viewer as the East does. Karayanni notes in the previously quoted citation, that “[Oriental male] dancers were not isolated in inciting curiosity and hate, attraction and repulsion, the East as a whole generated the same emotional effects” (97). The Saidian logic of allegory recurs in Karayanni's description of the Oriental male dancer. The latter according to Karayanni is not “isolated” from the ambivalent image that puzzles Western travellers about the East just as Kuchuk is not “isolated” from the image of inferiority that these travellers attribute to the East (*Orientalism* 27). However, this does not mean that Karayanni never expands the scope of Said's critical inquiry about the Oriental body and sexuality. On the contrary, by virtue of his analysis of homoeroticism, Karayanni offers a queer perspective of analysis that has undoubtedly gone beyond the heterosexual limits of Said's analysis, broadened the field of research in this area, and initiated further possibilities of critical inquiry about both male and female Oriental dance.⁶⁴ Karayanni's focus on the elusiveness of Oriental male dance complicates Said's discourse analysis since it shows how cross gendered dance spectacle generates desire and anxiety in the viewer and hence eludes or disrupts the heterosexually oriented discourse of the Western traveller about the Oriental Other. Yet, Karayanni reads this elusiveness only in relation to the colonial gaze without imagining how it may become an epistemology, or a form of knowledge that can produce a new attitude towards the

male body in Oriental cultural space.⁶⁵ For although Karayanni seeks to show how the dancing Oriental boys resist colonial hegemony, he still presents these boys' sexuality entirely through the traveller's desiring gaze. Karayanni actually reduces his description of eroticism in Oriental male dance to what he calls "the erotic qualities of male dancers [like Hassan El-Ballabsi] who provoked the coloniser's dissipated yearning" (65). In this way, Karayanni incarcerates the Oriental dancers' eroticism inside the closed space of coloniser's yearnings. Accordingly, Oriental male dance is not a cultural practice celebrating some ideologies and challenging others. Rather, it is a moment in which Western homophobia - which is a basic concern in Karayanni's book - shapes itself theatrically before the cross gendered body of the male Oriental dance.

The male Oriental dancer in Karayanni's narrative is not an agent emerging through the homosocial desire in his culture but the Other who merely mediates Karayanni's own concern about homophobia in the West. I argue that Karayanni hardly explains how homoeroticism in the Orient relates to "the social bonds between persons of the same sex" (Sedgwick, 1) in the Orient. Karayanni's lack of concern about this area of homoeroticism in the East makes him neglect how dance can be a site through which "the continuum between the homosocial desire and homoerotic desire is not as disrupted as it is in the everyday structure of men's relations with other men" (2). Although Sedgwick's theoretical concepts are grounded in English literature, they still invite us to ponder how dance constitutes a social and cultural event in which Oriental men gather and create bonds with each, just as they do in such male-dominated social spaces as public cafés and baths, for instance. Karayanni focuses more on the display of the spectacle of male dance without exploring the social and cultural norms in which the

dance takes place. Suha Kudsieh, for example, notices that “*Dancing Fear and Desire* does not detail the circumstances that allowed khawals [i.e. dancing Oriental boys] to be tolerated in the Ottoman Middle East. By overlooking these circumstances, the examination asserts the erroneous point of view that the Orient was a place where homosexuality thrived, a viewpoint that legitimizes the romanticized Eurocentric depiction of the East” (3). Kudsieh indeed explains the ways in which Karayanni romanticises both the male dancer and his dance by taking them out of their history, society, and culture that condition and regulate them.

Karayanni’s description of the contemporary Egyptian male belly dancer Tito Seif illustrates my claim since it shows how the body of the Oriental dancer emerges entirely through the author’s travelling gaze. In a tone that is both assertive and confident, Karayanni writes:

my gaze traverses his entire body with that religious hunger and that spiritual thirst, for this is the body where the dance comes alive, the body where movement materializes in rapid sequences that albeit evanescent, articulate in their power and eloquence the sadness and necessity of loss, the joy and pain of desire, the undeciphered mysteries of the body’s passions, ecstasies, strength and fragility. . . With his intense, precise, rigorous, invigorating shimmy, Tito brings the mystery of creation into art, the unspeakable power of the body into view, the power of emotion into play, eternity into the moment. (“Tito Seif: The Moment of Eternal Shimmy” www.gildedserpent.com)

The words “evanescent movement” and “unspeakable power of the body,” through which Karayanni describes Tito’s dance, recall the poststructuralist vocabulary which Susan Foster and André Lepecki use to conceptualise dance as unreadable bodily writing. More than that, Karayanni employs a vocabulary that evokes the religious and spirituality of Tito’s dance. Besides, the “religious hunger and spiritual thirst,” as I read them, shed light on Karayanni’s eroticising gaze that leaves Tito’s eroticism totally

obfuscated except as a traversed space. Captivated and mesmerised by Tito's dance, Karayanni associates the materiality of this dance with the evanescent, unspeakable, and undeciphered movement that "brings the mystery of creation into art." This description plunges us into Karayanni's fantasy which exoticises the dance movement of Tito and de-historicises it, that is take it out its social and cultural value system that prescribes or proscribes it. Karayanni turns Tito into a mystified abstraction we readers demystify only in images of evanescence and eternity exemplified through Karayanni's title, "the moment of [Tito's] eternal shimmy." Besides, Karayanni's words such as pain, desire, ecstasies, strength, and loss, are made as strange as the object they describe, namely Tito's body. These words are thrown in a vacuum-like system of signification with no referent other than Karayanni's camouflaged sexual desire for Tito's body.

Moreover, Karayanni's desire emanates from the power of his gaze that denies any agency to Tito's body in exactly the same way Orientalist travellers do Oriental dancers' as they traverse their bodies with their gaze. The word "traverse" effectively shows that Karayanni is a traveller exoticising and / or eroticising the body and dance of Tito as sites of "undeciphered mysteries . . . strength, fragility [with] the mystery of creation, [and] unspeakable power." Karayanni's words about Tito continue rather than disrupt the Orientalist quest to know the Oriental subject through the informed gaze of the tourist who has "the permission to narrate," as Said would say. Karayanni's reading of Tito is, to use Karayanni's own critical words, "a practice that suggests an ironic turn in Orientalist conventions" of reading the body of the Oriental dancer (164). I argue that Tito is the Other of Karayanni's discourse of elusiveness since he only serves to illustrate Karayanni's notion of elusiveness in dance without ever being granted the right

to narrate his own experience of being elusive. Karayanni's desire reiterates not only colonial desire but also the postcolonial eroticising paradigms which we encounter in the work of Malek Alloula and Edward Said who equally eroticise the Oriental body from different contexts.

1.6. *Postcolonialism and the Eroticisation of the Oriental Body:*

1.6.1. *Malek Alloula and Edward Said*

Before examining how Alloula and Said describe the Oriental body in the eroticising modes which they contest in colonial discourse, it is useful first to situate their writings in their historical contexts. In his photographic essay *The Colonial Harem*, published in 1986, Alloula analyses the eroticised picture postcards which French photographers took of Algerian prostitutes and sent back to France in the early twentieth century. Alloula's book clarifies that when French photographers could not have access to ordinary Algerian women's veiled bodies, they photographed the unveiled bodies of prostitutes as prototypes of exotic and / or erotic Oriental female sexuality.⁶⁶ Thus, Alloula informs us:

the photograph's fixation on the women's body leads the postcard to paint this body [of the Algerian woman] up, ready it, and eroticise it in order to offer it up to any and all comers from a clientele moved by the unambiguous desire of possession. To track, then, through the colonial representation of Algerian women – the figures of a phantasm - is to attempt a double operation: first, to uncover the nature and the meaning of the colonialist gaze; then, to subvert the stereotype that is so tenaciously attached to the bodies of women. (5)

Alloula argues that colonial fantasy presents the eroticised bodies of photographed prostitutes as prototypes of Algerian women in general. He notes that these photographed women are launched as truth to be consumed in colonial French society.

Alloula's narrative actually traces in detail the eroticising contents of colonial fantasy, shows how the colonial gaze misleads itself about what it sees, and challenges the stereotype that frames it.

Alloula also notes that the colonial project of invading Algeria overlaps with the French photographers' project of eroticising Algerian women as object of consumption in French markets.⁶⁷ Alloula insists that the medium of photography reflects the sterility and impotence of both projects. He maintains that "the first thing that the foreign eye catches about Algerian women is that they are concealed from sight" (7). Alloula goes on to assert that "turned back upon himself, upon his own impotence in the situation, the photographer undergoes an initial experience of disappointment and rejection . . . a triple rejection: of his desire, his art, his place in a milieu that is not his" (11). Here, the photographic representation of women reveals, in Alloula's view, not only the impossibility to represent them but also the illusion to possess them as sexual objects and to own their land as a French property. Instead of being a space of dominance, photography, according to Alloula, is a space of failure of the colonial project of dominance. Alloula confirms that his book is an attempt "to return this immense postcard to its sender" (5) as a way to display the unfulfilled colonial scopical desire. Still, is the eye of the critic immune to the colonial dynamic of seeing which he contests?

While some critics praise Alloula's photographic text, others point out its complicity with the colonial discourse it challenges. Barbara Harlow maintains that Alloula helps us see how the colonial "possession of Arab women came to serve as a surrogate for and means to the political and military conquest of the Arab world" (xiv, xv). Harlow points out the chiasmus between colonising Algeria and eroticising the

body of Algerian women and explains how colonial power stages itself erotically through the bodies of the female native subject. However, Rey Chow problematises Harlow's reading of Alloula's work by arguing that Alloula contributes to the staging of power over the bodies of the photographed women. Chow maintains that the photographed Algerian women in *The Colonial Harem* are subjected not only to the coloniser's gaze but also to Alloula's critical gaze. Chow asserts that

the Algerian women are exhibited as objects not only by the French but also by Alloula's discourse. Even though the male critic sympathises with the natives, his status as invisible writing subject, is essentially *different from*, not identical with, the status of the pictures in front of us. The anti-imperialist charge of Alloula's discourse would have us believe that the French gaze at these women is pornographic while his is not . . . his [i.e. Alloula's] own discourse coincides much more closely with the enemy's than with the women's. What emerges finally is not an identification between the critic and the images of the women, as he wishes, but an identification between the critic and the gaze of the colonialist-photographer *over the images of the women*, which become bearers of multiple exploitations. (39, 40; emphasis in original)

Chow notes that despite claiming himself to be equally subjected to the colonial gaze which eroticises the photographed women, Alloula identifies less with these women than with the colonial gaze since he, like the coloniser, exposes these women's bodies and denies them agency to speak for themselves. Chow adds that Alloula's representation is, like the colonial one, pornographic since it reduces the women's bodies to objects of sight to be exploited photographically.

Chow's response to Alloula's book is instructive in so far as it allows us to see how *The Colonial Harem* not only describes the imperial invention of the harem but also invents its own model of harem that is not very distinct from the coloniser's. Alloula invents its harem by mystifying the veiled Algerian body and representing it as a dissimulated or "concealed" object of desire. This sense of mystification recalls

Karayanni's idea of lack through which he reads the Oriental dancer's body. This act of obscuring and incarcerating the body of the Oriental woman recurs not only in Karayanni's discourse of the Oriental body but also in Edward Said's description of the contemporary Egyptian dancer and actress Tahia Carioca.⁶⁸

Edward Said attended Carioca's dance in Egypt when he was fourteen years old and kept her image in his mind till he met her in 1999, interviewed her, and published two articles about her. Said's description of Carioca is so revealing that I quote it at length

we were sitting about as far from the stage as it was possible to sit, but the shimmering, glistening blue costume she wore simply dazzled the eye, so bright were the sequins and spangles, so controlled was her quite lengthy immobility as she stood there with an entirely composed look about her . . . Her diaphanous veils were laid over the modified bikini that was basic to the outfit without ever becoming its main attraction. The beauty of her dance was its connectedness: the feeling she communicated of a spectacularly lithe and well shaped body undulating through a complex but decorative series of encumbrances made up of gauzes, veils, necklaces, strings of gold and silver chains, which her movement animates deliberately and at times almost theoretically. She would stand, for example, and slowly begin to move her right hip, which would in turn activate her silver leggings, and the beads draped over the right side of her waist. As she did all this, she would look down at the moving parts, so to speak, and fix our gaze on them too, as if we were all watching a separate little drama, rhythmically very controlled, reconfiguring her body so as to highlight her semi-detached right side. Tahia's dance was like an extended arabesque elaborated around her seated colleague. She never jumped or bobbed her breasts, or went in for bumping and grinding. There was a majestic deliberateness to the whole thing that maintained itself right through even the quicker passages. Each of us knew that we were experiencing an immensely exciting - because endlessly deferred - erotic experience, the likes of which we could never hope to match in real life. And that was precisely the point; this was sexuality as a public event, brilliantly planned and executed, yet totally unconsummated and unrealizable. [Tahia's] grace and elegance suggested something altogether . . . monumental. The paradox was that she was immediately sensual and yet so remote, unapproachable, unobtainable. ("Homage to Belly Dancer" 7)

In this strangely vivid memory of Carioca's dance performance, Said focuses on the seductiveness of her body and sexuality. He describes her "costume," "diaphanous veil," and "modified bikini" as elements which not only constitute the erotic display of her "well shaped undulating body" and the "beauty of her dance," but also "dazzle[d] the eye." The titillating effect of Carioca's dance intensifies through her "undulating" and / or serpentine movement" that makes of her, in Said's view, an "unobtainable" object of desire we "could never match in real life." Here Said fetishises Carioca's body since its sensuality in dance is idealised and made strange by virtue of the fact that it is remote, unapproachable, and unobtainable.

Although the image of Carioca's unobtainable eroticism in dance serves to dismantle the Orientalist notion that women in the East are sexually available, it still recalls the Orientalist discourse of secrecy Said ardently contests in *Orientalism*.⁶⁹ By reading Carioca's body through images of secrecy, amazement, and unreadability, Said reiterates the exoticising discourse through which Western travellers invent 'Oriental' subjects and their sexuality.⁷⁰ Carioca's eroticism, as Said defines it, is not only romanticised but also made arcane and "remote" enough to appeal to fantasies of male sexual conquest. I purposely use the word 'conquest' since it aptly describes the point where the sexual and the military interlock. Even though there is no military presence in the above context of Carioca's dance, Said's male impulse to conquer the veiled dancing body of Carioca recalls the Western sexual and military desire to conquer "exotic" and luring Oriental bodies, lands, and natural resources respectively.⁷¹ It also recalls Alloula's view about the overlap of the project of colonising a foreign land and erotising the women belonging to that land. Said is obviously not a coloniser but his discourse

fetishises the Oriental body of Carioca in the same way Western writers and / or travellers fetishise the bodies of Oriental dancers as they turn them into objects of visual desire entirely bound to their “to-be-looked-at-ness”(Mulvey 143). Carioca in Said’s eroticising narrative unfolds as an object of sexual desire reachable only through the bikini, the diaphanous veil, and the costume which are so orientalised that they “dazzle[d] the eye” and become, within the economy of fetishism, “commemorative traces of an absent object [of desire]” (Soloman-Godeau, 75). Said’s adoration of these garments conflates with his adoration for Carioca whose sense of untranslatability turns her into a valued eroticised commodity which the postcolonial desire produces and reproduces as Alloula and Karayanni’s descriptions demonstrate.

Despite being situated in different spatial and temporal locations, Alloula, Said, and Karayanni’s discourses about Oriental bodies illustrate the ways in which postcolonial discourse appropriates the eroticising modes which it challenges in colonial stereotypes. Emily Apter actually notices that postcolonial discourse “continues to seem profoundly reliant on late Orientalist figurations of eroticised tourist attractions” that predominate Western literary representations of the East (168). While examining colonial eroticisation of Oriental dance in the nineteenth century French realist fiction, Apter argues that the image of the serpentine which French authors use to describe Oriental dance also recurs in postcolonial theory that seeks to unmask the colonial gaze. Apter notices that “there is something about the ways in which serpentine is recapitulated in the discourses of postcolonial theory and makes one wonder whether . . . colonial desire haunts even the most rigorous, well intentioned efforts to unmask the colonial gaze”(176). Despite alluding to Alloula’s photographic essay, Apter’s statement applies

equally to Karayanni's description of Tito's "intense . . . invigorating shimmy" and to Said's account of Carioca's "well shaped body undulating through a complex but decorative series of encumbrances" ("Homage" 7). Both these descriptions reiterate "Orientalist figurations of eroticised tourist attractions" (Apter 169) that silence the material tensions through which Middle Eastern dance unfolds mostly as a form of labour.

The Dutch sociologist and anthropologist Karin van Nieuwkerk elaborates how Oriental female dance is a form of labour that is inextricably tied to the social and cultural discourses which construct feminine and masculine identities in the Orient. In the field work she conducted in Egypt in the late twentieth century, Nieuwkerk explains that Egyptian female dancers and singers consider their activity as "a trade like any other' [since] it fulfills a function in society and brings in money" (1). While explaining the difference between popular and cabaret forms of belly dance in Egypt, Nieuwkerk points out the types of tensions and risk associated with dance in both contexts. She maintains that the female dancer's body is generally subjected to various cultural and religious norms within which it is defined. Nieuwkerk writes that in Egypt

the female body is shameful because it is by definition eroticising and inciting, whereas the male body has several dimensions and is not by nature seductive. The male body, although sexual in the presence of a female body, has other dimensions - for instance in the economic or the political field. These constructions of gender and the body explain why the body of male performers is a 'productive body whereas that of female performers is by definition 'a sexual body' Female entertainers' main instrument for making money consists of their sexual bodies and voices. Female entertainers thus use the female power to seduce as well as secure a living. They profit from the cultural construction of the female body as seductive but pay for it in terms of status and respect. (154)

Nieuwkerk frames her description of gender construction within the Egyptian society which is predominantly heterosexual and bound to Islamic religious and cultural norms and rules of conduct. These norms define the female body and voice as *'awra*. In religious terms, *'awra* refers to the female body that has to be kept hidden from view. It also refers to the female voice that has to be low in public.⁷² By contrast, the male body and voice are constructed in terms of virility and brevity, which are positive attributes and require that they should be displayed. In this sense, female dance is contested in Islamic cultures because it displays the *'awra* of the woman and consequently threatens the moral order of society.

However, Nieuwkerk notices that female dancers in Egypt risk their honour and sense of respect as they display their seductiveness in dance in order to earn a living.⁷³ Although the majority of female dancers in Egypt are not prostitutes or courtesans, their use of their bodies during performance for economic purposes recalls Kuchuck who eroticizes her dance for Flaubert so as to “earn a living” and consequently turn her dance into “an economic exchange,” as Karayanni argues. Yet, while Karayanni limits this exchange to the colonial context, Nieuwkerk relates it to various stages of the contemporary history of Egypt. Her study focuses more on demonstrating how Oriental dance is a trade or labour in which female dancers invest their bodies for the production of profit most particularly for nightclub owners in the case of cabaret dance. Nieuwkerk notes that “nightclub performers are greedy for tips rather than for sex” (155). Yet, these dancers also expose their bodies in dance to support their families, raise their children, and afford the basic necessities of living, such as accommodation and food.

Nieuwkerk's analysis shows that the Oriental dancer's body is erotically commodified not only in the colonial context but also in the postcolonial cultural context in which dancers' bodies are faced with social and cultural realities to which Said and Karayanni attribute little or no importance. When Nieuwkerk records that in 1952, 1977, and 1986 people in Egypt burned dance nightclubs for moral and economic reasons, she actually invites us to infer that dance is too contentious to be reduced to the postcolonial mystifying categories of elusiveness and lack. Thus, Nieuwkerk's analysis raises the following questions: Why do postcolonial studies eroticise the Oriental body in a way that makes it alluring but still hidden, evasive, or immaterial? Does not this paradigm of abstraction make this body erotically strange? If yes, then in what way is it useful to present the Oriental dancing body through a process of estrangement postcolonial critics have already disputed in Orientalist discourse? These questions help us reflect the ways in which the body and sexuality of the Oriental dancer emerge as fetishised commodities "intended for consumption" in the worldly market of postcolonial studies.⁷⁴

1.7. The Oriental Body, Dance, and Postcolonial Fetishism

Alloula, Said, and Karayanni display the Oriental body as a commodity that is fetishised and mystified through the postcolonial categories of lack, elusiveness, and unreachability which conceal the material conditions regulating the body's eroticism and sexuality. I draw the notion of commodity fetishism from the Marxist theory which postulates that commodities have value neither in themselves nor in the human labour that produces them but rather through their exchange value in the market.⁷⁵ While Chow insists on Alloula's complicity in the colonial project of eroticising the body of the Algerian woman, she indeed prompts us to probe the ways in which Alloula also

fetishises this body as he focuses on its concealment behind the veil. Alloula does not situate the veil in its historical and cultural context as a form of clothing in Arab culture. Instead, he defines it as a space of lack through which he constructs his discourse of anti-colonial resistance and paves the way for his fame as a postcolonial critic. Yet, this image of lack and secrecy, which underlies Karayanni's analysis of Middle Eastern dance years later, mystifies the Algerian female body and turns it into a fetishised commodity constantly desired by readers and /or customers. Alloula not only reinvigorates eroticising colonial discourses, as Chow and Apter argue, but also promotes the veiled Oriental female body as a valuable commodity that guarantees profit for his own postcolonial work in which these women remain inanimate. Alloula thus confines the female Algerian body to the very "mercantilistic character" (17) he contests about colonial photography. His book not only keeps the photographs but also adds to them a narrative identifying the body as an ambiguous and impossible object of desire that constantly stimulates our desire to purchase the book and consume the photographs fantastically, just like French colonials did in the early twentieth century. For if French photographers, as Alloula correctly notes, eroticise the female Algerian body in order to offer it up to any and all comers from a clientele moved by the unambiguous desire of possession, then Alloula intensifies his clientele's desire by the fetishised image of the veiled body he offers without directly offering it. While Alloula's narrative describes the unfulfilled colonial desire, it also incarcerates the Algerian woman's own desire for good.

This postcolonial fetishisation of the Oriental body through the discourse of resistance recurs in Said and Karayanni's accounts of Carioca and Tito. Unlike Alloula

who evokes dance in his work without focusing on it, Said and Karayanni focus their gazes on the Oriental dancing body which they promote as fetishised commodity through the terms of evasiveness and unattainability. I argue that these terms constitute, in Fredric Jameson's words, an "immense dilation of the sphere" of the Oriental body, a "quantum leap" in its aestheticisation, and a prodigious exhilaration that arouses the postcolonial reader's enthusiasm about it at the global level (*Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* ix-x). The extraordinary and unusual excitement that Jameson notices about postmodern culture unfolds exactly in Karayanni and Said's postcolonial eroticisation of Oriental male and female dancers whose bodies turn into images the reader consumes avidly with no sense of the material conditions that shape the bodies of these dancers.⁷⁶ This desire for consumption postcolonial discourse generates is profitable for Karayanni and Said's magnitude as critics whose work grows and expands as it presents the Oriental body for its own "economic exchange" (*Colonial Fear and Desire* 54). Said and Karayanni's works undoubtedly assume an ethical imperative since they contest the Western discourse of otherness and challenge it through dance respectively. Yet, Said and Karayanni's postcolonial descriptions of the Oriental dancing body illustrate what Graham Huggan calls "the commodifying processes through which its [postcolonialism's] critical discourses, like its literary products are disseminated and consumed . . . [postcolonial] reification of people and places into exchangeable aesthetic objects [makes] postcolonial books and their authors acquire an almost talismanic status" (*The Postcolonial Exotic* 18). Although Huggan does not indicate how postcolonial critics gain their worldly fame through eroticising the Oriental dancer's body, his analysis still makes us ponder the ways in which Oriental

dance is reified for the postcolonial market. Huggan's critique of postcolonial commodification undoubtedly provides what Crystal Bartolovitch calls "a counter-force within postcolonial theory" (9). This counter-force allows us to reflect on the ways in which Said and Karayanni promote the Oriental dancing body as eroticised exotic that has value solely through the surplus value it guarantees for the postcolonial worldly market. Indeed, when Karayanni maintains that the Oriental dancing body "is [a] signifier with no referent" (*Colonial Fear and Desire* 19), he ultimately denies this body any value away from postcolonial discourse that weaves this body through metaphors of elusiveness and evasiveness. In this sense, Marxist interventions in postcolonial studies invite us to probe a "new orientation in postcolonial studies . . . capable of challenging the idealist and dematerialising tendencies that have heretofore dominated the field as a whole" (Bartolovitch 34), and more particularly the ways in which the Oriental body is addressed in this field.

The postcolonial aestheticisation of the Oriental dancer's body, as I have been describing it, has not empowered this body but rather disempowered it because it makes it vanish from our view as a material body regulated by gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, age, and other markers. By vanishing, I do not mean Lepecki's concept of the vanishing of the meaning of the body in dance. Rather, I mean the state of volatilisation which Fredric Jameson notices about the body as it loses its control in postmodern fragmented hyper-reality. Jameson notices that in postmodern spaces, "the body is . . . volatilised in the experience of images to the point of being outside itself or losing itself" (in Stephanson 25). The body accordingly loses its sense of stability in space and time which have in turn become fragmented and non-linear in postmodern cultural

representations where affect wanes and subjectivity fades away as a reliable source of meaning. I would argue that Jameson's view of the body resonates with the ways in which Lepecki, Foster, and other contemporary theorists of dance reflect on the vanishing body in dance. I make this inference because these dance theorists insist that dance is not only a space of entertainment and sport but also an epistemology, that is a mode of knowledge formation in which reflection about the body shapes itself in movement.

Nevertheless, this evocation of the postmodern sense of the body in my analysis of the postcolonial reading of Oriental dance does not mean that I am conflating Western philosophies of dance with the cultural practice of Oriental dance. Instead, I am explicating how the vanishing of the Oriental body and the loss of its materiality in postcolonial discourse of elusiveness recalls the volatilisation of the Western subject's body in postmodern hyper-reality as Jameson describes it and as I think it resonates in contemporary Western dance theory. Still, it is worth mentioning that Jameson and the postcolonial critics I address in this chapter express different attitudes towards the body. While Jameson contests the vanishing of the body in postmodern commodified culture, Alloula, Said, and Karayanni celebrate the idea the body's lack, vanishing, and unobtainability as paradigms of resistance to the eroticising gaze of Western and local viewers of dance and the dancer's body. Jameson criticises the ways in which the body vanishes because it is disconnected from affect and estranged from itself in fragmented spatial and temporal frames of reference. By contrast, Said and Karayanni more particularly employ the postmodern paradigms of deferral and the vanishing of meaning to show how Oriental dancers evade and unsettle Orientalist and patriarchal structures of

power that map the dancer's body as an object of desire. My argument is that the Oriental dancer's body dissolves in postcolonial discourses of inaccessibility and consequently becomes as volatile as Western bodies which Jameson describes in his critique of the hyper-real representations of postmodern culture.

Yet, neither Marxist theories of commodities nor a Marxist critique of postcolonial studies opens any possibilities for us to imagine the ways through which the body of the Oriental dancer can resist the consumerism in which it vanishes as a body and unfolds as a commodity. Marx and Jameson's critiques do not help us imagine how the Oriental body can emerge as erotically empowered from within postcolonial mystification. Marxist critics of postcolonial studies undoubtedly sharpen our critical awareness of the postcolonial marketing of the exotic and / or erotic Oriental body, but they hardly address the ways in which the erotic can be a space of empowerment that may resist this marketability from within. The issue of eroticism, which feminist theorists evoke in their critique of commodity fetishism, is silenced both in Marx's description of the production of the labouring body and among Marxist critics of postcolonial theory.⁷⁷ The British Marxist cultural geographer David Harvey reminds us that "there is much that is lacking in Marx's schema, including the sexual and erotic, the gendering, and racial identification of bodies" (*Spaces of Hope* 116). The category of the erotic lacks also in the writings of major Marxist critics of postcolonial theory such as Aijaz Ahmad, Neil Lazarus, and Crystal Bartolovitch. Graham Huggan points out the "exoticist spectacle, commodity fetishism, and the aesthetics of decontextualisation [that] are all at work in . . . the production, transmission, and consumption of postcolonial literary / cultural texts" (20). Yet he excludes the erotic and dance as sites

through which postcolonial texts consume the marginal they represent. Even when Marxist critics notice that postcolonial studies re-exoticise the marginal by turning him into a spectacle in which “marginality is deprived of its subversive implications” (Bartolovitch 24), they only contest postcolonial fetishisation of the marginal but do not imagine the ways in which this marginal produces political empowerment through what Audre Lorde calls “the uses of the erotic.” Therefore, rather than describing how the category of the erotic is undertheorised in postcolonial and Marxist theories of the body, I now turn to explore the ways in which Lorde’s theory of the erotic offers a productive space through which to re-choreograph postcolonial theories of the body in Oriental dance.

1.8. *Audre Lorde: The Erotic, the Pornographic, and Dance*

1.8.1. *Audre Lorde: The Erotic and the Pornographic*

Audre Lorde defines the erotic as an inner force women explore through their sexuality, creative and daily endeavours so as to reclaim their bodies from a patriarchal system of power and control. Lorde argues:

The erotic is a source within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed and unrecognised feelings. In order to perpetuate itself, every oppression must corrupt or distort those various sources of power with the culture of the oppressed that can provide energy for change. For women this has meant a suppression of the erotic as a considered source of power and information within our lives. (53)

Rather than implying a romanticised notion of a sexual sensation “where there is no idea but erotic feeling”(Griffin 254), Lorde’s conception of the erotic is grounded in her experience as a black Lesbian feminist who struggles against racist, patriarchal heteronormative oppression and exclusivist mainstream feminist discourse.⁷⁸ Being historically

situated in American Black feminist theory and criticism during the 1970s and 1980s, Lorde's conception of the erotic is a mode of reacting to the multi-faceted cultural politics that shapes and regulates female black lesbian bodies through the discourses of race, class, gender, sexuality and colonialism. As such, the erotic is a paradigm of resistance that emerges from "the culture of the oppressed" rather than an abstract reflection that expresses a metaphorical narrative of the female writing of the body.⁷⁹ Lorde's conception of the erotic is empowering since it "provides energy for change" and initiates a new female awareness about women's longings, feelings, emotions, and desires that are suppressed and unrecognised in and / or by themselves. Being a site of contest rather than consent, the erotic for Lorde aims to destabilise the linear narrative of hetero-normative integrity, racial purity, and patriarchal dominance. In this sense, the erotic is not related to lust or genital activity since such categorization in Lorde's view misrepresents the erotic and reduces it to its opposite, namely, the pornographic.

Lorde notices that the dominant ideology of patriarchy obfuscates the erotic potential of women by confusing it with the pornographic. She notes that

the erotic has always been misnamed by men and used against women. It has been made into the confused, the trivial, the psychotic, the plasticized . . . for this reason we have always turned away from the exploration and consideration of the erotic as a source of power and information confusing it with its opposite the pornographic. But pornography is the direct denial of the power of the erotic for it represents the suppression of free feelings. (54)

Lorde draws a sharp contrast between the erotic as a site of expressiveness and creativity and the pornographic as a mode of trivialising and banalising this expressiveness by reducing it to the role of sexual display. Unlike the erotic through which women articulate their feelings that are otherwise left unexpressed, the pornographic denies any

value or meaning of female bodies away from their sexualised image that titillates male viewers. “The pornographic culture,” as Arthur J. Mielke calls it, places special emphasis on such specific zones as genitalia, buttocks, and breasts so as to make the female body sexually suggestive and hence continuously consumable, expendable, and submissive to the role of stimulating sexual arousal. In this regard, the pornographic is used “against women” since it suppresses their “free feelings” and emotions, commodifies them, and prevents them from being in control over the use of their bodies.

Lorde’s critique recalls mainstream feminist anti-pornography theory which denounces the commodification of women in sex but still brushes off the categories of race and sexuality that are crucial to Lorde’s experience as a critic and a poet. Lorde’s theory of the pornographic meshes well with the reaction of anti-pornography critics, such as Drucilla Cornell, Andrea Dworkin, and Diana E. H. Russell.⁸⁰ Yet while these critics have pointed out the debilitating aspects of pornography for women, they still do not emphasise the categories of race, class, and sexuality which are central to Lorde’s experience as a Caribbean American working class black lesbian mother. Lorde’s distinction between the erotic as “source of power” and the pornographic as “denial of power” draws primarily from her political activism in which she contests the sexist and racist prevailing stereotypes that continues to haunt the female black diasporic consciousness since the times of slavery.⁸¹ Indeed, Lorde’s critical consciousness about the erotic typifies the intersectionality that defines the complex subject positioning of black lesbian feminists.⁸²

Departing from her conviction that narrowing down identity to one category is an act of “dishonesty by silence” (*My Words Will* 262-263), Lorde asserts that “it has been

necessary and very generative for me to deal with all aspects of who I am . . . I am not one piece of myself. I cannot be simply a black person and not a woman too, nor can I be a woman without being a lesbian . . .” (“My Words Will” 262-263). Indeed, Lorde’s queer consciousness, which she articulates in poetry, widens the scope of her resistance as she questions not only the supremacy of white middle class hetero-normativity, but also the ways hetero-normative discourse shapes itself among black heterosexual communities already denouncing racial oppression. The erotic for Lorde overlaps with the political since it questions the cultural and sexual politics which oppress her as Caribbean American and lesbian respectively. Lorde’s erotic stems from her awareness of the norms and codes which construct our sexuality and organise it according to pre-established cultural and social norms. The erotic is a force that embodies the expressiveness of sexual urges deemed silenced in women, incites the articulations of the social and political regimes of truth that silence these urges, and opens the possibility of change that this expression generates. Women’s expressive voice, according to Lorde, should allow them to come to terms with their insecurities in relation to their bodies and realise the ways in which they are alienated from them in patriarchal social and sexual value system. Lorde’s erotic is political also because it empowers women by allowing them to develop a new consciousness of their bodies as productive, creative, prolific rather than merely static, receptive, and accessible. Lorde’s erotic is situated in what Linda Alcoff calls a “simultaneity of oppressions” (410) in which Lorde’s resistance against gender intertwines with the elements of class, race, sexuality and other markers attributing historical materiality to her body. Being located in this complex subject positioning, the erotic as political in Lorde’s theory becomes a “methodology of the

oppressed” (Sandoval 1) in which women come to terms with the power that trivialises their sexual desire without undermining or denying their subjection to this power. Therefore, the lesbian erotic urge that is devalued in women should be valued through women’s consciousness of it as valued and cherished in them. Lorde argues: “Women have not been taught to respect the erotic urge, the place that is uniquely female. So, just as some Black people tend to reject Blackness because it has been termed inferior, we, as women, tend to reject our capacity for feeling, our ability to love, to touch the erotic, because it has been devalued” (“My Words Will” 265). In this way, the erotic assumes its political empowerment through which women see their bodies, their capacity to feel and desire beyond patriarchal classificatory power of desire.

The political is also the erotic for Lorde since her political activism in awakening women’s awareness about the empowering force of their erotic overlaps with her desire for women. The sexual connection or attraction Lorde feels for women is deeply intertwined with her feeling of connection to them as community facing the same oppression and challenges. This political as erotic translates itself in Lorde’s description of the sense of joy that she knows she is “capable of feeling” (57) both in sex and in the sense of empowerment sexual experiences produce as they help her transgress the hetero-normative paradigms set for women’s sexuality. In this case, Lorde’s notion of the erotic as power deconstructs the neo-liberal binary of the private and the public; and the political and the personal. Lorde asserts:

I write for myself . . . when I say myself, I do not mean only the Audre who inhabits my body, but all of those feisty, incorrigible black women who insist on standing up and saying ‘I am and you cannot wipe me out, no matter how irritating I am, how much you fear what I might represent.’ I write for these women for whom a voice has not yet existed, or whose vices have been

silenced. I don't have the only voice or all of their voices, but they are a part of my voice, and I am part of theirs. (988)

Lorde's erotic fuses the personal with the political since the quotidian struggle of her body overlaps with her resistance against oppression for which she calls. Lorde's private life, as a lesbian mother for example, is imbued with her public concerns as an intellectual, a poet, and a political activist engaging the issue of social, racial and sexual injustice that she and other black women suffer. These sides of Audre overlap with one another to reject the binary opposition between the 'individual,' the 'collective,' and the 'personal' and 'the political,' as we notice more particularly through the expressive space of dance.

1.8.2. Audre Lorde: Dance and the Erotic

In an interview with Jennifer Abod, Lorde explains that her essay "The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" is a paper she presented publically after having been inspired by her own dance. Lorde says:

'The Uses of the Erotic' . . . came about . . . [as a paper] I was supposed to present one Sunday - we'd meet every other Sunday- and I was supposed to present, and I was not prepared this Sunday because that night, Saturday night, I had been out dancing. And I had danced my lungs loose. . . And the attitude of course, was-from the group- not only, well you're not really prepared, but: how could you have chosen dancing rather than doing your presentation? And that's how I really started looking at some of those things in "The Uses of the Erotic." It came out of that, and it does describe in some very very central ways - deep sources of strength for me. (160-161).

Lorde describes that although she was unprepared for her presentation then, the experience of dancing informed her reflection about the erotic since dance allows her to enact her unexpressed energies and feelings. Dance thus acquires and embodies the political force of the erotic as it makes the invisible, unspeakable, and unrecognised

feelings visible and articulated. By virtue of her movements in dance, Lorde's own desires and awareness of those desires surge from within her subjection to the norms that historically inscribe her body. Dance also offers a moment of expressiveness in which Lorde becomes conscious of the ways women can come to terms with their feelings and desires otherwise kept obfuscated to them.

This inspiring force that emerges in Lorde's dance recalls the experience of female dancers who see the liberating power of their dance as they practice it. The American belly dancer and dance critic Andrea Deagon describes this experience in an interview with me when she tells me how the dance "has played a part in shaping my emotional and psychic world . . . there is an intensity at the centre of your body that you have when you dance for a long time . . . there is that core strength and core expression in your body that is a physical reality . . . This part of my body is beyond all these theoretical ideas and that is where it lives"(17 in Belghiti). Despite romanticising the state of emotional ecstasy she feels in "the centre of her body as she dances" Deagon's statement nevertheless articulates the strength that her body acquires through the expressive medium of dance. Deagon's words "core strength and core expression " indeed describe the female energy of the erotic through which the female body comes to terms with itself from within the forces that regulate it. Although Deagon's description of dance is not framed in the racial and lesbian experience of Lorde, she still shares with Lorde the awareness of what Jacqui Alexander, the Barbadian lesbian critic and poet, calls "the transformative power of the erotic, a meeting place where our deep yearnings for different kinds of freedom can take shape" (415). The personal experience of dance, which inspires Lorde's reflection about the erotic and allows Deagon to come to the core

strength of her body and emotions, is also the political that allows the female body to assert its potential and resist social and cultural oppressive norms to which it is subjected.

Lorde indeed explains that the erotic manifests itself in dance in which women are agents rather than merely objects of desire. Lorde clarifies:

the very word *erotic* comes from the Greek word *eros*, the personification of love in all its aspects - born of Chaos, and personifying creative power and harmony. When I speak of the erotic I speak of it as an assertion of the life force of women; of that creative energy empowered, the knowledge and the use of which we are now reclaiming in our language, our history, our dancing, our loving, our work, our lives. (55 italics in original)

Lorde refers to the Greek origin of the word “erotic” and clarifies that she understands it according to her woman-centred perspective. Lorde celebrates the erotic as a “life force” that helps her create a form of knowledge of her body’s desire not through male fantasy but rather through dynamic activities which include dancing. Lorde incorporates dance as a space of the erotic because it embodies the “creative power and harmony” between the female subject and her body and among the community of women. Still, isn’t this homogenising conception and redemptive quality of the erotic romanticising in itself?

Critics have pointed out that Lorde’s conception of the “erotic” embodies her political and / or sexual activism but also exoticises the Caribbean female body and recalls colonialist eroticised stereotypes of Caribbean space and body. Yakini B. Kemp argues that the erotic for Lorde “actually functions as a liberating force. By reconciling Lorde’s use of the erotic and its employment in identity construction, her continued reclamation and placement as African Caribbean writer can be given expanded meaning”(69). Kemp notices that Lorde’s erotic is “a liberating force” in which Lorde

brings different strands of identities together to form a complex whole whereby no strand is essentialised in a totalising discourse of identity. The erotic accordingly assumes what Gayatri Spivak calls “a deconstructive nomeopathy” or a deconstruction of “identity by identities,” which is a strategy that does not refuse identity but problematises it as a stable home (*Outside the Teaching Machine* 130). The erotic in this sense emerges as a paradigm of resistance through which Lorde dismantles the myth of originality in the discourses of identity and instead constructs an unfinished narrative of identity. This unfinished narrative is a narrative in which her identity as a lover is defined only through her identity as a poet whose work acquires meaning only through her sexual identity as a lesbian who, in turn, is distinguished by her racial identity as black which closely weaves with her class identity as a working class subject who is equally a mother. For this reason, the driving force of the erotic for Lorde is situated in the layers of these discourses in which identity is unsettled as origin and ceaselessly begins again and again.

Yet, Lorde’s conception of the erotic also romanticises the body of the woman and metaphorises it as land and / or landscape. Kemp notices this metaphorisation of the female body in Lorde’s poetry and fictional autobiography *Zami*, in which she describes her erotic encounters with the women she loves. This encounter is described in *Zami*:

I took a ripe avocado and rolled it between my hands until the skin became a green case for the soft mashed fruit inside, hard pit at the core. I rose from kissing your mouth to nibble a hole in the fruit skin near the navel stalk, squeezed the pale yellow-green fruit juice in thin ritual lines back and forth over and around your coconut-brown belly. The oil and sweat from our bodies kept the fruit liquid, and I massaged it over your thighs and between your breasts until your brownness shone like a light through a veil of the palest green avocado, a mantle of goddess pear that I slowly licked from your skin. (251)

In this passage Lorde describes her love experience with Kitty whom she names Afrekete in memory of Africa. This highly eroticised moment, which recalls erotica literature, is replete with spiritual overtones in which the two women unfold as goddesses in the erotic act of love making.⁸³ Here the erotic is not as worldly as Lorde describes it through her multi-faceted struggle. Rather, it is an otherworldly space in which the two lovers are highly romanticised.

Lorde romanticises the body of her female lovers as it describes them through the image of the land and / or landscape of the Caribbean which she imagines from her diasporic position in America. Kemp notices that the imagery in the above passage “intends to evoke the sensuousness of the Caribbean as physical entity, as body, as an island” (27). This image of the Caribbean and / or Africa as body recurs in Lorde’s writings in which the erotic act of sex is a trope of return to a lost home. While describing her sex experience with one of her black lovers, Ginger, Lorde notes that “Loving Ginger that night was like coming home to a joy that I knew I was meant for” (*Zami* 139). This allegorisation requires that we be cautious against the commemorative reading of Lorde’s conception of the erotic and instead point out the totalising discourse of nostalgia that is deeply embedded in it. Here, Lorde’s critics allow us to probe the ways in which Lorde’s allegorisation of the female body as land reiterates the discourse of nationalism in which the female body is an image of the land and / or nation. In this sense, Lorde’s erotic unfolds as disempowering rather than empowering space of reflection and subject construction. For although Lorde writes that “the master’s tools cannot destroy the master’s house,” referring to Western epistemologies or discourses of resistance which cannot be effective modes of resisting discourses of power, she actually

employs tools of the master narrative of nationalism as she metaphorises the female body as land.

Nevertheless, Lorde's erotic is still a useful category through which we can re-choreograph the postcolonial critique of identity politics less through the analysis of the colonial discourse about the colonial body than through the empowerment and desire of this body.⁸⁴ The practice of dance, which instigates Lorde's reflection about the erotic, allows us to probe the ways in which the dancing colonial body articulates its erotic empowerment from within the cultural norms which regulate either in the Caribbean, in diaspora, or in the Middle East. Brenda Carr points out that Lorde's theory of the erotic can be a useful space of resistance not only in black feminist studies but also in various cultural contexts. Carr notes that "reading Lorde . . . facilitates a dance of readings . . . in which multiple communities of response may be ethnically accounted for" (11). Although Carr uses dance only as a metaphor rather than a bodily site of the erotic, she allows us to ponder the ways in which Oriental dance "may be accounted for" not through the Western traveller's gaze and desire, as Karayanni suggests, but through the dancer's own transformative force of the erotic. In order to do that, I find it useful to focus on Jocelyn Saab's film *Dunia Kiss Me Not in the Eyes*.

1.9. *Dunia: Oriental Dance and the Transformative Power of the Erotic*

Dunia: Kiss Me Not on the Eyes is a film by the Lebanese director Jocelyne Saab who started her career as a war documentary director in the 1970s.⁸⁵ Saab decided in the mid nineties to make the film *Dunia* when Egyptian authorities refused to show her documentary on genital mutilation in Egypt.⁸⁶ *Dunia*, which was released in 2005, tells the story of a young woman from Cairo whose passion for dance invigorates the erotic

potential of her body long crippled by the genital mutilation she underwent in childhood. While studying Arabic literature at Cairo University, Dunia the title character, decides to represent Egypt in an international dance competition so as to continue the dance legacy of her late mother. Yet, in her audition, Dunia recites Arabic poetry without moving her body. She rather sits motionless on the floor and hides her body as a way to contest her repressive culture that allows the mutilation of women in Egypt both physically and symbolically. Despite that, the judges select her for the competition, which ignites her passion for dance and academic interest in fourth century Arabic erotic poetry. Dunia resists traditional norms of love by leaving her husband Mamdouh who becomes overtly possessive and repressive soon after they get married. Dunia discovers her sensual desire willingly with her thesis supervisor Professor Bashir who, in turn, resists the conservative intellectuals' decision to censor the book *One Thousand and One Nights* for its sexual content. Bashir loses his sight as a result of a public assault by his opponents, an event which recalls the assault against Naguib Mahfouz in 1994. Yet, his will to oppose the censorship of the book prevails despite his subjection to violence. The film finishes with the ecstatic sexual encounter between Dunia and Bashir and a dance performance by Dunia alone in the dream-like space of a roof over the city of Cairo.

Saab's film, which is classified as "erotic drama," presents dance as a site of erotic source of power in Lorde's sense of the term.⁸⁷ Despite being affiliated with a historical experience and a genealogy that is different from Lorde's, Dunia's dance nevertheless implements Lorde's theory of the erotic since it is "firmly rooted in . . . [the] unexpressed and unrecognised feelings" that patriarchal culture seeks to mutilate in

Dunia's body through the practice of circumcision.⁸⁸ It is useful to point out that Dunia's stillness or refusal to move during her dance audition choreographs her protest against the cultural norms that draw frontiers for female bodily movements in Egypt. When a jury member asks Dunia why she does not move her body, she rhetorically replies "how can a woman move her body in a culture that deprives her from her femininity?" Read in Lorde's terms, Dunia's reply is critically charged since it emanates from the erotic life force deeply embedded and ceaselessly pulsating in her. This life force actually enables her to remind the jury, and metonymically, her Egyptian culture, of her consciousness of the pain that is inflicted on her body and that empowers her through the space of dance.

In order to illuminate the disruptive power of the erotic in Dunia's dance, it is useful to situate her sexuality within the Islamic religious and philosophical contexts which produce the cultural and social norms that regulate Dunia's body. While examining the sexual dynamic of modern Islamic cultures, the Moroccan sociologist Fatima Mernissi points out that Islam defines sex not as a thing in itself but through its use in society and the extent to which this use preserves or threatens the social order. Mernissi indicates:

It is the use made of the instincts, not the instincts themselves [as it is the case in Christian religion], which is beneficial or harmful to the social order. Therefore, in the Muslim order it is not necessary for the individual to eradicate his instincts or to control them for the sake of control itself, but he must use them according to the demands of the religious law. (1)

Mernissi refers to the sociological and theological Islamic philosophies of sexuality in order to explain that sexuality is defined and regulated in Islamic religion in terms of the "demands of the religious law." Sex is accordingly constructive and legitimate only when it operates within the law of heterosexual marriage that preserves social order,

otherwise it is described as *Zina*, or illicit expression of pleasure that transgresses the religious law and threatens social order. For this reason, sexuality in Islam should be controlled “not for the sake of control itself” but for the sake of the preservation of the social order.

Moreover, Mernissi notes that Islam relates the threat to social order to female sexuality which needs to be controlled because it is chaotic. While examining the male-female sexual dynamic in modern Islamic culture, Mernissi distinguishes between the explicit theory of sex and the implicit one. The explicit theory, she argues, is

the prevailing contemporary belief according to which men are aggressive in their interaction with women, and women are passive. The implicit theory is epitomised in Imam Ghazali’s classical work. He sees civilisation as struggling to contain the women’s destructive, all absorbing power. Women must be controlled to prevent men from being distracted from their social and religious duties. Society can only survive by creating the institutions which foster male dominance through sexual segregation. (4)

Mernissi notices that while the Islamic explicit theory of sex promotes the binary opposition between active male sexuality and passive or receptive female sexuality, the implicit theory suggests that female sexuality is threatening and must be controlled to preserve the well being of society. According to the implicit theory of sexuality, female sexuality is *fitna* which means in Arabic chaos or disorder. Mernissi notes that “what is feared [in women’s sexuality] is *fitna*, i.e., disorder, chaos (Fitna also means a beautiful woman) . . . the connotation of a femme fatale attraction which makes men lose their self control” (4).⁸⁹ In this sense, the explicit theory defines the man as the hunter and the woman as the victim who is aroused only in response to male’s desire. By contrast, the implicit theory suggests that women are the hunters to be feared and controlled, even through such practices as genital mutilation as Saab’s film shows.

Although Saab's film *Dunia* dramatises the ways in which genital mutilation is used to reduce the threat of female sexuality of little girls in Egypt, it also focuses on dance as a space of this threat by virtue of its empowerment of the erotic. For instance, the film shows that Yasmin, the little girl who is genitally mutilated by her grandmother Omo-Antar, loves dancing. Being ten years old, an age close to puberty, Yassmin is developing her erotic expressiveness in dance and consequently threatening the social order which her grandmother seeks to preserve, in a family circle in which Yassmin's parents enjoy their sensuality together day and night. In this erotically charged space, Omo-Antar feels threatened and decides to cut "Half of it [i.e. the girl's clitoris]," as she says to Yassmin's mother, so as to symbolically cut and mutilate any sense of *fitna* or chaos Yassmin may later bring to the "social order". Indeed, the old woman explains to the girl that she does not want to harm her but rather make of her "a good woman and a docile wife when [you] grow up." This moment in the film actually contests the old implicit theory that female sexuality is active and threatening and should be symbolically "cut" for the sake of maintaining order and resisting chaos or *fitna*.⁹⁰

Dance therefore unfolds as a component of the *fitna* or erotic disorder that transgresses the cultural norms from within subjection to it. It is very revealing that both the Islamic conception of *fitna* and Lorde's notion of the erotic mean chaos and disorder through which female repressed feelings burst to unsettle dominant and repressive value systems. *Dunia* uses dance as a way to subvert her social order, just as her mother did before her. For this reason, both *Dunia* and her mother are socially threatening and transgressive. When *Dunia* visits her relatives in the country side, her aunt says that *Dunia*'s mother was a "disgrace" and "dishonour" to the community because she was a

dancer. The attitude of Dunia's aunt is grounded in the Islamic religious discourse according to which the female body is *awra* that must not be uncovered or displayed publically. Dunia's dance also threatens the social order of her own marriage to Mamdouh. The latter dramatises the fear of this threat by regulating, controlling, and seeking to tame Dunia's body and sexuality. Like Dunia's male class mates who ask her to "shut up" when she starts talking about desire in a class discussion about Arab erotic poetry, Mamdouh obliges her to tie her hair while going out. Besides, he expresses discomfort about her dance by telling her that "you dance only to display your body, that is why you dance." Mamdouh's deduction actually reflects the sense of fear that the female body produces in the patriarchal society of Egypt in which female sexuality is associated with threat and chaos.

Nevertheless, Dunia still offers to dance before Mamdouh so as to integrate him in her sensuality that she is in the process of exploring. She displays her sexual agency before him by taking the lead in a sensual dance movement that lures him to the point of arousal. Yet as soon as Mamdouh realises that Dunia refuses to be his sexual object, he calls her "frigid" and goes out. Mamdouh's reaction theatrically shows that he rejects Dunia's sexual agency in dance, because he implicitly refuses to see her desire manifest independently from his sense of control over this desire. I argue that this moment in the film reflects Dunia's erotic empowerment from within the historical materiality in which women's bodies, as Ketu Katrak says in a different cultural context, are exiled from them. Dunia's will "to re-belong" to her body through dance threatens Mamdouh who cannot imagine a space for a woman's desire outside of her submission to his own (7).⁹¹ His reaction also dramatises the social tension that constitutes the historical materiality

of Dunia's body and dance as erotic or *fitna*. Dunia in this instance is *fitna* or chaos not because she subverts the social order, as Mernissi argues under the sign of Imam Ghazali, but because she resists to reduce her sexuality to the requirement of this order.

Nowhere in the film does Dunia display her body in dance purposely to seduce her viewer. She does not even do it with her husband, which proves that her dance is far from being a pattern of what Lorde would call the pornographic. In Lorde's sense, it is Mamdouh's perception of Dunia's body that makes her dance pornographic. This is the main difference between Dunia and Mamdouh's conceptions of erotic display in dance. For while dancing for her husband, Dunia resists making of this dance a way to succumb to his desire. In this sense, Dunia reflects her *fitna* or erotic chaos as an empowering space through which she subverts the explicit theory which sums up female sexuality through its receptiveness of male desire. At this point, the film employs dance to deconstruct Mernissi's binary opposition between the explicit and implicit Islamic theories of sex. Mamdouh's fear of Dunia's sexuality is mixed with his rage over her refusal to be an object of his desire, that is to play her role that the explicit theory of sex assigns to her as a wife. For this reason, he calls her "frigid," which hurts Dunia but does not prevent her from taking her dance classes in which she comes to terms with her erotic emotions which she explores with Bashir at the end of the film.

Still, while exploring the liberating force of the female erotic, the film ties this erotic liberation to the male character of Professor Bashir whose influence on Dunia is left unchallenged. In contrast to Mamdouh's conventional perception of sexuality which Dunia rejects, Bashir represents free thinking about desire and eroticism, which appeals to Dunia. This binary opposition between Mamdouh and Bashir indeed influences

Dunia's own erotic desire when she chooses to have sex willingly with Bashir and leaves Mamdouh after having told him "you can have my body, but this [pointing to her head] belongs to me." Despite being conscious of herself as an agent of her desire, Dunia remains under the spell of Bashir whose intellectual activism charms her to the point of submission. This heterosexual context keeps the erotic in *Dunia* under the shadow of male dominance that overwhelms Egyptian Islamic culture. It is worth pointing out that the film does not challenge the reason why resistance to the censorship of *A Thousand and One Nights* should be voiced by a male intellectual. Unlike Lorde who challenges male chauvinism in the discourses of black resistance in America, Saab's film romanticises the heroic ring of Bashir's voice by making it an object of unquestioned attraction. When Dunia says to Bashir in a moment of poetic exchange: "I am whom I love and whom I love is me," he interrupts her by saying in a fatherly tone: "Look! whatever you say you do not understand, and whatever you understand you do not say." Dunia here keeps quiet. Then, Bashir starts singing and Dunia again looks at him with amazement and fascination.

Furthermore, the film casts an idealised dimension on Bashir's activism when it shows him in self-exile in the desert after he was blinded by his opponents. This romanticised or self-exoticised image overlaps with his stay in a hotel waiting for the hotel owner Gamallat to dress in red and offer herself to him. Ironically enough, in a moment of erotic enunciation, Dunia does exactly the same thing when, during the absence of the hotel owner, she wears the latter's red dress, puts on her red lipstick and wears her bracelets to pretend to be Gamallat before the blind waiting Bashir. Yet, Bashir recognises Dunia and tells her in a patronising tone while making love to her:

“never be anybody but yourself.” The last scene which follows Bashir’s advice shows Dunia dancing on a roof top over the city of Cairo, as if she were rejoicing the fact that she is at last “herself” just as Bashir told her to be.

Dunia’s sexual encounter with Bashir results from her suppressed emotions and feelings which come out in dance. The latter allows her to develop her awareness of her body, and allows us to re-choreograph postcolonial theories of dance from the standpoint of the transformative power of the erotic in the film. By presenting Oriental dance through the enunciation of female desire and the disruption of male erotic dominance, Saab’s movie represents a cinematic intervention into postcolonial discourses which keeps the Oriental body and dance inextricably tied to the viewer’s desiring gaze. Dunia’s body is actually subjected to the male desiring gaze of Mamdouh, of Professor Bashir, and of her choreography mentor. Yet, the film does not describe Dunia’s body through the sexual appeal it has on these male characters. Even Bashir who encourages her love for erotic poetry neither controls her sexuality nor oppresses her sexuality as a way to possess it. Bashir monitors her ideas from his position as a thesis supervisor. The last love scene between them emanates from Dunia’s own agency rather than any imposition from his part. We do not see Dunia’s body as a sight to be looked at, desired, or derided by “the psychic of fantasmatic structure” of a male dominance. Saab’s film does not present Dunia as the eroticised Other whose sensuality in dance unfolds in terms of elusiveness, unobtainability or lack. The film, I would contend, invites us to examine Middle Eastern dance through the consciousness of the Middle Eastern female dancer whose sensual passion develops through the regulating social norms in which the dancer and her body are historically situated. *Dunia*- the movie- accordingly employs

the power of the erotic in dance to challenge the postcolonial assumption that the female body of the dancing woman should unfold through the sexual appeal it has on its male audience. For this reason, Saab's movie lends itself to Lorde's philosophy of the erotic and also invites us to think through the limits of this philosophy in the heterosexual context of the film.

Saab's film initiates a reflection about the life force and / or empowerment of the erotic from the heterosexual perspective Lorde brushes off. Despite contesting "the myth of sameness which . . . can destroy us," Lorde hardly examines the ways in which the erotic transgresses the norms which organise our sexualities in a heterosexual framework (*Conversations* 86). The film, however, invites us to ponder how heterosexuality constitutes a space not only of repression and denial, but also of dissent and resistance. *Dunia* invites us to expand Lorde's philosophy of the erotic to the man-woman dynamic of desire so as to see how a lesbian position of the erotic risks to be trapped in the essentialism it resists. By reading the heterosexual context of Saab's film through Lorde's philosophy of the erotic, one challenges the sexual myth of essentialism in a postcolonial fashion. This fashion, I would contend, situates the erotic not "univocally" through the queer sexual epistemology but "contrapuntally," that is with a "simultaneous awareness" of the heterosexual culture that queerness contests. (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 51). By using the transformative power of the erotic in a heterosexual context from the perspective of dance, the film re-choreographs the postcolonial theories of the female Oriental body and simultaneously invites us to rethink the erotic in contrapuntal ways so as to read it in a heterosexual social framework. As it mediates our reflection about the erotic in this fashion, dance in the film situates the erotic as an

epistemologically dynamic critical category through which the colonial body acquires meaning not necessarily in the closed space of the desire of the viewer.

In this chapter, I indeed discussed eroticism in dance as a site through which to rethink postcolonial discourses of resistance which intervene in the logic of travel literature but end up appropriating the fetishising paradigms of this logic. This chapter also engages Marxist interventions in the postcolonial commodification of the Oriental Other. While pointing out the gains of this intervention, I indicated that the exclusion of the erotic and the sexual in a Marxist critique of postcolonial theory is critically problematic. I address Lorde's theory of the erotic as a different way of unhinging the postcolonial eroticisation of the Oriental body and dance. Lorde allows us to see that the erotic is far beyond the sexual display of the body Alloula, Said, and Karayanni describe. Lorde reminds us that equating the erotic with titillation means turning the erotic from its political value as a driving force of empowerment and subject formation into its commercialised value as a pornographic space of subject dissolution. This epistemology of the erotic that Lorde offers is useful to rethink postcolonial eroticisation and mystification of the Oriental body. I have integrated the film *Dunia* as a cinematic moment that implements Lorde's theory of the erotic from within the heterosexual context of Egyptian cultural tradition. *Dunia* opens possibilities for us to think through the erotic in Oriental dance from within the gaze that watches the dance and produces desire for the dancer. Watching *Dunia* reminds us that Said and Karayanni hardly probe the ways in which to describe the dancer's eroticism independent of the viewer's gaze. The dancers' desire for these critics exists only as it reproduces the male viewer's desire at the very moment of leaving it unfulfilled. Such, as I have tried to explain, is the

postcolonial mode of fetishising the body and making its value contingent upon the value it guarantees for the postcolonial text that metaphorises this body to make it seductive through its elusiveness. This presence of the power to seduce through the absence of fulfilment of desire in seduction is the way in which postcolonial critics eroticise the body and commodify it by exposing it to the market to sell it at a profit. Lorde's notion of the erotic warns us against this postcolonial use of eroticism as a capitalist commodity. She reminds us that "within living structures defined by profit . . . by institutional dehumanisation, our feelings were not meant to survive" (*Poetry Is NOT A Luxury* 39). As it incarcerates the Oriental dancer's eroticism in dance through paradigms of lack and elusiveness, postcolonial discourse tends to exemplify what Lorde calls "institutional dehumanisation" (*Sister Outside* 39) in which the dancer's emotions in dance mean less than the viewer's postponement of desire. By contrast, *Dunia* takes the dancer's body towards the expressiveness of her feeling which, as the character Dunia illustrates, survives the pain inscribed in her body. For this reason, Saab's film lends itself to Lorde's philosophy of the erotic as it intervenes in for example Said's postcolonial discourse of the Oriental dancing body and allows us to probe the disruptive force of dance in the case of the indigenous body mostly silenced in postcolonial theory.

Chapter two

Choreography, Sexuality, and the Indigenous Body in Thomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*

Certainly, the struggles and complexities we live out as Aboriginal peoples implicated in multi-worlds against a Western Eurocentric dominance is like a complex dance that requires constant attention to its choreography. There is this recognition, a ‘knowing’ that the usual equilibrium has been spun out of its centre and there is that constant struggling for balance for meaningful connections and wholeness.

(Lara Fitznor, “The Power of Indigenous Knowledge: Naming and Identity and Colonization in Canada.” 53)

2.1 Kiss of the Fur Queen: *the Cultural Practice of Dance*

Tomson Highway’s first novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, published in 1998, tells the story of two Cree brothers who develop their potential in music and dance from within the colonial violence that is inflicted sexually on their bodies. Being dedicated to the memory of the author’s brother René, a dancer whose performance is a visual expression of survival, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* presents dance not only as a metaphor for de-centred Aboriginal lives in Canada, as Ella Fitznor notes in the epigraph of this chapter, but also as a site of embodiment in which indigenous and contemporary cultures fuse at the level of movement.⁹² Although the novel’s first epigraph illuminates the colonial project to suppress indigenous dance in the early twentieth century, Highway’s narrative insists that dance is still nevertheless a practice that is culturally and spiritually meaningful among Aboriginal people in Canada. Highway states in an interview with Heather Hodgson that “dance is a metaphor for everything in our culture; for ritual, for art, for religion. Dance is a metaphor for being. If we cannot dance, we cannot pray” (Hodgson 2). Critics describe both the integrity of dance practices in Aboriginal cultures in Canada

and the colonial stigmatisation and suppression of these practices.⁹³ However, dance in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* remains largely unexamined as a category of analysis through which the indigenous body emerges as an agent of meaning production from within colonial oppression.

Kiss of the Fur Queen opens with the visual description of Abraham Okimasis' vigour in winning the World Championship Dog Derby in Eemanapiteepitat, northern Manitoba, in 1951. Nine months after Abraham wins the trophy and gets the kiss of the Fur Queen, his first son Champion is born "with the gift of making music" (*Kiss* 27). Three years later, the Okimasis family celebrates the birth of another son, Ooneemeto, who dances to his brother's tunes. The European Catholic missionaries rename the two boys Jeremiah and Gabriel respectively and place them in the Residential School where priests abuse them physically and sexually.⁹⁴ After they leave the Residential School, the two brothers move to Winnipeg where Jeremiah pursues his career as a concert pianist and Gabriel his career as a prominent dancer and choreographer. Because of his loneliness in Winnipeg, Jeremiah confines himself to classical music, leads an asexual ascetic life, and becomes culturally alienated. He only recovers from this alienation with the help of the magic figure of the Fur Queen at the end of the novel. By contrast, Gabriel explores his body's homosexual desire both in restless dance performances and excessive sexual experiences. The two brothers' different modes of life keep them apart for a long period until they reunite to perform the play *Ulysses Thunderchild* in which Jeremiah plays piano and Gabriel dances. The novel finishes with Gabriel's death from AIDS and his spiritual movement "rising from his [dead] body floating off into the swirling mist" with the Fur Queen (306).

Kiss of the Fur Queen draws from Highway's personal experience and his family background as it describes the indigenous body through both subjection and resistance to colonial violence. The character of Abraham Okimasis is inspired by Highway's father Joe Highway who is a world champion dogsled racer. The story of the abuse of the Okimasis brothers is a fictional version of the actual colonial violence sexually staged on the bodies of Highway and his brother René in the Residential School during the 1950s.⁹⁵ Moreover, Jeremiah's and Gabriel's development as musician and dancer respectively recalls the evolution of both Tomson Highway as a pianist and of René as a renowned dancer and choreographer who, like Gabriel in the novel, dies of AIDS.⁹⁶ Although these autobiographical elements in the novel reflect the unhealed scar in Highway's personal and collective memory, they still do not present the indigenous body entirely through colonial abuse and pain.⁹⁷ This is because the indigenous body unfolds through the novel's "complex engagement . . . that locates the personal experience within a specific colonial context, and that seeks to carry the force of that personal anguish back into the public sphere to find appropriate forms of redress and progress" (Brydon 23).

This chapter argues that the novel employs dance as a visually appropriate form of redress through which the indigenous body carries its colonial anguish and enacts its collective memory in the public sphere of contemporary Canada. In order to explore how the novel presents the overlap of contemporary and indigenous cultures in dance as a condition of survival, I first examine how the character of Gabriel evolves within the colonial, sexual, and cultural currents that cross his body and through which he, like René Highway, develops "a movement vocabulary that was contemporary although

intrinsically Native in feeling” (Trujillo 22). I then argue that the narrative of de-centred Aboriginal lives in Canada unfolds through Gabriel’s de-centred choreography in which the indigenous “shadow zones of ancestors” (Favel Starr, “Waskawewin” 133) is part of what the contemporary dance theorist André Lepecki calls the “irretrievable, never fully translatable” meaning of dance (127). Finally, I examine how the novel presents the indigenous fancy dance of a Pow Wow event as unreadable and yet culturally and spiritually grounded. Here I contend that the novel intervenes in the contemporary debate around the elusiveness of dance while suggesting the existence of a native collective memory wherein such debate may take place. Thus, this chapter presents dance as a political counter-movement that ruptures the linear account of Canada’s historiography of exclusion and simultaneously choreographs, or inscribes through motion, a counter-narrative of its collective history still untold in the dominant archives of Canadian history. This project of reading history through dance in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* requires that I build a bridge between contemporary Western and indigenous dance philosophies in order to argue for the importance of choreography in the novel as an original narrative device where sexuality and subject formation intertwine in the indigenous history of oppression and survival.

2.2. *Kiss of the Fur Queen: Dance, Sexuality, and the Trickster*

Gabriel, whose Cree name means dancer, displays his dance talent early in life and achieves world fame from within the colonial violence that leads to his death at the end of the novel. Before Gabriel is born, his mother feels his body “jumping up and down” in her womb and his father predicts that “this one is gonna be a dancer” (30). Gabriel’s body is responsive to music at the age of four when he dances to his brother’s

“little accordion” (41) tunes in their village of Eemanapiteepitat: “The moment Gabriel heard the music, his body began to glide across the bed of moss as though he were floating on a summer cloud” (42). Even in the dreadful space of the Residential School, Gabriel performs a dance in which he “beamed with pleasure . . . in a middle of a turn and tap-tippitytap of the feet that required particular panache” (76). His subjection to the priest’s sexual abuse, immediately after his dance performance at school, hardly reduces his passion either for dance or the expression of his sexuality. This is unlike Jeremiah who becomes impotent, associating heterosexuality with the rape and murder of two indigenous girls, Rose McCrae (107) and Madeline Jeanette Lavoix (132), in Winnipeg.⁹⁸ In contrast, Gabriel explores his homoerotic desire in the promiscuity-filled spaces of “the Hell Hotel” (130) and “the Rose” bars (165), and trains hard to acquire classical ballet dance without ever forgetting “what they [i.e. colonial abusers] did to us” (120).

Gabriel’s body and sexuality evolve in the novel through the symbolic image of the trickster who, according to a Cree legend, survives the Weetigo’s violence only by way of carrying the effect of this violence on his body. The Okimasis brothers remember the story of the trickster and the Weetigo while walking in a down town mall in Winnipeg. According to the story, “Weesageechak [Cree trickster] comes down to earth disguised as a weasel” (118). He “crawls up the Weetigo’s bum hole [then] chewed the Weetigo’s entrails to smithereens from the inside out” (120). The weasel frees himself from the Weetigo but realises that his coat is “covered with shit . . . God dipped him in the river to clean his coat. But he held him by the tail, so its tip stayed dirty” (121). The Weetigo is a monstrous figure which features prominently in the narrative and is

associated with European colonialism and capitalist mass consumerism.⁹⁹ The Weetigo represents such spaces as bars (105), malls (116), and television (187), which symbolically devour indigenous people and turn them into beast-like figures full of desire for food, sex, fashion, and images. Most importantly, the novel describes Father LaFleur's sexual abuse in terms of the Weetigo's violence that infects the bodies it devours and intensifies their desire for other bodies. Jeremiah, who witnesses the scene of his brother being raped, imagines the abusive priest as "a dark, hulking figure hovered over him [i.e. Gabriel] like a crow. Visible only in Silhouette, for all Jeremiah knew it might have been a bear devouring a honeycomb, or the Weetigo feasting on human flesh" (79). Yet, rather than diminishing at the hands of the priest, Gabriel's desire intensifies as "the pleasure in his centre welled so deep that he was about to open his mouth and swallow whole the living flesh" (78). Gabriel's body frees itself from the priest's violence and develops its homoerotic desire only by carrying the trace of the priest's abuse, just like the trickster who frees himself from the Weetigo's violence only by way of subjection to this violence. In this sense, the story of the weasel and the Weetigo symbolically clarifies how the priest's violence on Gabriel's body produces a positive result as this violence is re-visioned by Gabriel into a source of his corporeal potential in sexuality and dance.¹⁰⁰

The symbolic dimension of Gabriel's body and sexuality unfolds differently during his first sexual encounter with his dance mentor and lover Gregory Newman. When Gabriel first notices Gregory training some dancers in The Royal Winnipeg Ballet School, he wonders "who was this man . . . the voice of honey, the will of iron?" (198).¹⁰¹ After everybody has left, and "the room was as silent as a chapel" (200),

Gabriel tries to figure out how “he could get his groin to open further without ripping” (200). At that moment Gregory, “unencumbered of coat and brief case” (200), suddenly emerges, interrupts Gabriel’s movement, nudges his body, and asks him “to think of your pelvis . . . as a plate with an offering” (200), which gives Gabriel an ecstatic sensation as he “feels himself devoured” by Gregory (200). At a superficial level, Gregory’s suggestion means that Gabriel’s pelvis should “open” for an accurate ballet movement. Yet on a more symbolic level, Gregory’s request implies that Gabriel’s body is the body of Christ, which is offered as a sacrifice. In fact, the images of the gym bar which Gabriel “suspected was a communion rail in a vengeful second coming” (200) and the room which is “as silent as a chapel” foreshadow the religious context of sacrifice implied in Gregory’s request to Gabriel. These images also recall Gabriel’s role of Jesus receiving the lashings at the hands of priest Lafleur, which he plays in a school performance earlier in the novel (85). Thus, Gregory’s role in Gabriel’s life is revealing since it reminds Gabriel of the position he assumes for himself as a redeemer of his people, as he does in the school performance.

Critics have unravelled the complexity of Gabriel’s sexuality during his first sexual encounter with Gregory. In her article about the indigenous body and language in *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, Susan Knabe points out this complexity when she argues that “Gabriel’s sexuality is presented as complex and enigmatic, it is both the requirement of the physical discipline of dance, his pelvis must open in order to perform the move correctly, and a remnant of the ritual of religion, an offering, which marks his body as available” (139). Marjory Fee also notices that Gregory Newman is the “priest-like dance mentor and partner [of Gabriel who] links his [i.e. Gabriel’s] dance with the

offering up of Christ's body at the mass" (55). Fee implies that Gregory's request invites us to consider Gabriel's dance less as a recreational diversion than as a space of embodiment in which the body thrusts itself forwards in a symbolically charged movement. Coral Ann Howells equally refers to the idea of sacrifice that Gabriel's body and sexuality evoke in the novel. Howells comments that Gabriel is "locked into the role of sacrificial sexual victim [and that his] body is both gift and sacrifice" (89). Indeed, the above mentioned idea of Gabriel's "vengeful second coming" (*Kiss* 200) relates to the fact that sex for Gabriel is an act of vengeance, since he frequently betrays his dance mentor and partner, more particularly with priests. Still, Gabriel's body, as Howells argues, is not only Gabriel's sacrifice but also his gift which unfolds through his dance as colonial, mythical, collective, and sexual layers are woven together in the thick texture of his movement.

2.3. *Kiss of the Fur Queen: The Dancing Body and the Choreography of Collective Memory*

Gabriel's physical dance dramatises theatrically the indigenous metaphorical "complex dance" in which indigenous collective memory choreographically cuts across the self-integrity of Canada's contemporary space of "exalted subjects" (Thobani 3).¹⁰² While dancing before a "thousand white faces" (236) that include Gregory, Gabriel simultaneously dreams of his dead father coming out of his grave to tell his sons the story of the Son of Ayash:

Ayash oogoosisa," the hunter rasped at them, "the greatest Cree hero knew nofear, he ..." And the wind took the words. A note rang out, high pitched, sustained. And from his father's corpse, slowly Gabriel Okimasis raised his naked torso, strings crashed, electric, twanging, catapulting the dancer on a trajectory beyond the grave, the village, the earth. In the theatre's last row,

among the thousand white faces, Gregory Newman sat slumped . . . kept thinking about this luminous man on stage who had learned to climb air as a spider climbs webs . . . he [i.e. Gregory] had failed to plumb something essential. (236, 237)

The movement of Gabriel's torso in and out of his father's corpse suggests that Gabriel's body crosses the common boundaries between the individual and the collective, the contemporary and the mythical, and the corporeal and the spiritual through his *poowamoowin*, or "act of dreaming" (245). Gabriel's elasticity in dance, his movement around and "beyond the grave, the village, the earth," choreographs his metaphorical "complex dance" between the collective memory that inhabits his body and the contemporary theatre stage that evokes metonymically today's white-dominated Canada. This choreographic oscillation in Gabriel's dance deconstructs the dichotomous binarism between the above two spaces as privileged centre and subordinated periphery, and consequently suggests that "memory alone retains the spatial pattern, the design of the choreography" (Brandstetter 106).

The elements of memory and dream which permeate Gabriel's dance are keystones in indigenous theories of choreography. The Plains Cree choreographer, actor, and theatre director Floyd Favel Starr informs us that "our task [contemporary indigenous dancers] is to remember and to work from our origins . . . remembering songs, developing a body flexible and free enough to learn intricate movements of dances, and nurturing memory to learn and absorb . . . stories" (24). Being contemporaneous with Favel Starr's theories of choreography, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* visually describes the ways in which Gabriel's intricate movement absorbs the stories as his body thrusts itself forward in the space of memory of the Son of Ayash story that his

father tells his sons at his deathbed. The Cree collective memory of the Son of Ayash cuts across Gabriel's ballet performance and makes his choreography, or bodily motion in space, so transgressive that Gregory Newman fails to come to terms with it. Gabriel's movement illustrates the indigenous dancer's process of "adapting what is new . . . and always working and connecting with our tradition [which] continues to be our source of power and will make our work identifiable from other people's work" ("A Plains Nomad" 24). Gabriel's dance indeed integrates the collective memory of ancestors in its choreography and consequently becomes, in Favel Starr's words, "identifiable from" the current ballet movement which Gregory Newman instructs. The novel actually clarifies that contemporary indigenous ballet movement is less an entertaining sport than an empowering space through which the dancer, like the mythical figure of the Son of Ayash he remembers, seeks to expel the Weetigo which Cree mythology associates with colonial violence, expansion of capital, and their effects on the colonial body.¹⁰³ In this sense, although Gabriel's dance does not resolve his entrapment in the Weetigo-filled colonial world, it nevertheless enables his body to connect with the healing potential of dream in movement.

Dream and memory are also central to the dance performances of René Highway, to whose memory the novel is dedicated. The Native American dancer, actor, and choreographer Raoul Trujillo describes René Highway as "a living artist consumed by his work and his emotions . . . There was no differentiation between the dream world and the waking world [for René]. Both were very real and equally as important, although it was easier for him to dream" (22). By "dream," Trujillo means the way in which René remembers his ancestors through the space of his dance and connects with them through

movement. Trujillo adds that René's collective "memory fuelled the creative process . . . in the retelling of stories . . . Memory is an elevated state of being and remembering is the action . . . dreaming is one way of developing the technique of remembering" (22). Trujillo's words about René mesh well with Favel's above-mentioned conception of Movement, which is reflected in Gabriel's performance in the novel. Gabriel, who is as consumed by his work as René, performs a dance that displays how the dream world and the waking world are deeply intertwined in movement, and how the indigenous conception of art is integral to life, rather than being seen as an imitation of it as is common in Western culture. In this regard, the novel invites us to read Gabriel's dance through René's—not only because the two men live a passionate life, die in the prime of their lives, and refuse to be mourned after their deaths, but because Tomson Highway's creation of Gabriel's character confirms the transformative force of dance movement that René's performances embody in reality.¹⁰⁴ Thus René's "ghost . . . whose shadowy image dances on the front cover of the book, superimposed on a snowfield and a clouded winter sky" (Pearson 173), returns to claim that "the [indigenous] dead are not powerless" as the Chief Seattle of the Squamish says in the second epigraph of the novel. Here dance emerges as central to the critical project of unsettling the narrative of nationhood in Canada and claiming its incomplete resolutions.¹⁰⁵

Nonetheless, although it retains collective memory as a central frame of reference, Gabriel's choreography in the above-described performance hardly promises any central meaning for its viewer's gaze. As it choreographs the complex blending of various temporalities, Gabriel's motion disrupts Gregory Newman's Western-oriented choreography and delays its promise for any "essential" meaning. For despite his *savoir*

faire to “manipulate [his dancers’] limbs, mould their torsos, and control their breath” (*Kiss* 198), Gregory “fails to plumb something essential” about Gabriel’s dancing body. At this point, Gabriel’s dance emerges as a critical field of knowledge that informs us about the ways Cree collective memory intervenes in contemporary ballet in Canada and subverts its choreographic parameters. This permutation is crucial in two ways. First, it illustrates how the indigenous body negotiates the contemporary conception of the elusiveness of dance from the perspective of a Cree concept of collective memory that remains untranslatable in Eurocentric terms. In this case, the novel actually reminds us that we cannot distance today’s debate on the elusiveness of contemporary dance from the communal histories that permeate this dance. Secondly, the permutation of the collective memory in Gabriel’s ballet dance is also crucial because it actually choreographs the spectral return of this memory in movement in order to haunt the national, racial, and cultural integrity of the “thousand white faces” sitting, watching, but also romanticising Gabriel’s performance.

Although Gabriel’s dancing body is an agent that subverts the colonial discourse of Otherness from the perspective of movement, it is still subjected to the white gaze that romanticises it as a rare commodity in the global market.¹⁰⁶ By virtue of his global mobility as an internationally renowned ballet dancer, Gabriel subverts the racist discourse through which Canada constructs the indigenous body as stagnant and sick. Yet, Gabriel simultaneously sells his dance across the various Western countries where he performs and displays his contemporary ballet choreography as a rare commodity romanticised and made strange by the white gaze. Gregory, for example, romanticises Gabriel’s body by proving unable to interpret it in clear terms and by defining it through

the image of a spider that climbs air. Besides, Gregory wonders: “why did Gabriel keep stashed . . . in those *secretive* corners, behind those eyes whose *dark* little lashes . . . were nothing but headache and fatigue? . . . why did he *disappear* from time to time?” (237; my emphasis). While evoking the settler-invader’s unfulfilled desire to possess the indigenous body sexually and discipline it choreographically, Gregory’s questions also identify Gabriel as the enigmatic Other. Gregory’s questions overlap with his sexual possession that clearly unfolds later in the novel as an oppressive force, denying Gabriel’s body any sense of sexual agency. In a climactic outburst,

Gregory’s voice bled through: ‘Where did you go after the preview last night? Come on Gabriel. Production meetings don’t go to 3:00 A.M . . . How many people come by the house whenever I am out for even half an hour? Do you think I have no nose? That smell bed-sheets, sweat?’ (275)

Gregory’s skill to manage bodies choreographically appears to grant him the right to control Gabriel’s body not only kinaesthetically but also socio-sexually in order to own this body as his private space. In this sense, while ballet dance in the novel liberates Gabriel and speaks “to him in a way nothing else had ever done” (153) it also, as Susan Knabe notes, reinscribes him, however incompletely, as the object of a desiring, devouring, disciplinary, colonising white male gaze” (139).

The novel presents Gabriel’s choreography and sexuality as intertwined sites of embodied colonial power through which Gregory seeks to reduce Gabriel’s indigenous body to a docile object of colonial desire. I read Gregory’s queer sexual relationship with Gabriel in terms of colonial desire because Gregory’s above described attempt to regulate Gabriel’s sexuality cannot, in my view, be abstracted from the colonial history which legitimizes this regulation and normalizes it. The physical images that Gregory

uses to describe Gabriel—“stashed . . . in those secretive corners, . . . eyes [with] dark little flashes”—recall the Eurocentric repertory of mystifying images which exoticise the indigenous subject as the secretive Other whom the settler expels but still longs to explore sexually and, in the case of Gregory, manage choreographically. Being located in these asymmetrical relations of power, Gabriel’s body is accordingly the body of

the expelled [indigenous] Other [who] returns as the object of . . . longing and fascination . . . ‘the savage’ . . . placed at the outer limit of [Canada’s] civil life, [who suddenly] becomes [the] symbolic content of [Gregory’s] desire. (Stallybrass and White 45)

In this sense, Gregory, as Knabe and Fee both imply, continues rather than ruptures Father Lafleur’s violence whose destructive effect the novel revisions through Gabriel’s kinaesthetic potential in dance.

Indeed, instead of constituting itself entirely through its subjection to Gregory’s anxious desire, Gabriel’s choreography unfolds in a transgressive and a politically evasive dance where his body rewrites history from the counter-discursive potential of movement. In one of his adroit stage performances:

Gabriel Okimasis beamed like a torch. He was walking on air, his toes tingling, his heart atwitter, for never had he expected to be a star with lights and tights and wigs and music and choreography. Instinctively, he knew that he was doing something revolutionary, perhaps historical definitely head turning. (Kiss 155)

Gabriel’s choreography is “historical definitely head turning” because it unsettles mainstream constructions of native subjectivity in terms of “worthlessness, laziness, dependence, and lack of ‘higher’ order human qualities” (Smith 4). Although Highway’s image of a “beaming torch,” much like other descriptions of Gabriel as “fine linen” (166) with “sultry beauty and desirability” (167), both glorifies and over-eroticises Gabriel’s body, it hardly idealises this body in a totalising linear narrative of purity.

Unlike Gregory's gaze which exoticises Gabriel as a way to de-historicise him, Highway clarifies the ways in which Gabriel's body is also a promiscuous body stereotypically associated with indigenous bodies in Canada.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, Gabriel's bodily movement is "revolutionary" because it demonstrates that colonial violence, which Father LaFleur performs in the Residential School, produces a body whose dance motion choreographs a counter-narrative of collective history from within colonial violence. In this regard, Gabriel's dancing body challenges what Gerald Vizenor calls "the hypotragic" representation of history in which the indigenous subject merely laments the violence that inscribes his body and haunts his memory. Being haunted by "what they have done to us" (120), Gabriel walks "on air, his toes tingling, his heart atwitter" so as to assert visually that colonial violence can be re-visioned by his dance into a source of constructive corporeal potential. To Susan Leigh Foster, Gabriel's choreography is "a critical historicizing, a thinking tool, to rethink how ethnography, historiography [in Canada] is subjected to choreographic revision" (*Corporealities* xi). *Kiss of the Fur Queen* presents the above moment of dance as a "thinking tool" through which we reflect about the construction of a narrative of indigenous history and identity from the perspective of movement. This dance is also politically urgent because it presents the body as "a socio-political agent [that] manifests its agency through the many ways it eventually struggles its materiality into a charged presence that defies subjection" (Lepecki 6). Because "he knew . . . [what] he was doing," Gabriel actually claims agency and "defies subjection" as his dance visually unlearns historical and social constructions from within rampant colonial abuse. Gabriel's dancing body "struggles . . .

[through its historical] materiality” and physicality into a charged presence since it re-establishes the social and political dynamic of indigenous subject formation in Canada.

Furthermore, Gabriel’s choreography becomes a politically subversive mode of redressing what Sam McKegney calls Canada’s “legacy discourse” (84). McKegney notes that this discourse of the state and the church “situated Aboriginal people . . . as the primary objects of study rather than the system of acculturative violence [of the Residential School system] itself” (84, 85). Although McKegney adds that the novel’s “political effectiveness . . . resides in its re-imagining of current legacy discourse . . . and articulating alternative patterns of redress and empowerment” (85), he does not depict how the novel choreographs this reimagining in dance. Nor does he evoke how the dancing body emerges as a signifying agent of empowerment and redress from within subjection to colonial violence. I would argue that Highway’s narrative employs “the political potential of the choreographic” as the “alternative pattern of empowerment” that unsettles Canada’s “legacy discourse” and problematises it from the perspective of corporeality (Browning 163). In this regard, “the political effectiveness” of the novel lies in its employment of choreography as a new “way of knowing” (Acoose 37) that both rethinks Canada’s “legacy discourse” and suggests the dancing body as a tool of analysis deeply embedded in “our [indigenous] cultural epistemologies and pedagogies” (56).

The novel also disrupts Canada’s “legacy discourse” through its own narrative discourse that blends the performative and the literary modes in a “complex dance”—like narrative design. The above-described bodily writing / inscription of Gabriel’s movements represents the performative mode that perpetually crosses the verbal mode

of the narrative and consequently deconstructs the conventional binarism between the two. The narrative itself, like Gabriel's dance, is a blend of the contemporary and the indigenous so as to unlearn Canada's "legacy discourse" that describes indigenous subjects as sick and traumatised enough to be in need of the State's compensation.¹⁰⁸ I read the fusion of the textual and the performative on the one hand and the contemporary and the indigenous on the other as part of the novel's process of choreographing "the complex dance" and showing how indigenous subject construction takes place along the complexity of this dance in which trauma and subjection overlap with healing and survival. In this sense, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* presents choreography as "a way of thinking about the relationship of aesthetics to politics . . . as a performative, choreography cannot be simply identified with the aesthetic and set in opposition to the category of 'the political'" (Hewitt 11). By virtue of its counter-discursive élan that unsettles the above-mentioned sexual, social, and racial power relationships in the novel, choreography dismantles the opposition between the aesthetic and the political as they overlap through the interrogative legacy of dance.

2.4. *Kiss of the Fur Queen: Pow wow and the Unreadability of Dance*

Dance also unfolds in the novel through the pow wow event which Jeremiah and Gabriel attend on Manitoulin Island, Ontario. Both the excessively bright colours of the dancers' regalia and their energetic movements frighten Jeremiah and astonish Gabriel. This is because the Okimasis brothers, like Highway, are northern Cree who are not affiliated with a Pow Wow culture and whose ancestors were Christianised long ago in the fur trade times.¹⁰⁹ Thus, despite his skill in dance, Gabriel realises that he is unable to explain this dance in which:

A dozen bronze youths throb by. Their backs sprouted feather-rimmed suns—black on yellow, red on black, pink, blue, purple, orange—two per fancy dance, one above the other. A gust of wind ruffled the suns, shimmering domino effect that fell against the wall of Gabriel’s heart, sparking the image of the spiked, roiling spine of the mythic lake serpent, the Son of Ayash riding it to the Island of the flesh devourers. (*Kiss* 243)

Not only does this event in the novel illustrate contemporary fancy dance, it also dramatises the indigenous body’s dynamism in movement that informs remarkably this body’s survival and resistance to colonial violence.¹¹⁰ The movements of throbbing and sprouting constitute a choreography that is integral to an indigenous cultural dynamic in which the body is both a medium and a signifying agent articulating its own imaginative rebuttal and enacting its communal connectivity through motion. Instead of being frozen in a romanticizing rhetoric of grief over the colonial pain that is inflicted on them, the indigenous dancers in this fancy dance are connected as a community of bodies partaking in a common effort to narrate their physical ability to endure—that is, continuing to exist through pain.¹¹¹ Dance, in this case, is a process of healing disjunctures as it helps the dancers to exorcise the colonial violence that “devours” them. In fact, the strength and vigour of the dancers reminds Gabriel of the Son of Ayash who “took the weapons and, on a magic water snake journeyed” to free the human soul from the violence of the Weetigo, the flesh devourer (227). Gabriel’s memory of “the lake serpent [and] the Son of Ayash” thus illustrates that the above dance is a moment in which the indigenous body moves and throbs to exorcise the demon of the Weetigo. That is why Gabriel realises that “he had to learn this dance. Someday soon, he may need it” (243), since he feels the healing and transformative potential that is inherent in it.

Nevertheless, although Gabriel does not feel as distant spiritually from the Pow Wow event as Jeremiah, he is still unable to interpret the fancy dance and the rituals that take place at the event. While Jeremiah feels ‘like a German tourist’ (242), Gabriel admits that “there was no rules to this Round Dance that he could recognise” (244). Both brothers are curious to see some communal practices in which

an old man passing [...] raised an eagle plume, a woman did likewise. The crowd shaded eyes to look up at a peerless sky. Half a mile above the field, migisso—the eagle—flew lazy circles. For the song, apparently, had summoned migisso—the messenger of God, according to those praying—and she had heard. (244)

Here, the novel evokes some of the indigenous cultural practices that remain immune to the Western process of Christianisation to which Cree communities have been subjected since the seventeenth century.¹¹² Besides, by presenting dance through the above described cultural practices, the novel opens up the possibility of reconceptualising the postmodern notion of the unreadability of dance from the vantage point of an indigenous epistemology that is both homogenizing and disruptive as it remains untranslatable in the novel. The circularity of fancy dance evokes both the homogenising force of what the contemporary indigenous scholar Gail Guthrie Valaskasis calls “the circle of socialization” (151) and the unreadability that contemporary theories attribute to dance.¹¹³ The choreography of this dance therefore theatrically manifests a moment when, to use the words of the contemporary theorist Peggy Phelan, “the moving body . . . [is] fading from our eyes to make us constantly uncertain of its boundaries . . . [as] we witness this fading in which we do and do not see these bodies” (205). Nonetheless, rather than being located outside of history, this ghostly zone of seeing and not seeing

draws from the indigenous poowamoowin, or “act of dreaming” that is central to the survival of native mythology and indigenous cultural history and memory.

Seen through Floyd Favel Starr’s indigenous perspective on choreography, the fancy dance in the novel’s Pow Wow event emanates from the collective memory and its evasion of totalising interpretations. Favel Starr argues that “the relationship of the feet to the ground, the head to the sky, the different position in the body . . . [are] enigmatic relationships . . . that creates the dance. These enigmatic relationships are the shadow zones where ancestors and the unknown dwell, and this is where the creativity is born, where the impulse is born” (114). Rather than implying the disempowering trope of secrecy and enigma that colonial discourse associates with indigenous cultural practices, “the unknown” in Favel Starr’s indigenous choreographic terms is the unreadable space of disruption that evades the colonial desire to acquire this body as a static ethnographic object. This unreadable zone is also a collective site in which “the dancers [in the novel] release contained spirits or forces back into the deep caves of mother earth, where they would be immune from the coloniser’s strategies and techniques” (Youngblood Henderson 61). Through this act of releasing the contained spirits so they can return to the mother earth, the dancing indigenous body actively plunges itself into the collective memory of its ancestors, whose bones and blood are themselves the soil on which the dancer’s body taps as it dances. Indeed, Gabriel’s above-mentioned choreography, as well as Pow Wow performance, recovers its collective communion in which the indigenous body re-members the bodies of the dead through its virtuosity that is deeply “layered in the ambiguity and continuity of tribal memories” (Valaskakis 155).

Both Gabriel's dance and Pow Wow events are therefore spaces through which the movement of the indigenous body implements Hardt and Negri's description of the bio-political events which emerge "from inside [indigenous]culture" so as to resist the bio-power that produces this body in colonial knowledge formations. Highway's narrative presents dance as a "bio-political event" in which the indigenous body subverts the "bio-power" which produces this body as consumable object of desire. Despite describing the dynamic of the colonial gaze that traps the dancing body of Gabriel, for instance, the novel still does not situate Gabriel's dance entirely through the dynamic of this gaze. Instead, the novel describes the ways in which the dance emerges from within the dancer's collective memory without undermining the power of colonial violence that produces the indigenous body as sick, promiscuous, and elusive. In this sense, Gabriel's dance is a bio-political event since it takes place as a mode of survival through which Gabriel "resists [as a condition] to exist" (Hardt and Negri) in a world that either rejects him or accepts him as a romanticised figure. Indeed, Gabriel's dance acquires meaning and evolves from within the hegemony of colonial desire and violence that manifest brutally through the murder and rape of Rose McCrae and Madeline Jeanette Lavoix. Gabriel dances with the inscription of colonial violence in his body as a way to make of his dance "a production of life as an act of resistance, innovation, and freedom" (Hardt and Negri 61) that is not idealised since it is always aware of the tensions that condition and motivate its resistance.

All in all, the indigenous body in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* unfolds through the complexity of the layered discourses of race and sexuality that inscribe it as a site of representation and control. The indigenous body in the novel also emerges through the

intersecting axes of the colonial violence that abuses it and the collective cultural memory that invades its dance movement. The novel not only metaphorically choreographs “the complex dance” of Aboriginals between various cultures but also addresses dance movement as a theatrical space where indigenous and contemporary cultures blend choreographically. Nevertheless, rather than vanishing in the process of this cultural blending, Gabriel’s collective memory assumes a disruptive force as it interrupts the self-integrity and autonomy of his ballet choreography and deconstructs kinaesthetically the Eurocentric binary opposition between white dominant Self and the indigenous Other. This kinaesthetic disruption also informs us as to how dance in the novel initiates the process of rewriting history from the perspective of an Aboriginal cultural archive which the acculturative power of the Residential School seeks to obliterate. *Kiss of the Fur Queen* thus suggests dance as a way to unpack the revitalizing force of indigenous art for cultural survival. Highway’s novel also offers us the possibility of rethinking and / or re-choreographing the postcolonial theory which reads the body and dance only through the desire and gaze of the coloniser. Both Gabriel’s ballet and the fancy dance in the Manitoulin PowWows offer moments of re-conceptualising the paradigms of elusiveness and unreadability in dance through indigenous cultural categories that remain untranslatable in Western narratives of knowledge. The novel thus bridges the gap between indigenous and contemporary theories of dance without undermining the colonial dynamic that problematises the connection between the two. *Kiss of the Fur Queen* politicises the elusiveness of dance since it addresses it through the colonial violence that inscribes the dancing indigenous body. The novel shows that the sexual and choreographic encounters between Gabriel

and his ballet mentor and lover Gregory Newman revolve around the colonial history that conditions them and the institutional power of choreographic knowledge that regulates them. Therefore, the novel uses sexuality and choreography as crucial categories of analysis through which the indigenous body's desire and movement unfold as spaces of both meaning construction and redress from within the settler-invader's immanent violence. Still, is dance always associated with discourses of resistance in the colonial context? Can the cultural practice of dance assume the position of hegemony? In order to explore these possibilities, I will have to turn my attention to a different cultural location in which the colonial body questions its own practice of dance.

Chapter Three

**Carnival Dance, Calypso, and the Narrative of the
Nation in Earl Lovelace's *The Dragon Can't Dance***

“The history that has come down to us . . . depicts Africans as slaves, the brutalised objects of European power and mischief . . . That [history] is geared, it seems true, to cultivate in Africans a sense of inferiority . . . Fortunately, we have another source of history . . . what we do have is their dances and their songs and their stories. We dance those dances and sing those songs and tell those stories today . . . when we experience the vitality and power of the steel band and hear a stick fight chant and watch the leaps and dexterity of the bongo dance and the self- affirmation and sauciness of the bélé or the brisk affirming energy of pique, we know we have a history of ourselves as subjects. It has not been erased, for it is carried in our bodies.”¹¹⁴

(Lovelace, *Growing in the Dark* 335-336)

“O my body, make of me always a man who questions!”

(Fanon, *Black Skins White Masks* 323)

3.1. *The Dragon Can't Dance: Dance, the Body, and Cultural Identity*

Earl Lovelace's novel *The Dragon Can't Dance*, published in 1978, describes how the protagonist Aldrick Prospect decides never to perform his dragon dance again because it has become a global commodity. The novel integrates dance as a repository of the African ancestral memory Trinidadians seek to preserve so as not to see themselves only as victims of colonial and racialised violence. The first epigraph, an excerpt from Lovelace's essay “The On-Going Value of Our Indigenous Traditions,” clarifies that dance and music are cultural modes of expression through which Caribbean people tell their diasporic history that is silenced in colonial historiography. Being visually expressive, dance more particularly enables African-Caribbeans to “see” and project themselves “as subjects” choreographing a counter-discourse of their collective memory through “the leaps and dexterity” of their bodies and “the self-affirmation and sauciness

of the bele or the brisk affirming energy of pique” (3). The dancing body of the Caribbean subject is accordingly an agent which challenges the project of colonial amnesia but can also interrogate its own practice of dance as a mode of writing resistance, as Aldrick does in Lovelace’s novel.

The Dragon Can’t Dance begins with a description of Cleothilda the mulatto Carnival queen who owns a parlour store and rejects the love offer of Philo, the Calypso singer because of his black skin colour. Being a shop owner, Cleothilda also boasts before Miss Olive and Miss Caroline who are too poor to pay the rent to Guy, the rent collector and later city councillor. While Cleothilda is publically excited about the upcoming Carnival, Aldrick Prospect, the Carnival king and central character, makes his dragon costume so solemnly that he gives up all pleasures and social ties and consequently rejects the sexual offer of Sylvia, Ms Olive’s young beautiful daughter. Still, Aldrick is dismayed when Sylvia takes up with Guy and exhibits pretentious class manners. In contrast to Aldrick who is too discrete to divulge his dismay about social injustice, Fisheye displays outwardly gratuitous violence that overlaps with his sexist and racist attitudes towards his girlfriend Yvonne and Pariag the Indian respectively. Yvonne leaves Fisheye for a new lover she meets in the political party PNM. Pariag remains subjected not only to the humiliation of Fisheye but also to the hatred of the Calvary Hill Afro-Creole community. The latter people smash his bicycle and thus shatter his persistent hope for integration. Fisheye equally reacts to Philo who accepts to sell his Calypso art to foreign investors. Aldrick, Fisheye, and a few “Bad Johns” form the “People’s Liberation Army” and kidnap two police agents before the eyes of the rest of the community. Aldrick and Fisheye are tried and sentenced to six and seven years in

prison respectively. After being released, Aldrick decides never to dance the dragon again as he realises that it is a mere masquerade with no political, cultural, or social significance, just like the empty phrase “all o’ we is one” Cleothilda reiterates and foreign investors appropriate. Sylvia leaves Guy and gets back to Aldrick who is now eager to begin a new life of love with her. Pariag ends up having a shop of his own in the Hill. The novel closes with Philo’s memory of his childhood, his determination to develop his music career beyond the root culture of the Hill, and his visit to Cleothilda who allows him into her bedroom now that she is old.

Critics have pointed out that the novel’s representation of dance embodies the historical ambivalences which characterise Trinidad Carnival as a space of both liberation and subjection. Angelita Reyes notices that Carnival dance in Lovelace’s novel is a medium of both liberation from the memory of slavery and subjection to global commerce and consumerism. Reyes clarifies that Aldrick’s “dance [for example] allows him to liberate himself from the past of oppression and to seek a possible remedy for the present situation of poverty and social depression” (112). Yet she adds that dance, like music in the novel, also displays itself to “commercial multi-national dollars that are more than appealing. Many of the local street bands decide to let the outsiders sponsor them, which means they have to make compromises . . . in their traditional customs. They are not in control” (114). Reyes’ definition of Carnival dance as lack of control is revealing since Trinidad street dancers, as well as calypso singers, actually lose control of their art once they sell it to “outsiders.” Besides, Aldrick and Fisheye’s abortive rebellion, which they describe as dragon dance, shows that “they are not in control” of the political situation they seek to change. Carnival dance in the novel thus

hardly resolves the meaning of liberation either physically or symbolically since it represents “quest and failure” (Barrat 407), that is, the quest to liberate people and the failure to fulfil liberation outside the control of the global market.

Other critics notice ambivalence in the ways in which the novel both frames dance in the discourses of cultural heritage and national identity and yet contests these discourses through Aldrick’s decision to give up his dragon dance. Stefano Harney explores the “dilemmas of literary nationalism” during the 1970s when the novel was published. Harney argues that the novel reflects these dilemmas as it “contains obvious affection for the image of an indigenous, primordial culture of the hill, steel band, calypso, the scorn of property and material goods, and yet the Dragon maker, in the end, rejects these immutable values and cultural practices, sensing the need to change and remake his imagination outside of these practices” (34). Harney implies that Aldrick gives up his dance not only to challenge the global capital that commodifies the dance but also “to remake his imagination outside” his “indigenous and primordial culture” to which he has hitherto solemnly devoted himself. Dance, which Angelita Reyes associates with liberation from the memory of slavery in the novel, is, according to Harney, an oppressive space Aldrick feels bound to give up. This dilemma of dance as liberating and oppressive adds to the “contradictions [and] competing ideologies” which Diana Brydon examines in the novel and invites us to ask the following questions: How can dance and Calypso music, which are intertwined constituents of Trinidad Carnival, shift from being sites of “liberation” to being sites of oppression in the novel? What is the space “outside” the “primordial culture of the hill “that makes Aldrick “change and remake his imagination” when he rejects his dragon? How can we read Aldrick’s

decision through Fanon's prayer quoted as the second epigraph of this chapter, in which the body of the African-Caribbean subject makes him "a man who always questions"? Does Philo's calypso participate in this process of questioning? How can we address the contradictions in the meaning of dance and music in the novel from the position of Pariag, the Indian indentured immigrant, whose identity was recast as the Afro-Creole's self-constituting Other during the 1950s and 1960s?

Departing from Frantz Fanon's prayer, I argue in this chapter that Aldrick rejects his dragon dance as a way to question the nativist inscriptions on his body and open the possibility for a relational philosophy of his culture which Philo and Pariag initiate when they decide to "move on" and "mix" Creole and Indian music respectively. I borrow the word "relational" from the Martiniquan poet and theorist Edouard Glissant who uses the concept of "relational poetics" to describe the ways in which cultures acquire meaning through their overlap with rather than isolation from each other. Although Lovelace's strong ties to his national Trinidadian culture distinguish him from Glissant's experience of diaspora, Lovelace also interrogates in his novel the modern discourse of homogeneity and racial integrity of the nation which Glissant contests. In order to explain the ways in which *The Dragon Can't Dance* interrogates the isolationist discourse of the nation from the perspective of Carnival dance and calypso, I first provide a historical survey which shows that Carnival dance and music are hybrid rather than national genres due to the fact that Trinidad is historically an immigrant society. The novel reflects Trinidad's cultural and ethnic mixture, clarifies that this mixture threatens the nativist view of culture among Afro-Creole Trinidadians, and dramatizes this threat posed by Pariag, the Indian character, who is denied access to Creole dance

and music because of his ethnicity. Here, I contend that dance emerges as a paradigm of analysis through which the novel contests the politics of racial and ethnic difference that overlap with the discourse of cultural nationalism in Trinidad's narrative of the postcolonial nation. Then I explain how this discourse of national culture inscribes the body of Aldrick and freezes it sexually. Locked in what Fanon calls "a world of retroactive reparations" (*Black Skin While Mask* 231), Aldrick's body makes him question and "turn his back to the inhuman voices of his ancestors" (231) by giving up his dragon and opening the possibility for a relational philosophy of culture that is still to come. Despite that, Aldrick's decision not to dance, I will argue, exoticises and de-historicises the dance since it takes it out of the regulating global market place to which it is historically subjected. Philo, by contrast, articulates a relational philosophy of culture because he decides "to move on and grow" in his calypso career without having anything "to apologise for" (*Dragon* 210). Although Philo is despised by Fisheye as a betrayer of the Calvary Hill root culture, he opens the possibility of using his calypso as a medium to re-define his culture not through a rooted identity but through its potential to extend to other cultures via what Paul Gilroy calls "cultural assemblages" (1). I read Philo's "thinking . . . of moving . . . to the bigger arena of overseas" (Brydon 332) not only "as a possibility for social change" (331, 332) but also as a possibility for a new paradigm of globality in which the growth of global capital overlaps with the growth of an international consciousness of national culture. I finally examine how this paradigm of globality unfolds in a more complicated way through Pariag's projects to join Carnival dance and mix steel band music with his Indian sitar tunes. Although Pariag's projects are potential, they still intervene in both the nationalistic discourses of identity

in 1960s Trinidad and the philosophical discourses of the history of slavery which silence the voice of the indentured immigrant Other while exploring the unfinished history of slavery and the Atlantic crossing. Here, the novel invites us to see that dance and music function as paradigms of analysis and allow us to rethink this historiography from the point of view of the indentured immigrant through whom the discourse of slavery becomes hegemonic. I conclude by pointing out that even though the novel is invested in the discourse of cultural nationalism, it is still groundbreaking since it presents dance and music not only as components that mediate this discourse but also as sites that interrogate and unsettle it at a time when cultural essentialism was a dominant discourse of identity in Trinidad.

3.2. *The Dragon Can't Dance: A Historical Background of Trinidad*

Carnival

The Dragon Can't Dance presents Carnival music and dance as cultural sites through which Philo the Calypsonian and Aldrick the dragon dancer preserve their African heritage and question their blind attachment to this heritage in the ethnically and culturally hybrid nation of Trinidad. Before pointing out the ways in which Carnival reflects the cultural hybridity of Trinidad, it is useful to shed light on the historical factors which contribute to this hybridity. Historically, the experiences of colonialism, slavery, and immigration have made Trinidad a hybrid culture. Trinidad has become racially, culturally, and ethnically heterogeneous ever since European travellers invaded it in 1498, destroyed its Amerindian indigenous culture, brought black Africans to work as slaves on its sugar plantations, and employed East Indians and Chinese immigrants as indentured workers after slavery formally ended in 1834. Besides, the influx of

immigrants from neighbouring Caribbean islands also contributes to the cultural diversity of Trinidad. The inter-colony immigration took place during the post-emancipation period when a lot of newly freed slaves moved from the small Caribbean islands of Barbados and Grenada in search for better life conditions in the economically blooming nations of Trinidad and Guyana.

Trinidad more particularly received a large number of immigrants from neighbouring Caribbean islands due to its growing oil industry and vast agricultural production during the early nineteenth century. Jocelyne Guilbault notes that “subject to limited job opportunities in their own land, West Indians migrated to larger and more prosperous adjacent territories in search of work. The unique position of Trinidad in terms of natural resources and commercial opportunities drew migrants from all over the region from the early nineteenth century”(22). The Guyanese critic and historian Gordon Rohlehr, whose work is influential in Caribbean Studies, also examines the ways in which the historically grounded ethnic diversity in Trinidad disrupts the homogeneity and integrity of its national identity status. Rohlehr asks rhetorically:

how was status to be determined in a society where groups of Yorubas, say, fresh from Africa as indentured workers, or taken off slave ships, were living alongside creolised blacks of French, English or Spanish background, East Indian indentured workers, and a dozen or more fragmented ethnic groups, all experiencing severe problems of language in their relation to the power structure? (19)

Rohlehr notices that the linguistic plurality and ethnic mixture in Trinidad make the discourse of national identity disjointed rather than coherent since there is no unifying common ground through which an ethnic group can enjoy prominence and status. Rohlehr emphasises that language which represents a symbol of national identity rather

reflects social and cultural disjunction since different ethnic groups in Trinidad are unable to communicate both with each other and with the governing power. The lack of cultural homogeneity in Trinidad has also produced a mixture of music and dance forms that have intertwined and eventually shaped the Calypso as a culturally multi-layered genre. Still, in order to describe the formal and cultural diversity of Calypso, one needs to address the history of Carnival through which Calypso becomes hybrid.

Carnival in Trinidad has evolved through four historical periods starting from the French festivities in the late eighteenth century, to the period of emancipation in 1834, then the rise of nationalism in the 1950s and 1960s, and later the era of global consumerism from the 1970s till the present.¹¹⁵ Carnival was first introduced in Trinidad by the French settlers who accepted the Spanish offer of Celuda, according to which the Spanish government of Trinidad then gave acres of land to the French in sparsely populated areas of Trinidad. French plantation owners organised Carnival festivities which included songs and dances drawn from their own tradition of Carnival and their slaves' dances which they mimicked by wearing black masks as they danced. Richard D.E. Burton describes this period when he notes that

Trinidad Carnival, like stick fighting and caiso, has its origin in the decision by the planters in the French colonies . . . of Martinique, Grenada, Dominica and later Saint-Dominique to respond to the Spanish Government Celuda of 1783 . . . the planters brought with them a form of Carnival directly derived from the French Carnival tradition, to which they added . . . the masque known as the *negre jardin* based on their own field slaves and the ritual of *cannes brulés* . . . [or later to be known as] *cannboulay* in Creole . . . Trinidad carnival thus began as an imitation of blacks by whites rather than vice versa. (199)

Yet despite being the object of fascination and imitation of White Creoles, the enslaved black communities were still denied access to Carnival which had the form of masked

balls accessed only by white families and few free coloured. Slaves were still allowed to celebrate Christmas festivities during which they could dance, sing, and travel from one plantation to another to visit their friends and relatives. Carnival in this period was marked by the exclusive mode of slavery that lasted until the year of emancipation in 1834.¹¹⁶

The period of the emancipation of slaves, which is the second stage in the development of Trinidad Carnival, represents a turning point since Trinidad Carnival during this period became a ritual in which ex-slaves rejoiced their freedom and restored their collective African memory, identity, and self. Selwyn R. Cudjoe notes that

the years 1838 through 1851 witnessed the emergence and subsequent articulation of the African presence in Trinidad . . . With the emergence of this new class of people . . . [of about 22,000 free men], the Carnival celebrations, previously French Creole origins, took on a new dimension as Africans began to make their presence felt in the public arena. In a period in which the masked balls of the upper class, a holdover from the pre-slavery days, remained an important feature of the Carnival celebrations, the immersion of Africans in this festival allowed them to release energy and to display a sense of self that had not been possible previously. Even the use of masks (and masking) which they practiced /adopted after they took over Carnival, signified a commitment by the African to continue ‘the traditions of his predecessor’ and to maintain ‘the reputation of his lineage.’ (89)

Cudjoe explains how the ‘African presence’ in Trinidad epitomises itself in Carnival during the post-emancipation period. Ex-slaves use masquerade dance, stick fighting, and canboulay not only as repositories of African cultural memory but also as spaces of political empowerment that threaten conservative plantation owners and clergymen and compel them to ban the dances. The display of “African presence in public arena” also made white Creoles leave Trinidad Carnival particularly as it witnessed direct confrontations between jamets and stick fighters on the one hand and authorities on the

other, which led to the banning of stick fighting in 1884.¹¹⁷ Trinidad Carnival thus became the symbol of unity in which African-Creoles revived their African Spirit and consequently eclipsed the East Indian ritual of Hosay which was another form of resistance to be rebuked by authorities.¹¹⁸ Indeed, Afro-Creole nativism grew between 1885 and 1895 and became articulated in various Calypso lyrics such as “Can’t beat my drum / In my own, my native land / Can’t have the Carnival / In my own my native land” (quoted in Brereton 162). Still, this rhetoric of nativism serves less the purposes of the masses than the political interests of the growing local elite that had joined the colonial administration’s project of disciplining Carnival and “sanitizing” it.

Both the colonial project of disciplining Carnival and the local elite’s discourse of nationalism characterise the third phase of the history of Trinidad Carnival. Bridget Brereton notices that “after 1895 the grosser forms of obscenity so characteristic of the “jamaet Carnival” were no longer possible; Carnival had been purged. The way was clear for the respectable classes to re-enter Carnival and for the festival to develop slowly into a ‘national event’” (173). Although stick fighting riots still represented a threat to colonial authorities until the 1920s, Carnival has become a national emblem since it stages the celebration of Trinidadian identity represented primarily by white, coloured, and black Creoles but not East Indians.¹¹⁹ This celebratory image of Carnival overlaps with the beginning of competitions, the emergence of the Calypso Contest which was first won in 1939, and the filming of the event of the Carnival in the early 1930s. Despite being suspended during World War II, Carnival resumes with the emergence of the steel bands coming out from Afro-Trinidadian working classes singing and dancing tambou mambou on the streets and using improvised tunes on metal scraper and oil pans

collected from rubbish. Being “social organisations similar in form and function to the legendary stick fighting bands of the nineteenth century” (Rohlehr 369), steel bands revive the tradition of fighting both with the police and against each other. The phenomenon of steel bands fighting marked the history of Carnival from their inception in the early 1940s until the early 1970s. Like stick fighting in the nineteenth century, steel band fighting expressed the racialised ideology of belonging and Africanness and consequently the exclusion of other ethnicities. Such a sense of separatism also fuelled the ideology of the People’s National Movement led by Eric Williams, the first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. Richard Burton notices that

although there was now [during the mid 1950s] some East Indian (and Chinese) participation in Carnival, it remained an overwhelmingly black- dominated event, and its virtual co-option by Eric Williams and his predominantly black People’s National Movement as the epitome of Trinidadianess when they came to power in 1956 merely underlined Carnival’s – and the party’s restrictive racial character. (206)

At this point Carnival becomes a site through which cultural nationalism asserts the existence of sovereign Trinidadian nation apt to rule itself. Carnival thus becomes heavily politicised since it expresses the ideology of the ruling class which promotes culture towards the global markets that invaded Trinidad during its years of prosperity resulting from its oil production in 1973.

Multi-national consumerism marks a new era in which Trinidad Carnival becomes confined to theatres and ballrooms where it was performed for the profit of global markets. Garth L. Green and Philip W. Scher note that

after Trinidad gained independence from Great Britain in 1962 . . . steel bands . . . popular among working class Trinidadians during the 1950s diminished in prominence; and small . . . historical or fantasy bands more popular with various segments of the middle class became renowned for their meticulously

detailed construction and brilliant costuming. This period came to be known as the Golden Age of Masquerade.(5)

Yet, this period, as Green and Scher notice, witnessed a remarkable sense of a paradox since the nationalist discourse which claims that Carnival is by and for the people promotes it as a sellable commodity destined less for the people than from the consuming global market. Green and Scher add that this paradox dominated Carnival in the post-70s era in which

many officials interested in economic development and participants in the Carnival sought to expand the economic potential of the Carnival – to make it more profitable and viable enterprise . . . [this] has become highly desired. Artisans entrepreneurs, and political leaders wish to make the Carnival a more attractive tourist event. In the early nineties, the rhetoric of economic development merged with that of cultural nationalism in promoting the Carnival as the basis for cultural tourism. Despite what may have been a happy convergence of cultural pride and competitive advantage, a paradox emerged. The paradox of nationalist entrepreneur or entrepreneur of nationalism is that in order to intensify the commodification of the Carnival, it must be represented as though it is actually ‘authentic’ or ‘noncommodified.’ Tensions are between a desire to maintain putative authenticity and a desire to locate that authenticity in the past. (63)

Here Green and Scher explain the paradox that is associated with the cultural practice of Carnival in the era of global tourism. This paradox unfolds through the fact that Carnival preserves Trinidad’s collective memory only by exposing this memory to the global capital as a rare commodity. Green and Scher imply that Carnival in this period falls in the hands of the local bourgeoisie which promotes the authenticity of culture in order to sell it to the global market and, to borrow Fanon’s words, prostitute the nation. The sense of nationalism, or the pride of one’s nation, becomes itself a commodity that local nationalist entrepreneurs use to increase their profit. Indeed the national entrepreneurs

make the cultural practice of Carnival more expressive of national pride so as to be ceaselessly desired as flavours of the local global tourists hanker for.

These historical stages in the genealogy of Carnival therefore illustrate that calypso music and dance in Trinidad are inscribed by various relations of power, social, economic, and cultural mobility that characterise Trinidad's modern history. Rohlehr synthesises that

a full study of the emergence of calypso during the nineteenth century would need to consider these several elements: (1) the musics and dances of the largely French Creole slave society before Emancipation and , in particular, the various African inputs into that complex of musics and dances; (2) the musics and dances of pre-dominantly Anglophone West Indian immigrants between 1840 and 1900; (3) the musics and dances of the distinctive groups or 'nations' of Liberated Africans during the post-Emancipation period; (4) the persistence of a small Hispanic element in Trinidad, the maintenance of constant contact with Venezuela and Curacao, and the influence of Venezuelan migrants on music, dance, and masquerade; (5) the ritual celebration of all these things in the annual Carnival as well as their simplification into a few predominant forms by 1900 when oral and scribal evidence makes the task of ethnomusicologist a music simpler one. (8, 9)

Rohlehr explains that the mixture of sounds which overlap in calypso dance and music is actually representative of the overlap of tongues, races, ethnicities, and the cultures that intertwine and constitute the multi-layered discourse of the nation of Trinidad. Rohlehr describes the historical materiality through which Trinidad Calypso music and dance of Carnival acquire their meanings as a cultural form of expression. He implicitly rejects the monolithic conception of Carnival as a national event, just as Earl Lovelace does in *The Dragon Can't Dance*.

Being chronologically situated in the late 1950s and moving into early 1970s, *The Dragon Can't Dance* reflects the history of the clashes between the politicized steel bands and "bad johns" in the 1950s, the rise of nationalism in the early 1960s, and the

global commercialisation of carnival in the early 1970s. The novel reflects the image of Carnival as a symbol of ethnic homogeneity and celebration of African collective memory through Aldrick's making and dance of the dragon and through the nineteenth century warrior tradition of stick fighting which Fisheye and his steel bands preserve. The novel also draws on the widespread nationalist ideology of the PNM party politics in which Yvonne is involved. Besides, the novel addresses the ways in which these politics overlap with the US based Black Power movement, and most importantly the ways in which nationalist politics turns into a farce that betrays the project of oneness it promises. Aldrick's speech and call for his community to "rise, rise up . . . to be people for our own self, [and] take power" (189) re-enacts the abortive ideology of black power and more precisely the speech of Eric Williams which sought to unite Creole Trinidadians under the discourse of the nation in 1959.¹²⁰ Aldrick realises the failure of this political project of nationalism both when he is in prison and after his release in the early 1970s when he decides to give up the dragon dance and start a new life with Sylvia. Nevertheless, despite ending with a happy re-union that restores Aldrick's sense of himself, the novel remains sceptical about resolutions and instead invites us to ask the following question: Does the narrative of collective memory, that feeds the discourse of national identity in Trinidad, resolve the meaning of dance and calypso in the novel or does it keep it unsettled? In order to address this question, I first need to explain how Carnival in the novel incorporates the discourse of collective memory that is crucial for the narrative of nation formation in Trinidad.

3.3. *The Dragon Can't Dance: Dance, Collective Memory, and Nativism*

The Dragon Can't Dance addresses the cultural practice of Carnival from Lovelace's Afro-Creole perspective that both calls for the preservation of African cultural memory and questions the blind preservation of this memory. The novel first presents dance as a repository of African collective memory which Aldrick's performance carries and enacts in the Trinidad Carnival:

Up on the Hill Carnival Monday morning breaks upon the backs of these thin shacks . . . sweeping yards in a ritual, heralding the masqueraders' coming, that goes back centuries for its beginnings, back across the Middle Passage, back to Mali and to Guinea and Dahomey and Congo, back to Africa when Maskers were sacred and revered, the keepers of the poisonous and heads of secret societies, . . . [masqueraders] . . . would dance and make their terrible cries, affirming for the village, the tribe warriorhood and femininity, linking the villagers to their ancestors, their Gods, remembered even now, so long after the Crossing, if not in the brain, certainly in the blood; so that every Carnival Monday morning, Aldrick Prospect, with only the memory burning in his blood, a memory that has endured the three hundred odd years to Calvary Hill felt, as he put on his dragon costume, a sense of entering a sacred mask that invested him with an ancestral authority to uphold before the people of this Hill, this tribe marooned so far from the homeland that never was their home, the warriorhood that had not died in them, their humanness that was determined not by their possession of things. (134)

This paragraph's uninterrupted sentence reflects the content it describes; namely, the continuity of the African ancestral rituals in the Caribbean Carnival during the 1950s when steel bands revived the nineteenth century tradition of warriorhood and stick fighting dance. This moment in the novel also emphasises that Carnival dancers and masqueraders preserve the African tradition of masks through which the ancestors' dead bodies connect with the world of the living according to African world views.¹²¹ African collective memory recurs in the Caribbean Carnival as "ancestral authority" symbolically "burning in blood" and legitimising racial unity and cultural integrity in

dance. Ancestral memory acquires its authority as it runs through Aldrick's blood while he makes, wears, and dances the dragon which is "simultaneously history and his-story" "weaving and interlacing "into the fabric of the dragon costume"(Reyes 110-111). This fusion of the personal and the collective symbolises the experience of belonging and appurtenance which emerges from within the lack of possession and poverty that overwhelms the characters' daily life in the novel.

Gerard Aching points out the image of blood in the novel and explains that it gains significance less in terms of biology than collective memory which Aldrick reflects in his dragon dance. Aching suggests that

it is necessary to conceptualise blood not as a biological fact but primarily as access to corporeal / historical knowledge through performance . . . these bloodlines and the memory that flows through them transcend the imposed geographical borders and real deterritorialisations to produce communal sentiments based on an appreciation for the dragon's dance . . . what this memory in the blood accomplishes is the definition, rationalisation, and advocacy of the Hill's place in the African diaspora. (62)

Aching sees dragon dance in Lovelace's novel as a space in which the cultural memory of Africa as home culture returns through the body in a de-centred way. Despite recalling the discourse of diaspora in which belonging unfolds through dispossession of home, Aching's comment describes the "common sentiment" of Africanness that unifies African Caribbean people in Trinidad. Aching's reference to blood is revealing because it explains how this image "transcends" physical borders and becomes an essence African Caribbeans share through their experience of displacement in the New World to which they have been sailed as slaves. Blood accordingly is a metaphor of collective feeling of commonality, cohesion, and purity generated by the discourse of belonging

and recuperation of the essence of peoplehood which Aldrick emphasises in another moment of dance in the novel.¹²²

The idea of peoplehood indicates the sense of unity that dominates the discourse of cultural nationalism and unfolds in Aldrick's dragon dance for which he refuses to be paid. This moment in the novel is so revealing that I quote it at length:

He watched terror strike pale faces as he lunged towards them, as he smiled inwardly as they grinned nervously and rushed hands into their pockets to find coins to offer him in appeasement, as was the tradition. But no, No. He refused the money. He wanted it to be known that he was for real, that you couldn't just offer him a coin and he would disappear. He wanted them to know that he would always be threatening there, a breath ways from them. Some couldn't understand it, this refusal of the coins. They thought that they were not offering enough; and as he danced before them they made another journey into their pockets and showed him more coins. He didn't take the money- 'No, this could not happen! This dragon was crazy. This fellar wanted trouble!' But it was carnival. Whoever heard someone called the police foe a Dragon. Aldrick growled and he spat and he moved to press against them, watched them grow more afraid, more confused He wanted to frighten them He liked it when they saw him coming and gathered up their children and ran. Oh, he danced. He danced pretty. He danced to say, 'You are beautiful, Calvary Hill . . . Look at your steel bands how they playing! Look at your children how they dancing. . . You is people, people. People is you people. He wanted everybody to see him. When they saw him, they had to be blind not to see. (138)

Aldrick contests the neo-colonial project of promoting the cultural heritage of Trinidad as a global commodity by refusing to sell his dragon dance to foreign tourists, euphemistically depicted as "pale faces." Instead, he celebrates his dance as a moment of national unity and peoplehood.¹²³ Being captured by the warrior spirit of stick fighters and steel bands, Aldrick employs his dragon growling as a mode of resisting systems of dominance and freeing the black body that has been chained for centuries.¹²⁴ He sees both his dance and the music of the steel bands accompanying him, as moments of harmony and beauty unifying the people around their collective history which they have

inherited and through which they become visible as a people. The predominance of the verbs “look” and “see” in the above passage explains that Aldrick dances his dragon not only to enact the blood of collective memory burning in him but also assert his visibility and that of his people otherwise left invisible.

Nevertheless, this visibility of Afro-Creole ‘people’ in dance is deeply embedded in the nativist discourse of identity and culture which romanticises people’s struggle for freedom. By nativist discourse, I mean the discourse which emphasises the return to a pure notion of culture originating in the pre-colonial modes and practices and excluding different races and ethnicities as menacing to one’s integrity. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith, and Helen Tiffin note that

the term [nativism] is most frequently encountered to refer to the rhetoric of decolonisation which argues that colonialism needs to be replaced by the recovery and promotion of pre-colonial, indigenous ways . . . the nativist project of recuperation [is a form of] reconstruction of tradition based on . . . [the image of] the pre-colonial indigenous culture as authentic. (160)

This definition of nativism applies well to the role which dragon dance and steel bands play in Lovelace’s novel as “pre-colonial indigenous ways” through which the discourse of decolonisation articulates itself in Trinidad Carnival during the 1950s and 1960s.¹²⁵ The discourse of nativism in the novel unfolds through the image of ancestral authority that incorporates both Aldrick’s dance and the tradition of warriorhood “which had not died in” the steel bands. The novel illustrates that Aldrick’s performance is grounded in the ideology of the return “back to Africa back to Mali, Guinea, and Dahomey.” This wish for return to the past marks the meaning of the dance as a nativist discourse that recuperates and reconstructs tradition as a strategy of resistance and self-reinvention against racism, colonialism, and cultural enslavement. The image of

warriorhood is also a form of “authentic indigenous culture” steel bands preserve and Aldrick promotes in his “real” and “threatening” dragon as a mode of anti-colonial resistance.

Being grounded in the centrality of African masquerade as empowerment, Aldrick’s dragon dance represents an Afro-centric world view that employs paradigms of identity construction as essentialising as the Euro-centric discourse it contests. Molefe Kete Asante explains that

to be Afrocentric is to place Africans and the interests of Africa at the centre of our approach to problem solving. There is neither recognition of African classical thought nor of the African classical past in the Eurocentric formulations. We are essentially left with a discontinuous history and uncertain future. (9)

Asante describes Afro-centrism as a discourse of resistance which attributes recognition to Africans in the pre-dominantly Eurocentric world in which African history and culture are silenced by racial and colonial amnesia. Yet, Asante’s discourse also shows that Afro-centrism, which has always been contested in the Caribbean context, is a project that is as essentialist as the Eurocentric colonial discourse of power it resists. Like Euro-centrism, Afro-centrism produces a totalising discourse of identity “based on the myth of Africa as a single unified country or nation” (244). By virtue of this imagined narrative of African community, the tenor of Afro-centrists’ discourse is [as] essentialist as the language Aldrick employs in his description of the dragon dance and steel bands in Trinidad Carnival and that reflects the rhetoric of the Afro-dominated people’s national movement in Trinidad led by Eric Williams. The latter indeed uses “clear-ethno-racial appeals in reaching out to black voters in the more economically depressed areas” of Port of Spain (Harney 39). Yet, although Eric Williams won the

elections and became a president in 1962, his party was still threatened by the presence of the Democratic Labour Party which defended the rights of the Indian community in Trinidad. Williams actually reflected the ethnic antagonism of the Afro-Creoles towards Indian Trinidadians when he indicted the Indians in Trinidad as “hostile and recalcitrant minority” (qtd. Harney 130). Such exclusivist rhetoric is a keystone of the nationalist “pedagogy” (Bhabha) Trinidad, like Guyana, employed through its cultural and racialised politics.¹²⁶

Homi Bhabha confirms that the narrative of the nation is grounded in metaphor and that “the entitlement of the nation is its metaphor” (149). The elements of blood, memory, beauty, and peoplehood in Lovelace’s novel actually form the metaphoric spectrum through which the Afro-Creole Trinidadian nation entitles itself. This metaphoric entitlement expresses itself in dance and steel band music which are visual patterns that mediate the difference between the dominant Creole culture and the “minority” cultures of indentured immigrants whom Williams describes as unruly. The novel also metaphorises the categories of dance and music since it describes them through the idea of the racial homogeneity of the nation. Aldrick romanticises both the dragon and the dance when he sees the former as “sacred’ and “real” and the latter as priceless. By romanticising the dance, I mean exoticising and de-historicising it, that is taking it out of the historical and economic materiality that determines it as a commodity for the devouring cannibalism of global consumerism.¹²⁷ The images of veneration and sacredness attributed to steel bands and masks as “towers” and the “sacred” respectively draw from the rhetoric of nativism which idealizes indigenous culture as a space of resistance. This rhetoric also employs beauty as an idealising category through which

Aldrick defines the dance, steel band music, dancers, musicians, and his people in general. Beauty more particularly recalls the discourse of Negritude which, as John Mbiti reminds us, makes blackness a “mystique, a virtue and a quality of which one must and should be proud” (352). Aldrick’s pride in the “beauty” of his dance and people is ironic because it orients the dance towards the very commercialised enterprise which he resists when he refuses to be paid for his dance. Dancers and steel band musicians Aldrick describes as visible are symbolically invisible since they emerge not through the forces that regulate their bodies and stimulate their resistance but through the metaphors of beauty and sacredness that turn them into abstract ideas and images. Carnival dancers and musicians thus transcend their socio-historical tensions in the same way in which Fisheye is uplifted through the image of the movie heroes with whom he identifies.

Furthermore, the image of bloodlines is also a myth that idealises Aldrick’s dance by presenting it as a mode of eternalising African gods and ancestors “who are remembered long after the crossing if not in the brain, certainly in the blood” (134). The image of blood in the description of Aldrick’s dance expresses a sense of permanence that is not different from the one empire attributes to itself. Gerald Aching also idealises the category of bloodlines in Aldrick’s dance by describing the ways in which they transcend geographical borders. Aching, I argue, fails to notice that bloodlines are themselves metaphoric borders separating Afro-Creoles from other ethnicities in Trinidad and relying heavily on the fantasmic inscriptions of race. He hardly probes how the nativist discourse of purity of blood in Aldrick’s dance repeats rather than disrupts the Eurocentric and racist discourse of power which Afro-Creoles resist in the first

place. Ann Laura Stoler reminds us that “the myth of blood [which] pervades nineteenth century racism [in Europe] . . . [is] traced . . . from an aristocracy legitimacy, pure blood, and descent . . . [and] dependent on an imperial politics of exclusion” (51). Although Stoler’s statement draws from a different historical experience and genealogy, it still allows us to notice how the idea of blood, or what Robert Young calls “sanguinary past,” is not absolute, true, or prior to colonial organisation of knowledge.¹²⁸ Stoler’s statement rather allows us to see that the category of blood, which belong to ideologies of pseudo-scientific racism, is a myth and an imagined narrative invented by discourses of power such as Eurocentrism or Afro-centrism to measure human variation in terms of descent according to which racial and social exclusions and inclusions are established and validated. Earl Lovelace indeed integrates this mythical discourse of blood not only as a way to contest its hegemony but also an alibi to gain more hegemony and exclude the Indian indentured immigrants in Trinidad, whom Pariag symbolises, through the very literary act of speaking for them.¹²⁹ Yet, before examining the impact of this myth on the character of Pariag, it is first useful to explore the ways in which this myth inscribes itself on the body of Aldrick as he makes his dragon.

3.4. The Dragon Can’t Dance: Collective Memory and the Body of the Dancer

Aldrick is so deeply submerged in his “collective choreography” (Aching 24) of making his dragon that he alienates himself from his body. While he is in his room, Aldrick

worked solemnly on his dragon costume . . . it was in a spirit of priesthood that Aldrick addressed his work, for the making of his dragon costume was to him always a new miracle, new test not only of his skill but of his faith . . . only by

faith he could bring alive. . . that dragon. . . every thread he sewed, every scale he put on the body of the dragon was a thought a gesture, an adventure, a name that celebrated some part of his journey to and his surviving upon this hill. He worked as it were in a flood of memories, not trying to assemble them, to link them to get a linear meaning, but letting them soak him through and through. (49, 50)

The words “solemnly,” “spirit of priesthood,” and “faith” form the religious imagery that describes the ways in which Aldrick is deeply dedicated to the making of his dragon. This religious holiness, which overlaps with the essentialist idea of the wholeness and purity of the Afro-Creole nation and race, absorbs Aldrick’s body and dissolves it in an imaginary through which he identifies with the dragon as a symbol of cultural struggle and survival. Aldrick’s body thus melts into the fantasy of his “faith” that is contingent upon the “miracle” of bringing the body of the dragon to life.

Feeling alienated from his body as if it did not belong to him, Aldrick becomes sexually impotent and unable to approach Sylvia. When Sylvia stands before him

hurling at him with all the fragile softness and youth and warmth of her womanness, announced and emphasised and shouted out in the pathos and beauty and ridiculousness of the handed down dress and the oversized shoes and the lipstick and the ribbon in her hair . . . Aldrick was a dragon . . . the only responsibility he had to bear now was to his dragon. (*The Dragon* 51)

While Sylvia’s passionate offer reminds Aldrick of his body as an agent of desire, he instead prefers to keep his body metaphorically drowned in the “flood of memories . . . [which] soak him through and through” (52). Aldrick sees Sylvia’s sexual call as a form of imprisonment which draws “him into that world of ordinary living and caring that he has avoided all his life” (57, 58). Sylvia, who erotically displays herself through “the handed down dress and the oversized shoes and the lipstick,” stands as an object of desire Aldrick rejects because he is absorbed by “the ancestral authority” (*Aching* 44) of

the dragon.¹³⁰ Aldrick lives so devotedly for the dragon that he identifies with it, attributes life to it, and simultaneously takes life from his own body as an agent of desire. At this point, Aldrick's body becomes a metaphorical body with no sensation since it is romanticised through the inanimate image of the dragon that pertains to an ideal world Aldrick contrasts with "ordinary living, [desiring] and caring." Aldrick is alienated from his body since it is, to borrow Reyes's words, "psycho-spiritually moving into the sacred time of Carnival" (112) for which he is preparing. Reyes notices that "when Aldrick becomes the dragon, he descends through history to evoke all that was achieved by his people" (112). Yet, this descent "through history" turns history into, to borrow Wilson Harris's words, a metaphor of "imprisonment" that makes Aldrick's body too numb to feel itself outside of the spectrality of the dragon.

The dragon is thus a collective space which oppresses Aldrick's body physically and sexually so as to liberate it metaphorically through what Frantz Fanon calls "a world of retroactive reparations" (*Black Skin White Masks* 205). By "retroactive reparations," Fanon means the discourses of tradition which enslaves the body and estranges it from itself by drowning it into metaphors, just as much as racist discourses do. Although Fanon's study focuses on the psychology of the black subject, it nevertheless describes the ways in which both black and white subjects and bodies are "mired in what the past determined" for them by discourses of tradition and collective memory. Fanon implies that the racially intensified discourse of nativism generates antagonism and hatred between races and invents the idea of race in the first place.¹³¹ Fanon insists that racism does not exist in itself but emerges as a product of the racially nativist constructions of the pure native Self and the impure immigrant Other. Fanon grounds his analysis in his

own experience of immigration in France where he discovers his blackness through the discourse of racism France inherits from “the imperial politics of exclusion” in Europe (Stoler 51).

Fanon suggests that we need to question “the world of retroactive reparations [in which our bodies] are mired,” imprisoned, and alienated so as to initiate a project of freedom and disalienation. Fanon insists that

both [white and black] must turn their backs on the inhuman voices which were those of their respective ancestors in order that authentic communication be possible. Before it can adopt a positive voice, freedom requires an effort at disalienation. At the beginning of his life a man is always clotted, he is drowned in contingency. (*Black Skin White Masks* 231)

Here Fanon describes that the project of disalienation needs to address the ways in which the human body, black or white, is “drowned “in collective tradition as the space of “inhuman voices . . . of ancestors. “By “inhuman voices” Fanon means ideas, prejudices, and stereotypes which we inherit from our ancestors and which haunt us and make our encounter with others strange, as Sara Ahmed notes in a different context.¹³²Fanon emphasises that in order for human beings to communicate, they need to transgress the colour line by challenging the “inhuman voices” of tradition which guide their path in life as if they were patterns of religious “faith.” That is why Fanon prays that his body makes him always a man who questions the authenticity of these “voices” that incarcerate us just as they do Aldrick’s body in his attic-like room. In this sense, Aldrick’s decision not to dance in Lovelace’s novel is significant since it allows him to question not only the global commodification of his dance but also the collective memory that stifles his body and drowns it in contingency, to borrow Fanon’s words.

Being as haunted by the enslaving collective memory as Fanon was before him, Aldrick allows his body to make him question the oppressive impact of his dragon which carries his cultural memory. Aldrick refuses to wear the dragon costume again not only because the dragon has become a fancy invention of global consumerism but also because it represents the symbol of oppression which deprives his body from feeling and desiring. It is very important to underline that Aldrick builds up “the thought that he didn’t believe in the dragon any more” (*The Dragon* 135) only when he sees Guy caressing Sylvia, the woman Aldrick loves. Having realised the alienating effect of the “faith” of the dragon on his body, Aldrick becomes aware that he has to “learn how to feel” (110) and reconcile with his body by taking it out of the “world of make-belief and fantasy . . . mock heroic spectacle, the essence of which is glitter and show. . . playing roles and adopting poses” (Chang 98). Refusing to dance for Aldrick means opting for the choreography of stillness through which his body refuses to move as a way to question the discourses that inscribe it in the “collective [dragon] choreography.”¹³³ The modal auxiliary “can’t” in the title, *The Dragon Can’t Dance*, indicates neither inability nor impossibility to dance but a lack of permission through which the body refuses to allow itself to be alienated by the discourses of tradition and commodification in the process of making and dancing the dragon respectively. Instead of denying the hegemony of these discourses on his body, Aldrick decides to “turn his back to the inhuman voices of his ancestors” (Fanon 231) by opening the possibility for a relational philosophy of culture and history that is not there but still to come. This philosophy is still to come because Aldrick is still unable to challenge the narrative of racial wholeness and ethnic integrity of the nation since he, upon leaving prison, refuses to get in Pariag’s

new shop to greet him. Here, the novel does not resolve the narrative of the nation through reconciliation between its ethnic groups in the heyday of cultural nationalism in Trinidad during the 1970s. The novel rather paves the way for further thinking about the narrative of the nation not only through the overlap of the personal and the national but through the ways in which the personal produces a political consciousness that interrogates the national from the perspective of dance and music.

The novel thinks through the nation not by allegorising it, or making the personal reflect the national, but by unsettling the integrity of the national through the political consciousness that the personal develops via dance and music. I borrow the term allegorisation of the nation from Fredrick Jameson who argues that Third World Literature, as opposed to Western literature, or novels are “national allegories” in which the self-realization of individuals reproduces that of the nation. Jameson argues that

all third-world texts are necessarily . . . allegorical, and in a very specific way they are to be read as what I will call national allegories.... The story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society. (545 - 546)

According to Jameson, fictional works in “third world” literatures produce a narrative in which the growth, development, and self-realisation of characters reproduce the growth of the nation. Characters in “Third World” fiction according to Jameson’s formula of “national allegory” are entirely representative since their personal destinations reflect the destiny of the community to which they belong.¹³⁴ In this case, the nation is narrated in postcolonial novels through the image of individuals just as we notice in Lovelace’s portrayal of female characters in his novel.

The Dragon Can't Dance describes female characters through images of fertility of the nation to which Lovelace aspires in the age of cultural nationalism. Dance is employed as a metaphor that serves this ideological purpose. For instance, the narrator in the novel focuses on how

these women with baskets and with their heads tied . . . winding daily down this hill on which no buses run . . . to market, to work as a domestic . . . these women, in this season bounce with that tall delicious softness of bosom and hip, their movements a dance, as if they were earth priestesses heralding a new spring. (27)

Besides being eroticised, women's bodies in this passage are romanticised as sites of adoration and / or nurture. Lovelace, like many Caribbean writers of his generation, tends to elevate Caribbean women by using tropes of motherhood and fertility that can be a pattern of a Caribbean pastoral. Dionne Brand notices that in the work of Lovelace "like [in] that of Jacques Roumain or . . . George Lamming, the female body is . . . like land to be traversed or owned. . . a country, . . . unspoiled land, as territory for anti-colonial struggle . . . and a builder of the binary pedestal" (34, 35). Brand helps us see that the female body in Lovelace's novel unfolds through the allegory of the nation and / or land. The image of the above women as "earth priestesses" actually suggests that Lovelace writes at a time of cultural nationalism in which the meaning of the body is framed within the discourse of the nation. Dance is invested in the metaphorisation and / or allegorisation of the female body and subjectivity since both dance and music "are two aspects of folk tradition that have functioned as fertile sources of metaphors for Lovelace" (Aiyejina xi). Dance is a source of Lovelace's metaphor of the female body as the fertile land and / or nation he longs for as a nationalist writer. This image of fertility of the land allegorises, in Jameson's sense of the term, the Caribbean black

female body as land to be owned or the nation to be re-conquered in “the embattled situation of the public third-world [anti-colonial] culture”(Jameson 546). The privacy of the female body in Lovelace’s novel is accordingly made public through the nation which is itself gendered within the formula of “national allegory.”

Nevertheless, although Lovelace’s novel portrays female characters through the image of the fertility of the nation, it still deviates from Jameson’s model of national allegory since Lovelace’s characters interrogate the narrative of the nation rather than merely reflect it. Lovelace’s novel does not tell the history of the nation entirely through the stories of his characters but rather uses the consciousness of characters as a space through which it questions the linearity of the narrative of the nation. Stefano Harney notices that

at first the novel might appear to be an account of the emasculation of Carnival, from its rough roots in the poor hills around Port of Spain, where playing mass, stick fighting, or beating pan were not only methods of expression but a substitute for real empowerment, to its middle class, and nationalist, cooptation by corporate sponsorship, tourism and consumerism. Such a narrative history, and accompanying allegory, would suit Jameson’s national allegory well since the novel tells the small story of a single yard of characters while also telling a larger history of nation and culture. . . . Perhaps even Lovelace wanted to write a history of national culture. But on a closer examination he has not, or at least not one that can help reduce national culture to the signs and invention necessary to the nationalist trade. (43)

Harney demonstrates that Jameson’s theory of national allegory does not apply entirely to Lovelace’s novel. Harney first argues that the class and race tensions of the characters in the novel are stories that reflect the historical tensions of the nation of Trinidad at a definite moment in history. He also notes that the emasculation of the stick fight and steel band music reflects the sense of empowerment of the narrative of the nation. In this sense, the novel’s narrative of the personal overlaps with that of the national. Yet,

Harney also suggests the ways in which characters question the hegemony of the discourse of the nation from the vantage point of these cultural forms of expression, namely dance and music. In fact, both Aldrick's refusal to dance and Philo's decision to expand his calypso career beyond the nation are ways through which the novel questions the integrity of the nation rather than merely allegorises it. Harney thus confirms that "Lovelace cannot be contained by Fredric Jameson's national allegory. [Lovelace's] texts move from individual to nation, and then beyond to an unfettered individual whose national identity is universal" (46). Aldrick and Philo's personal choices are not predicated upon collective destinies but are critical of the fake and hollow meaning of the wholeness in which Fisheye, for instance, keeps believing even after having been to prison. Both Philo and Aldrick's alternatives thus open up "the question of individual will and creativity inside the nation, which in turn introduces the idea of the nation as a state to be transcended" (46, 47). Still this idea of transcending the nation through creativity remains problematic particularly from the vantage point of Aldrick's refusal to dance.

While Harney clarifies that the personal transcends the national through the spaces of dance and music in the novel, he still does not examine the ways in which this transcendence exoticises and de-historicises dance and music. Although Aldrick refuses to dance as a way to resist global commodification of his culture and free himself from the collective memory that oppresses his body, he unwittingly exoticises his dance through this very refusal. Aldrick's decision idealises the dragon dance by isolating it from the global consumerism to which it is historically subjected. Aldrick is aware throughout the novel that "ethnicity and nationhood . . . are history carried in the body"

(Harney 49). Yet, towards the end of the novel he becomes aware that his body is not “bound by that practice or that ideology” (Harney 49) of nationalism or neo-colonialism. Still, Aldrick’s sudden decision never to dance again explains that he exoticises his dance by alienating it from the regulating market place and implicitly associating it with the idealised notion of secrecy Western tourists attribute to it. Aldrick decides to give up his dance after he learns that the dragon has become the “fancy” object of global entertainment (*The Dragon* 268). Yet, his very act of resistance to commercialism makes him turn his dance into an abstract idea that rejects the historically material meaning of social and economic tensions in which dance unfolds.

Being distanced from the commercial tensions that regulate it, Aldrick’s dance emerges as a de-historicised “postcolonial exotic” (Huggan) through which the novel acquires its value in the global market. Huggan argues:

postcoloniality is a value regulating mechanism within the global late capitalist system of commodity exchange. Value is constructed through global market operations involving the exchange of cultural commodities and particularly, culturally othered goods. Postcoloniality’s regime of value is implicitly assimilative and market-driven. (6)

Huggan argues that although postcolonial studies reject the commodification of culture in the global market, it still contributes to this global commodification through its representation of the Other of Europe and / or empire whom it turns into exchange value. Huggan maintains that postcolonial literature and theory are instruments through which the value of this Other is regulated in the global market. Postcoloniality is “market driven” because it expands its own market through the promotion of the Other as a sellable commodity. In this sense, postcoloniality and the global system of commodity

exchange enter into a symbiotic relationship which the former seeks to resist through its anti-colonial intellectual engagement.

Seen in the light of Huggan's analysis, Lovelace's novel constructs the value of Aldrick as a culturally othered good through his very decision not to dance which makes his dance alluring as an object of secrecy for the reader/ tourist. The absence of the dance is its secrecy that makes Aldrick valuable as a commodity in the postcolonial market Lovelace indeed serves. Although Lovelace suggests Aldrick's refusal to dance as a strategy to resist the global commodification of the dance, this strategy ironically enough provides the very tangible proof that the novel promotes global late capitalist system of commodity exchange since it leaves refusal with no tangibly political credibility. The novel resists neo-colonial commodification of culture only by promoting a purified image of this culture through Aldrick's refusal to dance which incarcerates the dance and de-links it from the historical conditions of consumerism that make it tangible. The dragon eroticises itself since it makes itself unfold as a secret which Aldrick refuses to unveil to global investors.¹³⁵ Yet, this sense of secrecy is exactly what turns the dance into an exotic rare commodity in the global market where travellers, investors, entrepreneurs, and readers across the world seek to discover what there is about the dance that Aldrick suddenly refuses to unveil. Still, is that how the novel resolves its position about Carnival dance? Does the novel suggest any way other than self-eroticisation to subvert the narrative of the nation from the perspective of dance and music?

3.5. The Dragon Can't Dance: Dance, Music, and the Subversion of the Nation

Dance and music emerge as potential spaces the novel uses to subvert the linear narrative of the nation through the character of Pariag, the indentured immigrant Other. The novel subverts the nativist narrative of national identity through the character of Pariag who threatens the integrity the Afro-Creole narrative of identity by invading the internal space of Carnival dance and music. The novel's fifth chapter "The Spectator" describes the ways in which Pariag is physically present in Calvary Hill but socially and culturally invisible since he constantly wants to make himself seen. Pariag is an indentured East Indian immigrant who has lived in the countryside New Land but has moved with his wife Dolly to the urban space of Calvary Hill "to join up with the people, be part of something bigger than just New Lands sugar estate" (91) where he has worked before. Pariag becomes so fascinated with the Calypso music and stick fight dance in the Hill that "one day, carried away by the drums, he had jumped into the stick fight ring, but Seenath [his friend] had pulled him out. Real Carnival was a city thing, a Creole thing" (101,102). This moment visually reveals that stick fight dance is ethnically restrictive since it is a "Creole thing" which prohibits non-Creole people from entering the dance ring. The motto of "all o'we is one," which Carnival celebrates, is accordingly contingent upon the regulatory power of Creole identity as difference, that is between the Afro-Creole who define themselves as native and the Indian indentured immigrants who threaten to unhinge the category of the native. The above image of the dance circle illustrates that Carnival, which is a space of resistance, is organised around an ethnically constructed border non-Creole people are not entitled to cross, even if they were "carried

away by the drum.” Here, Carnival dance emerges as an agent of ethnic exclusion precisely because it enacts the sense of homogeneity which is central to the nativist discourse of Creole cultural identity.

Jocelyne Guilbault argues that Trinidad Carnival is deeply embedded in the politics of racial and ethnic authenticity and cultural exclusion upon which national identity is predicated in Trinidad. Guilbault notes:

As Carnival became understood as the exclusive domain of enslaved Africans, and hence of the black political subject, it marginalised the histories of other diasporas, notably South Asian, entangled with the nation- state of Trinidad. Thus understood as a political technology, Carnival since its inception has articulated the cultural politics of race, nation, and diaspora. The politics of authenticity . . . pivot on how the selective tradition of calypso came historically to dominate the contours of Carnival and become emblematic of the nation-state. (40)

Drawing from Michel Foucault’s concept of the technology of power, Guilbault argues that Carnival dance and music is a political technology of power that organises itself around racial and ethnic exclusions. Stick fight dance accordingly illustrates the contradictions within itself since it epitomizes a pattern of the very racial exclusion it contests in its resistance to Eurocentric racism. Carnival and its constituting elements of music and dance emerge as forms of policing power through which Creole culture draws its ethnic lines of descent and seeks to make itself immune to the contamination of the South-East Asian Other, namely Pariag. The latter resists this political technology of power and its “myth of purity of blood” (Stoler 51) by deciding to join the stick fight dance and symbolically claiming that it is hybrid rather than national. At this point, Pariag transgresses the closed space of Creole nativist “logic in which cultural hybridities were seen as subversive and subversion was contagious” to the “full

blooded” Afro-Creoles (Stoler 52) whose steel band music Pariag also wishes to permeate.

Pariag expresses his desire to mix Indian and Creole music together as a way to deconstruct the ethnic unity of the nation from inside the cultural practice of Carnival. Pariag tells Aldrick “I wish I did walk with a flute or a sitar, and walk in right there in the middle of the steel band yard ... and sit down with my sitar on my knee and say, Fellars, This is me, Pariag from New Land. Gimme the Key. Give me the Do Re Mi” (98). Pariag’s wish to walk in the steel band’s yard illustrates a political initiative to contest the reductive discourse of Trinidad’s national identity which defines itself only in terms of black race, steel band music, stick fight dance, and African-inherited masquerade. His wish “to sit down with my sitar on my knee” in the steel band site indicates that he wants to blend the Indian and Creole choreographies of performance and consequently debunk the binary of Creole vs. Indian that is central to the nativist discourse of cultural identity in Trinidad. His deconstructive project unfolds through his wish to fuse the Creole Do Re Mi of steel band and the Indian Do Re Mi of the sitar so as to come out with a music that is yet to come.¹³⁶ By not telling us about the product of this mixture, the novel hardly offers any ready-made resolution to the narrative of the nation and ethnic reconciliation. For the novel rejects the answer to reconciliation in the “Creolisation “ of the Indian, which is a choice made by the Indian character Balliram, who “liked to curse and get on like Creole people,” boasting about “his Creole girlfriends and about the dances he went to” (67). In contrast to Balliram, Pariag realizes that “we didn’t have to melt into one. They woulda see me” (88). Pariag actually uses music and dance not as spaces in which he alienates himself from his

culture but as epistemologically potent spaces of cultural mobility that allow him to put the stagnation and absolutism of identity discourses into question. The novel is groundbreaking because it presents the Indian indentured immigrant not through racialised constructions of identity but through a political consciousness he develops about the potential of music and dance to dismantle separatist discourses of nation formation in Trinidad.

Pariah's subversion of the dominant narrative of the nation also unfolds differently when he rides his new bike to sell candies amid Carnival festivities which exclude him on ethnic grounds. Pariag's new bicycle not only enrages the Afro-Creole members of the Hill who are too poor to afford a bike, it also represents the newness of hybridity that enters the world of African-Creole racial and national integrity and risks to infect the purity of Afro-Creole blood and integrity of its identity. Ann Stoler notes that the belief in blood is based not only on science and medicine but also on a

nationalist discourse in which a folk theory of contamination based on cultural contagions, not biological tainting, distinguished true members of the body politic from those who were not. These folk theories of race were derived from how empire was experienced in Europe. They were disseminated through an imperial logic in which cultural hybridities were seen as subversive and subversion was contagious. (52)

Read in the light of Stoler's analysis, Pariag subverts the European "folk theories of race" which the Calvary Hill community internalises without realising that these theories also produce the system of slavery that abuses African Creoles as cheap labour for the economic ends of empire. Being too self-centred to develop a critical consciousness of their collective history, Creole local bourgeois people in Trinidad become instead the agents who adopt European folk theories of race to fulfill their own economic interests.

The Afro-Creole middle class thus constructs a racist discourse of South East Asian immigrants as morally unprincipled, degraded, deceitful, prone to perjury, and fond of litigation. Afro-Creoles accordingly interpret the will of South East Asians to integrate socially and economically into Trinidadian society as a threat to resist with all means.¹³⁷ Guy and Cleothilda, the representatives of middle class ideology in the novel, feel insecure not only because Pariag is demonized as replete with vices Creoles fear in themselves, but also because he is described as being capable of taking over them economically. Cleothilda warns that Pariag would soon open his shop and Guy predicts that Pariag “will take over the whole hill, the whole town” (108). Here, Guy and Cleothilda, to use John Higham’s words in a different context, represent patterns of the race-conscious “nativist [who] stood always as a nationalist in a defensive posture” (169). Aldrick indeed clarifies that Pariag is a threat mainly because he menaces the interests of Guy and Cleothilda. Aldrick remarks that “Guy and Cleothilda ain’t fooling me. The Indian is a threat to them, he ain’t no threat to me . . . Guy and Cleothilda trying to protect what they own” (110-111). This implies that Pariag is a threat not only because he cuts across the Creole national metaphor of bloodlines, but also because he unveils the internal rift in the nationalist discourse which employs the rhetoric of peoplehood only to protect the interests of a few local middle class proponents and entrepreneurs. While contaminating the African-Creole racial hegemony, Pariag actually diagnoses the tumour of class antagonism that eats away at the body of the nation which describes itself in terms of solidity and / or solidarity through the hollow motto of “all o’ we is one.” Pariag’s transgression reflects that “Trinidad nationalist discourse was characterised . . . by a lack of class politics . . . Nationalism [in Trinidad] becomes no

more than a racial unity, emptied of history, class or common social goals”(Harney 37). Thanks to his position of otherness, the character of Pariag allows us the reader to discern the ways in which the nationalist discourse in Trinidad is grounded in an imagined racial unity that is devoid of any consciousness about class politics or social power relationships that haunt this unity as Guy and Cleothilda’s fear well demonstrates.

Pariag thus illustrates that Carnival dance and music do not only articulate the cultural politics of race and nation, as Guillard argues, but also mediate resistance to this politics from within the lived reality of social exclusion. The novel presents in its epigraph the Creole perspective through which music, dance, calypso, and costumes are associated with the people’s endurance and survival in an environment of deprivation that has led them to “cultivate again with no less fervour the religion with its Trinity of Idleness, Laziness and Waste”(The Dragon 25). Yet, the novel also presents Pariag’s perspective through which dance and music emerge as modes of intervention in the technology of ethnic and racial nativism that Afro-Creoles manifest towards indentured immigrants in Trinidad. Seen from the Creole perspective, music and dance are spaces in which people liberate themselves but still exclude the Indian immigrants whom they invent as Other. Yet, seen from Pariag’s own imaginary perspective, music and dance are spaces in which Creole and Indian cultures may intertwine. Pariag’s will to permeate the Creole spaces of dance and music in the novel overlaps with his role in unravelling the silent class antagonism that haunts the discourse of racial unity Trinidad Carnival celebrates in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Unlike Aldrick who exoticises dance by turning it into secrecy, Pariag uses dance as a political tool through which he resists ethnic and racial nativism that produces him as Other. At this point, the novel intervenes

in postcolonial studies of dance since it constructs meaning about dance not through the colonial travel narrative but through the potentially transformative force of the body of the marginalised subject, namely Pariag. Both Pariag's actual movement of jumping in the stick fight dance and his wish to walk in the steel band yard with his sitar are choreographies of resistance that symbolically intervene in the very politics of race and ethnicity which initially exclude this movement on nativist grounds. Pariag's actual movement of jumping and potential movement of walking open the possibility for a new choreography, or design of bodily motion, in which the colonial body acquires meaning independently from the travel narrative of desire around which postcolonial studies of dance frequently rotates.¹³⁸ This interventionist potential of the performative arts in the discourse of resistance in the novel unfolds differently in the case of Philo who manifests a consciousness of his calypso culture in relation to other cultures.

3.6. The Dragon Can't Dance: Calypso and the "Relational" Narrative of the Nation

Although the novel describes Carnival from the African Creole perspective, it still broadens this perspective through the character of Philo who re-defines his calypso art not only from its root identity but also its potential to relate to different cultural spaces. Philo has always felt emptiness, rejection, and dismay in the milieu where he grew up as a child, the Hill community of his adulthood, where he develops as adult, and the bourgeois neighbourhood where he lives as a famous Calypsonian. The novel shows how Philo was ridiculed at school "because he was skinny"(240), felt dismayed at home because his father represents "defeat" and failure (235), and rejected in the Hill by Cleothilda who scorns his love offer "in one fluid gesture of disgust" (32). Yet, Philo's

social maladjustment neither isolates him nor impedes his way towards self-fulfillment. It rather motivates him to win the Calypso King Contest with his sexually suggestive calypso ‘the Axe Man,’ which he sells to foreign sponsors so as “to write down my name” in history as he says to Aldrick (127). Despite being despised by Fisheye for having betrayed the Calvary Hill root culture, Philo is still determined to expand his roots beyond the Hill where young people feel stagnation and refuse to find ways to alter it. Philo wonders

what did they [i.e. people who despise him in the Hill] want him to do? Continue to stand on the Corner watching people? What did they want him to do? End up like his father singing and playing the Arse on Local Talent on Parade? The show didn’t exist anymore . . . He had to move on, and they couldn’t, wouldn’t leave the Corner . . . he had to get away, to move in larger area of space, to move, to move. (246)

Here, Philo refers to the Badjohns, Fisheye and his companions, who are associated with the tradition of warriorhood and whose lives are focused on the corner Hill in Port of Spain of the late 1950s and 1960s. The corner for Badjohns is less the battle field it had been in the postwar era “than a haven, and more than a haven vantage point, a podium from which they might view the Hill travelling up and down its main street” (*Dragon* 166). Philo rejects the lifestyle of stagnation and statism, which the badjohns lead, and instead decides to move on beyond it. Philo “needs the air, needing to move his limbs, stretch” (247) beyond the limits of the authority of his ancestors but without being culturally or socially alienated. Philo refuses to be blinded by the easy life in Diego Martin, and in one of his calypsos describes how the people in Diego Martin “bleach themselves . . . like robots that wind up and set running” (267). Indeed, Philo’s return to Cleothilda’s house in the Hill at the end of the novel symbolically illustrates the fact that he remains tied to his local culture even if he sells his calypso to foreign consumers.

While selling his calypso to foreign investors, Philo does not mean to betray his cultural roots but rather allows these roots to grow through what the Martiniquan poet and critic Edouard Glissant calls the “poetics of relation.” Glissant notes that in “the Poetics of Relation, each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other” (*The Poetics of Relation* 11). Being inspired by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s philosophy of the rhizome which defines roots through combination rather than fixity and depth, Glissant reads cultures as root systems growing not in isolation but through the process of conjunction with other cultures.¹³⁹ By virtue of his relational conception of culture, Glissant rejects nativist narratives of identity through his distinction between “the absolute” and “diverse.” He envisions “the appearance of a new man who is able to live the relative after having suffered the absolute. When I say relative I mean the diverse, the obscure need to accept the other’s difference; and when I say absolute I refer to the dramatic endeavour to impose a truth on the Other”(147, 148). Glissant describes the emergence of a “new man” who broadens the sense of the truth of his cultural tradition by opening it to different forms of truth as a way to question its sense of statism and permanence. His distinction between “the absolute” and the “diverse” is central to the dynamic of his poetics of relation since the “new man” reaches the diverse only by uprooting the absolute in the discourse of identity and re-defining it through the ways it relates to the Other. In that case, truth establishes its meaning not through its universality and durability but its potential to extend to that outside of itself to which it relates. Glissant actually grounds his philosophy of culture and identity in his critique of the totality of the absolute, particularly when he insists that

we no longer reveal totality in ourselves by lightning flashes . . . we approach it through the accumulation of sediments . . . Lightning flashes are the shivers of

one who desires and dreams of a totality that is impossible . . . duration urges on those who attempt to live this totality, when dawn shows through the linked histories of peoples. (33)

Glissant's phrase "lightening flashes" indicates the religiosity and (w)holism implied in the narrative of the wholeness of the nation. "Lightening flashes" is an image of epiphany or revelation of "the totality of ourselves", as subjects culturally affiliated to one stable and venerated discourse of identity unfolding solely in relation to itself and, like colonial discourses of power, excluding difference as Other. Glissant rejects this mode of defining one's self or one's cultural identity and indicates instead that our sense of ourselves unfolds rather through the "accumulation of sediments," that is the growth of various cultural and historical residues in which the histories of peoples are linked to rather than isolated from each other.

Glissant's "poetics of relation" meshes well with Wilson Harris's conception of culture as a result of different fragments that draw from various cultures rather than a wholeness that is contingent upon ethnic and racial homogeneity. Harris argues:

One can't structure that wholeness. . . one moves into it ceaselessly, but all the time one moves with partial images . . . so that there is a ceaseless expedition into wholeness . . . one may not be immediately aware of how the partial image links up with another partial image until the centre of being in an imaginative work breaks or moves and the illusory centrality of the partial image is enriched in creative paradox. . . in the Caribbean and in the South Americas, because of the residue of cultures and what has happened in the past, that kind of approach seems to be significant. (30, 31 1980)

By wholeness, Harris means the unifying homogeneity and integrity that characterise the modern narrative of national identity. Harris's metaphor of "the partial images" implies that the wholeness of identity realises itself only in fragments linking up together through paradoxes and tensions. Harris frames his critique of the discourse of the

wholeness of the nation in the cultural space of the Caribbean in which cultures are defined through the partial images, or fragments of various races and ethnicities produced by “what happened in the past,” namely, slavery and ethnic cleansing. Harris not only deconstructs the pedagogy of the nation as integral and self-contained, he also challenges the colonial project of amnesia that cannibalises and exoticises indigenous cultures as a way to de-historicise them. His philosophy of the “ceaseless expedition” recalls Glissant’s conception of relational poetics which claims that “*epistemological break* with [the essentialist discourse of] *négritude* is complete” (Dash 148; emphasis in original). Both Glissant and Harris’s inquiries represent attempts towards breaking free from the ideas of cultural purity, racial authenticity and ancestral origination” (148). Still, although Glissant and Harris’s narratives are grounded in their experience of diaspora, it is still geographically modelled on the organic metaphor of the Caribbean archipelago as one nation. Yet, this narrative is nevertheless different from Earl Lovelace’s which reveals an attachment to his cultural identity of Trinidad.

Nevertheless, although Lovelace’s strong ties to his national Trinidadian culture distinguish him from Glissant and Harris’s experiences of diaspora in his novel, Lovelace also interrogates the modern discourse of homogeneity and racial integrity of the nation. The space, events, characters, and stories in *The Dragon Can’t Dance* are grounded in the contemporary history of the nation of Trinidad and the ideological tensions that both produce and are produced by this history. Jennifer Rahim notes that the world in Lovelace’s novel “is never an elsewhere, or nowhere, but always here, a ‘real’ location with ‘real’ people. The nation then is the legitimate space from which its inhabitants learn about themselves, and so speak about themselves to themselves, and to

the world. It is the location from which one begins to ‘see’, to ‘create’” (6). Rahim implies that Lovelace’s novel is situated in the nation of Trinidad rather than in diasporic or transnational space, as Glissant and Harris’s works. Rahim points out that the nation in Lovelace’s novel becomes legitimate as it provides a frame of reference from which characters are made “real” people who “speak about themselves to themselves.” Here the nation reflects its discourse of homogeneity through the characters’ act of speaking to themselves. Yet, Rahim adds that the nation in *The Dragon Can’t Dance* also acquires its legitimacy because it makes its people speak “to the world” and relate to spaces outside the geographical, ethnic, and racial boundaries of the nation. In this sense, the novel presents a narrative of the nation not only in terms of the veneration of the past, the sacredness of bloodlines, and the authority of ancestors, but also in terms of the openness “to the world” to which some of its characters speak. This openness does not mean that the characters in the novel are alienated or estranged from their own local culture through a transnational ideology; it rather means that they develop consciousness of their local culture through the latter’s potential to relate to the world outside itself. Lovelace makes this idea clear when he says that “one is not born into the world. Every one of us is born into a place in the world, in a culture, and it is from that standpoint of the culture that we contribute to the world” (*Growing in the Dark* 152). While Lovelace confirms that Trinidadians are anchored in a specific culture, he also maintains that this culture cannot be incarcerated in a nativist discourse that isolates it from the world outside itself but rather be accessible and open to the world to which it contributes and relates. It is from this relational perspective that Lovelace imagines his characters as ordinary people forming “the principles in the creation of the New World” (*Growing in*

the Dark 103) in which the nation sees itself in relation to the world outside itself rather than only to itself.

Lovelace's novel illustrates his relational view of the nation through the character of Philo who opens his calypso art to the world and develops an international consciousness of this art. Philo sees his calypso not only through the ways it embodies its African cultural heritage but also the ways this heritage acquires meaning as it relates to other cultures. Philo's project of moving on and growing is concomitant with vitalising his art through the ways it contributes to cultural spaces outside the ethnic, racial, and nationalistic boundaries of his identity as Afro-Creole Trinidadian. To borrow Glissant's terms, Philo does not see his identity in "absolute" terms but through the ways in which this absolute expands its sense of itself through other roots. Calypso is accordingly a form of "poetics of relation" through which Philo emerges as a "new man" permeating the global market to commercialise his art and make of commercialisation a way of constructing broader meaning about his culture. Philo sells his calypso to commodify what Fredrick Jameson calls "Third World" culture, but, at the same time, seeks to show that this culture acquires broader meanings through its "expedition" (Harris) to the "First World" and its transformative power to deconstruct the colonial binary of "First World" and "Third World." Philo does not frame calypso in nationalist terms of identity but sees it through the internationalist consciousness which he develops about his culture as he decides to grow and move on in his calypso career.

Frantz Fanon explains that it is critically productive to acquire an international consciousness of one's national culture in the process of constructing a narrative of the nation. Fanon famously argues:

the building of a nation is of necessity accompanied by the discovery and encouragement of universalising values. Far from keeping aloof from other nations, therefore, it is national liberation which leads the nation to play a part on the stage of history. It is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows. And this two-fold emerging is ultimately the source of all culture. (*The Wretched of the Earth* 199)

Fanon's statement occurs in his critique of the ideology of nationalism according to which the local bourgeoisie promotes local culture and heritage to the global market as a condition for the construction of an independent postcolonial nation state.¹⁴⁰ National culture for Fanon acquires its meaning through its potential to help us develop an international consciousness about the cultural works produced in the sphere of the nation, be they poetry, music, or dance. Indeed, by emphasising that culture should be directed towards defining the nation through an international lens, Fanon constructs a theory of national culture which Lovelace implements years later in his claim that local culture defines itself mainly through the ways it contributes to the world and builds up towards the future rather than freezes memories of venerated past traditions.

Rahim notices that Lovelace's perspective of national culture in *The Dragon* meshes well with Fanon's theory of national culture. Rahim argues that "Lovelace's project of 'National Independence' . . . is . . . universal in its scope . . . his humanist-nationalist / regionalist orientation intersects perfectly with Fanon's brilliant articulation of the symbiotic bond between a civic nationalism and a human world" (5). Rahim explains that Lovelace defines national independence in universal terms that transgress the essentialism of racial and ethnic nativism. She points out that Lovelace's sense of humanism is concurrent with Fanon's since both Lovelace and Fanon define the nation not through the racist and capitalist terms of relations that are inherited from colonialism

but through the ways in which the culture of the nation flourishes as it sees itself through other cultures rather than in antagonism with them. Rahim's analysis allows us to look further into the ways in which the novel unhinges the wholeness of the nation from the perspective of dance and music that paves the ground for the formation of black subjectivity and culture.

The permutation of Philo's calypso overseas symbolically illustrates this initiative towards what Nathaniel Mackey calls a movement "from noun to verb," that is a shift from the statism of national identity to the dynamism and will to grow. Mackey explains:

on a political level, [noun means] a containment of black mobility, a containment of the economic and social advances that might accrue to black artistic innovation. The domain of action and the ability to act suggested by *verb* is closed off by the hypostasis, paralysis, and arrest suggested by *noun*. The confinement to a pre-determined status (stasis), the keeping of black people 'in their place' gives rise to a countering, contestatory tendencies . . . movement from noun to verb. (266)

Mackey's distinction between noun and verb is situated in the context of his critique of the ways in which white musicians in the United States appropriate the artistic works of African American musicians as a way to erase their inventiveness. Mackey notices that appropriation is a race-oriented strategy to keep black artists contained in what he calls "noun", that is paralysis and stagnation as opposed to "verb," or the ability to act and grow. Mackey explains how white appropriation of black music also aims to restrain black musicians economically and socially so that they keep in the low ranks stereotypically assigned for them in racist discourses. In this sense, Mackey suggests that the notion of "verb" is politically relevant since it describes the action of contesting

racist stereotypes by means of the determination to grow and develop one's artistic potential.

Mackey's analysis is useful because it allows us to read Philo's growth in his calypso career as a movement from "noun" or paralysis of essentialist interpretation of culture to "verb" or mobility of the meaning of culture through diversity. Although Philo is not the product of the racist tensions to which African American musicians are subjected in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s, he still embodies "the ability to act" which Mackey associates with "verb." Philo's decision to grow in his calypso career is symbolically a movement of acting against the "noun" or stereotypes and misconceptions through which he is described as "skinny," "dark," and "betrayed." Philo's project of growth is also a way in which he metaphorically "stretches his limbs" beyond the nativist philosophy of his culture which internalises the white racism Mackey describes in America. Besides, Philo's challenge of the essentialist discourse of identity in Calvary Hill recalls Mackey's own critique of absolutist definition of culture. Mackey emphasises that "cultural diversity is cultural, that it is a consequence of actions and assumptions that are socially – rather than naturally, genetically - instituted and reinforced" (12). Here Mackey rejects the nativist paradigms of genetics and argues instead that culture emerges through the social and political relationships through which it is constructed as diverse, exactly as the cultural history of Trinidad Carnival demonstrates. Philo's decision to expand his calypso beyond Trinidad implements Mackey's notion of culture as diversity and thus assumes a political move which intervenes in the genetically oriented philosophy of culture that predominates Calvary Hill's community. Philo's movement and growth implement that music, as Mackey

notes, is “a laboratory index of possibility” (15) towards a newly choreographed discourse of resistance.

Yet, *The Dragon Can't Dance* still complicates Mackey's theory of music by transgressing its racial boundaries of blackness through the experience of Pariag which Mackey totally brushes off in his reading of Caribbean literature.¹⁴¹ Although Pariag's jump in the stick fight ring and walk in the steel band yard are forbidden and unfulfilled desires, they still represent modes of movement from the “noun” of the ethnic stereotypes that invent him as Other to “verb,” that illustrates his “domain of action or ability to act” (Mackey) and thus become a subject. Pariag's movements actually represent moments in which he enacts and imagines his ability to act from within the forces of exclusion enacted upon him by both Afro-Creole community and Mackey's own critical discourse of resistance. For despite his interest in Caribbean literature and theories of culture, Mackey remains silent about the ways in which indentured Indian immigrants in Trinidad in particular and the Caribbean in general could broaden the scope of music and dance as sites of empowerment. I would argue that Pariag's project of mixing steel band and sitar music in the novel indeed complicates the political meaning of the pattern of “versioning” in which cultures intertwine through the mixing of musical rhythms. Dick Hebdige insists that “‘versioning’ is at the heart not only of reggae but of *all* Afro-American and Caribbean music: jazz, blues, Rap, r&b, calypso, soca, salsa, Afro-Cuban, and so on” (12). Lovelace's novel intervenes in this theory of versioning by showing how Pariag's Indian sitar and Creole steel band music could generate a political movement from the nativist mode which reads cultures through contamination into the relational mode which reads cultures through conjunction. The

novel intervenes in Mackey's racially limited space of black music and expands it to the larger space of various categories of excluded subjectivities that act from their position of otherness in Trinidad.

Moreover, the novel allows us to see music and dance as critical categories of analysis through which we can imagine the possibility of a counter discursive historiography of the nation of Trinidad. Both Philo's project to grow and Pariag's project to permeate Carnival are instances of the emergence of a political consciousness about the writing of the history of the nation. This consciousness, David Scott argues, initiates a historiography in which it is

possible to refuse history its subjectivity, its constancy, its eternity; to think it otherwise than as the past's hold over the present, to interrupt its seemingly irrepressible succession, causality, its sovereign claim to determinacy. For in this thought a different possibility of community might have been made visible – community as a project. (Scott 105)

Scott's statement, which is taken from his analysis of the possibility of "de-historicising history," envisions a view of history that is contingent more on the formation of a future sense of identity than the archive of the past. Scott's project problematises the "constancy" of history as a discourse of permanence in which we read the present through shadow of the past. He argues that this process of challenging the hegemony of the past in the narrative of history generates the construction of a new conception of community still to come. Philo's project to grow in his calypso career anticipates a future perspective of history in which history is not fetishised but rather accumulated with the present for the construction of a narrative of the future of the nation and of the self. Philo locates his calypso in a narrative of history which is, in Ian Baucom's words, "never something that is purely past, done, finished with, distant, all worn out" (331) but

rather accumulative “not yet done with, not yet worn out” (331). Baucom’s words relate to the ways in which the experience of the endurance of the Atlantic crossing does not end in the past suffering but remains unfinished since it permeates the discourse of modernity through the metaphor of crossing in which the past accumulates with the future. Philo’s project to grow in the novel illustrates this sense of an unending history in which Trinidad calypso permeates global markets and global music genres and inscribes Philo’s name in history not as a victimised slave but an agent whose sense of growth overlaps with the growth of global capital. *The Dragon Can’t Dance* does not romanticise calypso by taking it out of the global market that appropriates it, but rather shows how the Calypsonian transgresses the position of victimisation from within the reality of this consumption which Aldrick resists only by giving up the dance.

Yet again the novel complicates Baucom’s reading of the history of the black Atlantic by suggesting that this history is not conceivable without the histories of indentured immigrants who become suddenly the constitutive Other of the historiography of slavery. Baucom totalises Caribbean historiography by reducing it to the experience of slavery without probing how slavery gains a position of hegemony through silencing the history of indentured immigrants in Caribbean historiography. In contrast to Baucom’s analysis, Lovelace’s novel writes the historiography of Trinidad through a more expanded perspective of history that includes the histories beneath the grand narrative of the History of Slavery or Slavery as History. Pariag’s permutation of Creole dance and music constitutes, at least potentially, a politically suggestive re-reading of Trinidad’s history as unending but male historiography. Pariag’s permutation symbolically intervenes in the critical discourses about the black Atlantic in which

paradigms of “relationality” unwittingly reiterate the exclusivist impulse of colonial and racist narratives of modernity. Glissant and Gilroy vehemently contest in their migratory and diasporic poetics of history. Lovelace’s novel, though it intercepts the Indian while speaking for him, departs from within the nation to suggest that the historiography of the nation is still unfinished. Lovelace employs dance and music as devices through which he writes this unfinished history of the nation. By doing that, Lovelace’s novel also implies that the critical discourses of history are themselves unfinished since they exclude the indentured immigrant’s histories without which any narrative of global financial capital and philosophies of history becomes reductive.

The Dragon Can’t Dance therefore narrates the nation not in terms of a venerated history and tradition but in terms of a history that is still in the making since it includes the histories that constitute the hybrid identity of Trinidad’s nation. Tracing the narrative of the nation through the performative spaces of Carnival dance and calypso, the novel intervenes both in the neo-colonial accounts that exoticise Carnival dance and music and the postcolonial studies of dance that merely analyzes the colonial discourse of exoticisation. *The Dragon Can’t Dance* presents Carnival dance and calypso as spaces through which the nation both enacts its cultural memory and also unsettles discourses of permanence about this memory. The novel is not a folkloric work that uses dance and music to advertise the national culture of Trinidad for tourists and / or readers. Although it exoticises dragon dance through its very title that mystifies the dance, the novel still resists falling in the category of the postcolonial market which reinvents the travel narrative by laying out the spectacle of Carnival as a “postcolonial exotic” commodity. The novel rather contests the paradigms of beauty, bloodlines, and

ancestry that exoticise, idealise, and dehistoricise dance and music through the characters of Philo and Pariag who mediate new critical reflections about these forms of expression from their position of exclusion. Pariag more particularly represents a critical consciousness which challenges the claims that Carnival is a national cultural practice, that dance is only a site of the technology of power, and that indentured immigrants in Trinidad are mere silent Others. Pariag does not denounce the nativist philosophy of Carnival. Yet, he attempts to permeate Creole stick fight dance and wishes to mix Creole music with his Indian sitar so as to claim that music and dance can be made into modes of unsettling the discourse of racial, ethnic, and national identity of Carnival. Yet, Pariag is still spoken for by the Afro-Creole literary agency of Earl Lovelace himself. This act of speaking for, as Spivak reminds us, implies silencing and intercepting not only Pariag's voice but also the Indo-Caribbean literary and cultural tradition without which Caribbean historiography remains a hegemonic discourse. My focus on the character of Pariag does not mean an apology for indentured immigrants in Trinidad who include other ethnicities the novel has outwardly silenced.¹⁴² Rather, my focus on the character of Pariag allows us to see how dance intervenes not only in the nativist discourses of the nation in Trinidad but also in the theories of relational poetics and versioning as paradigms of resistance. Unlike Aldrick who self-exoticises his dance and Philo who builds his calypso career beyond the geographic limits of the nation, Pariag uses dance and music to intervene into given discourses of resistance from his perspective as an indentured immigrant. This perspective allows us to re-think discourses about contemporary philosophies of the unfinished historiography of slavery from the perspective of the immigrant whom the ex-slave constitutes as his Other. The

novel thus integrates Pariag to show how discourses of slavery in the Caribbean can be hegemonic. The novel uses dance and music as categories of analysis through which we can rethink theories of relational poetics from within the ethnic complexities of the nation rather than merely through transnational or diasporic perspectives. Dance and music allow Lovelace to re-read contemporary philosophies of history by showing that the history of slavery is “unfinished” (Baucom) not only because it unsettles Eurocentric paradigms of progress but also because it dismisses the histories of indentured immigrants whom it invents as Other.

Conclusion

What is at stake in a postcolonial discussion of dance is how to articulate the colonial dancing body's agency from the positions of historical victimisation, political subjection, and cultural uprooting. One may very well ask why focus on dance if the literally dancing body is also metaphorically dancing or swinging between the forces that control it and the collective memory it articulates from within this control. This metaphorical dance that historically overlaps with the literal dance of the colonial body is worth probing because it allows us to see that the body in dance is always subjected to the tensions it resists as it dances.

My thesis situates the colonial body and dance beyond the binary of either- or, since I refute the assumption that the colonial body dances EITHER to enact its collective memory OR to display itself to the consuming gazes of the colonial traveller, the global tourist, or the local entrepreneur. Unsettling this binary has been substantial to my project of re-choreographing postcolonial theories of the body in dance. For while the African body, for instance, enacts its Yoruba worldview or the indigenous body in Canada articulates its Cree collective memory, they do it from within their subjection to European colonial violence that reduces their dance to "savagery" and "barbarism," seeks to dissipate it, and contaminate the dancer's body to death. In this sense, the dancing colonial body resists violence by exposing itself to it rather than merely eluding it as postcolonial theory claims.

My aim in this thesis was to maintain that the colonial body produces various forms of knowledge while articulating and choreographing its silenced histories from within its subjection, alienation, and display to the colonial or neo-colonial gaze. This knowledge does not specifically identify or record the cultural system of values or ideas

from which the body emerges. My focus was not to compare the cultural value systems which the dancing body enacts in the cultural traditions I have addressed in my thesis. Rather, my dissertation explores the ways in which the knowledge which the body produces in dance opens the possibility for re-choreographing, re-organizing, and re-designing the order of the postcolonial discourse of resistance. To do this re-choreographing, I examined the ways in which dance generates knowledge through the paradigms of the erotic, the metaphor of the limbo, the space of the occult, and the state of possession. Postcolonial theory has neglected these paradigms since it always constructs meaning about the body and dance through the colonial desiring gaze. My project of choreographing postcolonial theory of the body is thus predicated upon challenging the logic of travel literature according to which the colonial body or dance acquire meaning only through the gaze to which it is exposed.

In that regard, I challenge the postcolonial paradigm of elusiveness of dance since I do not see it as a site of resistance but of further alienation of the body from the culture which it enacts when it dances. This is another way in which my project re-choreographs postcolonial theories of the dancing body. Unlike the postcolonial epistemologies that have left the colonial body hostage to its discourses of elusiveness that fetishises it, my analysis of my selected theoretical, cinematic, and literary texts demonstrate that the colonial body neither ends the violence against it when it dances nor gives up its dance as a way to succumb to this violence.

Having felt that I have reached the goal I laid at the beginning of my thesis, namely to demonstrate how dance produces knowledge that questions given postcolonial epistemologies of the body, I am still aware of some difficulties that I have faced along

my research. One of these difficulties is finding texts which implement my theoretical investment in the colonial body and dance. My ordeal was even bigger since I was trying, as I stated at the beginning, to avoid a totally ethnographic approach to dance. I tried to overcome this difficulty by selecting texts from different cultural traditions rather than applying a comparative perspective on how dance enacts culture in each of them and probe how the practice of dance in these texts intervenes in the postcolonial epistemologies of the body from various traditions. For example, the fact that I have read Tomson Highway's through postmodern theories of dance may at first sound as a risk I have taken by projecting Western theories over indigenous experiences. Yet, a close look at my analysis will show the reader that I have opened a timely dialogue between texts and theoretical perspectives of dance from different traditions. My method of analysis thus allows me to draw the conclusion that dance generates critical rethinking of the reductive constructions of the colonial body regardless of the culture to which it is affiliated. Here, I do not undermine the cultural specificity of the texts I have selected. I rather emphasise this specificity by locating the body in the social and cultural tensions that regulate it and instigate its resistance.

The other difficulty is that my study metaphorises the colonial body and dance through the very process of contesting colonial metaphors of power and postcolonial metaphors of elusiveness and unreadability. Still, isn't the conception of the dance as enactment of culture itself a metaphor? If metaphor acts as a discourse of power that has diverse effects, dance as a metaphor then serves as both a site of resistance and perpetuation of the power it seems to be resisting, namely the power of the discourse of

identity. Does that mean that my project is sterile since it presents dance as a betrayal of its very promise of producing the colonial body as agent?

My answer to this question is that dance, as I have understood and theorised it in my study, articulates the cultural identity of the colonial body and simultaneously puts this very concept of identity into question. Soyinka's reading of his Yoruba cosmology and Highway's use of dance are very useful examples. Soyinka presents dance as a site in which the body articulates the Yoruba world view as it creates the cosmic harmony between the dead and the alive and channels the two worlds ceremonially. Yet, Soyinka sees Yoruba cosmology in relational terms with other cosmologies. In this sense, the dance which is central to Yoruba cosmology is also central to the Hellenic cosmology through which Soyinka reads his Yoruba world view. Dance in this case articulates the Yoruba local cultural identity but dislocates this identity from its nativist reductionism and essentialism.

In Highway's case, Gabriel's dance movement is filled with the memory of the legend of the trickster which is proper to Cree culture. Yet this memory in movement erupts in the Western dance of the ballet and on the theatre stage of contemporary urban Canada. Dance in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* is thus a space that articulates the collective memory of the trickster without leaving this memory tied to an essentialist idea of identity but rather making it permeate the postmodern white dominated space of today's Canadian culture. My reading of Soyinka and Highway's works, and others, thus allows me to see how they use the cultural practice of dance to claim that Cree and Yoruba cultures are dynamic and mobile from within the immanent colonial violence that seeks to make them static and sterile. Here, my study re-choreographs the analysis of the

colonial body less through the elusiveness of its dance than through the potential of dance to produce a dynamic sense of the cultures of colonized or neo-colonised subjects.

These two examples and others in my thesis demonstrate that dance is a useful paradigm of critical analysis that needs to be integrated in literary theory and more particularly postcolonial studies curricula, rather than remain tied to the departmentalized status of “Dance Studies.” My thesis is meant to open the possibility for future research in the area of interdisciplinary studies since it choreographs provocative moves in the critical reflection about the body, race, the narrative of the nation, discourses of gender and sexuality, theories of eroticism, and the institutions of globalization. My thesis calls for the integration of dance in literary studies as a tool of critical thinking that opens up productive possibilities in the process of thinking the body through gender, sexuality, race, class, and other markers through which it acquires its historical materiality as a body. Dance enriches postcolonial theory by virtue of its complexity as a space that both tells collective memories in movement and also invites us to question the metaphoricity of this corporeal mode of telling. Dance ultimately produces a corporeal narrative that overlaps with the verbal mode of narrative in literature.

My thesis has taught me that dance is not only a space of entertainment and sport in which the body displays its sexuality and generates the viewer’s desire along that display. My thesis has allowed me to see dance as a moment in which the body acts its desire to exist at the very moment it is enacted upon by the control of the viewer’s desiring gaze or the entrapment of the normalising cultural and social value systems. Audre Lorde’s theory of the erotic has helped me learn how to read resistance in

subjection through the space of sexuality in dance. Hardt and Negri's reading of Foucault's biopower and bio-politics has also helped me to infer that dance is a space of resistance in subjection since it generates the life "of" the body- or biopolitics- from within the hegemony of life "over" the body – or biopower. These theories have opened possibilities for me to "crack" provocative imaginaries about the postcolonial theories of the body through the space of dance.

My thesis has also taught me that there is still much room for further discussion about dance in today's postcolonial world. In particular, a more comprehensive study of dance would have to include a good variety of texts that engage dance in such self-assertive politics as social visibility through the hypervisibility and hypersexualisation of the body. Moreover, we would have to explore the ways in which dance allows us to re-choreograph our conception of the body in spaces such as the gym where classes and workshops of high profile dances of *balady* and *zumba* take place. While these spaces are not immediately concerned with postcolonial issues, they can still offer new and popular perspectives about embodiment, sexuality, gender, and subject formation. Finally, I think it is important not to relinquish the issue of dance since it constantly reminds us that theoretical resolutions about the body need to be re-articulated and re-choreographed from the vantage point of movement.

Notes

¹ The term “colonial body” can mean the body of the colonised who is subjected to the Western traveller’s gaze and violence. It can refer to the Western traveller’s body which is inscribed by the categories of class and health, and it can also describe the postcolonised subject’s body which is subjected to neo-colonial commodification and global consumerism. For examples of the works that address the first two meanings of the colonial body, see Burton (2007, 17-29). For a discussion of the colonial body which unfolds through the imperial discourse of otherness, see Lindner (2010, 23-40). See also David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993) 22. For a discussion of the postcolonial body, see Albert Wendt, “Afterword: Tatauing the Post-colonial Body” *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics, and Identity in the New Pacific*, ed. Vilsoni Hereniko and Rob Wilson, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1999) 399-429. See also Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2007) 166-168. In my thesis, I associate the “colonial body” with the body of the colonised subject who is exposed to local, colonial, and neo-colonial forms of disciplining and violence. I argue that even after the event of postcolonial independence, the colonial body keeps being exposed to neo-colonial commodification and the oppressive norms of the culture where the body is located.

² Dance has always been an object of attraction for Western travellers to non-Western cultures from the seventeenth up to the late nineteenth century. For further reading about dance as a major stimulating reason of Western travel to Egypt, see Karin van. Nieuwkerk 1995, 21-22, 25-26, 34, 40). Sherifa Zuhur, *Colours of Enchantment: Theatre, Dance, Music, and the Visual Art of the Middle East* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2001) 223. For more reading on the ways in which dance attracts Western travellers to different parts of the world, see Carole Pegg, *Mongolian Music, Dance, and Oral Narrative: Performing Diverse Identities* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001) 107. Millery Polyne, “‘To Carry the Dance of the People Beyond’: Jean Leon Destine, Lavinia Williams, and Danse Folklorique Haitienne,” *Rhythms of the Afro-Atlantic World: Rituals and Remembrances*, eds. Mamadou Diouf and Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010) 137. For a fictional representation of the colonial encounter with the dancing colonial body, see Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness and Other Tales* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) 63. I should emphasise that this moment in Conrad’s story remains largely unaddressed by postcolonial critics, such as Said, who devoted a large amount of his work to Conrad’s literature. Aijaz Ahmad, Arif Dirlik, Neil Lazarus, and other critics who focus on the limits of postcolonial theory, have also neglected to address this moment of dance in Conrad’s story.

³ Simon Featherstone offers a generic interpretation of dance and sport as embodied postcolonial cultures. See Simon Featherstone *Postcolonial Cultures* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005) 70. Barbara Browning examines the ways in which Samba dance evolves through black diaspora in Brazil and across class and race ideologies. For further reading, see Barbara Browning, *Samba: Resistance in Motion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995) 1-34 and 157. Savigliano explores the dance of tango as a symbol of Argentinean national identity through which the nation exoticises itself particularly in Europeanised middle class narrative of the nation. For useful moments in Savigliano's study of tango as a spectacle, see Marta Savigliano, *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995). Mica Nava examines the ways in which tango and Oriental dance represent cultural spaces through which the cultures of the Other intervene in European modernity and shape it, see Mica Nava, *Visceral Cosmopolitanism: Gender, Culture and the Normalisation of Difference* (New York: Berg, 2007) 19-40. Yvonne Daniel studies the evolution of Ramba dance across the social and national history in contemporary Cuba. See Yvonne Daniel, *Ramba: Dance and Social Change in Contemporary Cuba* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995) 26-44. Sorgel examines the ways in which dance theatre company in Jamaica infolds through the discourse of the nation and identity in Jamaica and the Caribbean. For reference to Sorgel's study, see Sabine Sorgel, *Dancing Postcolonialism: The National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2007) 43-95. For anthropological studies of dance as a sign of ethnicity, national identity and indigenous culture, see Susan Reed's study of dance in Sri Lanka in Susan Reed, *Dance and the Nation: Performance, Ritual, and politics in Sri Lanka* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010) 23-127. For examples of recent ethnographic studies of dance and choreography as an expression of ethnic identity, see Katerina Martina Teaiwa, "Choreographing Difference: The (Body) Politics of Banaban Dance," *The Contemporary Pacific* 24: 1(2012): 65-94. See also Matthew Krystal (2012, xiii-40). It is interesting to point out that these critics represent a shift from what Theresa Jill Buckland calls "classical ethnography and folk studies [in which] the past was significant in legitimating issues of authenticity and ethnic identity" to "the analysis of dance's past histories often from the political perspective of nationalist identity" ("Shifting Perspectives on Dance Ethnography," *The Routledge Dance Studies Reader*, ed. Alexandra Carter and Janet O'Shea, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2010 337-343) 341. This shift makes their work very relevant to dance ethnography but not to postcolonial theoretical perspectives of the body and dance as spaces of resistance and postcolonial subject formation.

⁴ Karayanni has also described the relevance of Tsifte-teli which is a Turkish word meaning "two strings" or "double strings," and refers to a style of playing the bouzouki or 'ud instrument. In Greece Tsifte-teli signifies a particular rebetika dance rhythm, as well as the physical performance of the dance itself. For a discussion about the rebetika and Tsifte-teli music and dance, see Janet Sarbanes, "Musicking and Communitas: The Aesthetic Mode of Sociality in Rebetika Subculture," *Popular Music and Society* 29.1 (2006): 17-35. See also Yiannis Zaimakis, "Music-making in the Social World of a Cretan Town (Heraklion 1900-1960): A Contribution to the Study of non-Commercial Rebetiko," *Popular Music* 30.1 (2011): 1-24. For further reading of Karayanni's analysis of Tsifteteli, see Karayanni (2004, 139-157).

For more reading about Karayanni's reference to the history of Rebeticca dance, see my conversation with Karayanni and Andrea Deagon in Belghiti (2011, 12).

⁵ For more reading about the history of dance, see Janet Adshead-Landsdale and June Layson, eds. *Dance History: an Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1994) 3-44. For examples of recent publications on dance history, see Florencia Garramuño, *Primitive Modernities: Tango, Samba, and Nation*, trans. Anna Kazumi Stahl (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011) 1-16. Lynne Fauley Emery, *Black Dance: From 1619 to Today* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Book co., 1988) 3-28. Rachel Fensham and Alexandra Carter, eds. *Dancing Naturally: Nature, Neoclassicism and Modernity in Early Twentieth Century Dance* (New York: McMillan, 2011): 16-30.

⁶ I have integrated concepts drawn from these philosophers' work throughout my thesis and showed how the contemporary philosophy of dance is grounded in Derrida's deconstructive philosophy of meaning construction in language. For more recent examples of contemporary philosophical speculations of dance, see Mark Franko, "What is Dead and What is Alive in Phenomenology?" *Dance Research Journal*. 43:2 (2012): 1-4. See also Heather Margaret Ritenburg, "Frozen Landscapes: A Foucauldian Genealogy of the Ideal Ballet Dancer's Body," *Research in Dance Education* 11:1 (2010): 71-85.

⁷ I have taken this definition from the online Oxford Dictionary. For the link to this reference, please check "choreography," *Oxford Dictionary*, 19 Sep, 2012. <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/choreography>

⁸ Said frames his notion of "critical consciousness" within his secular interpretation of criticism and culture. For further reading about Said's conception of "critical consciousness," see his article "Secular Criticism" in Edward Said, *The World, and the Critic* (New York; Columbia University Press, 1983) 31-53.

⁹ Brydon's instructive indication of this division recalls Biodun Jeyifo's distinction between a "postcoloniality of normativity" (53) and a postcoloniality of "interstitiality and transnationality" (54) as two different categories of postcolonial narratives of resistance. The former describes writers of the négritude movement for instance who assert native origin, tradition, and myth to speak "to, or for, or in the name of the post-independence nation state" (54). The latter, by contrast, refers to writers such as Salman Rushdie and Derek Walcott whose works reflect the "ambivalent mode of self-fashioning" (53) as they "question the competing polarized claims of centre and margin, metropole and periphery, Western and non-Western"(53-54). Jeyifo shows that whereas writers of the first category, inscribe "cultural norms and traditions as comforting but enervating myths of pure origin" writers of the second category do not as a result enjoy "greater a far greater visibility" in Western academia. Like Jeyifo, I think that it is productive to bring these two categories into critical dialogue from the perspective of dance. By virtue of articulating silenced historical memory and local cultural archives and by unsettling reductive constructions of identity, dance, as I will show in my

study, often brings into crisis the sharp divisions between nativist and “interstitial” forms of postcolonial writing.

¹⁰ By romanticising dance, I mean describing it as a symbol that is de-historicised, de-materialised, or taken out of its historical materiality that conditions it through the regulating categories of race, gender, class, and sexuality, to mention the most dominant markers. This romanticised perspective of dance unfolds in the writings of such nineteenth century French symbolist poets and critics as Stéphane Mallarmé and Paul Valéry. The romanticised image of dance was taken up by modernist writers and poets such as William Butler Yeats and T.S. Eliot. For more reading about the ways in which British and Irish modernist poets adopt the French symbolist philosophy of dance, see Terri Mester, *Movement and Modernism: Yeats, Eliot, Lawrence, Williams, and Early Twentieth-Century Dance* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1997) 39-43.

¹¹ While describing the interdisciplinary aspect of postcolonial studies, Ato Quayson follows the classification of the different types of interdisciplinarity offered by Julie Thompson Klein. For a reference to Quayson’s analysis of interdisciplinarity in postcolonial studies, see Ato Quayson, *Postcolonialism: Theory, Practice, or Process?* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2000) 23-47. For more reading about interdisciplinarity in Klein’s work, see Julie Thompson Klein, *Interdisciplinarity: History, Theory, and Practice* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990). For further readings about interdisciplinarity in postcolonial studies, see Graham Huggan, *Interdisciplinary Measures: Literature and the Future of Postcolonial Studies* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008). See also Malreddy Pavan Kumar, “Postcolonialism: Interdisciplinary or Interdiscursive,” *Third World Quarterly* 32:4 (2011): 653-672.

¹² For examples of studies of trans-local bodies through the categories of race and geography, see DivyaP.Tolia-Kelly, “The Geographies of Cultural Geography I: Identities , Bodies, and Race,” *Progress in Human Geography* 34:3 (2010):358-367. Louise Amoore and Alexandra Hall, “Taking People Apart: Digitized Dissection and the Body at the Border,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 27:3 (2009):444-64. Irma van der Ploeg, “The Body as Data in the Age of Information,” *Routledge Handbook of Surveillance Studies*, eds. Kirstie Ball, Kevin Haggerty and David Lyon (New York: Routledge, 2012) 176-185. Robyn Loghust, Elsie Ho, and Linda Johnston, “Using the ‘Body’ As an ‘Instrument of Research’: Kimch’i and Pavlova,” *Area* 40:2 (June 2008): 208-217. See also Judith R. Walkowitz, “Cosmopolitanism, Feminism, and the Moving Body,” *Victorian Literature and Culture* 38:2 (2010): 427-49.

¹³ The category of the Oriental body which I use here, like the categories of indigenous body and Caribbean body which I use in the other chapters of my dissertation, does not mean that I am describing the Oriental, Caribbean or indigenous body as a generic body. I rather use these categories to emphasise the historical materiality that inscribes these bodies and makes them unfold through layers of discourses such as race, sexuality, race, and gender for instance. I am well aware that these nominations are part of the colonial constructions of otherness. For

further reading about the categories which inscribe the body and determine its identity as a body, see Sander L. Gilman, "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Towards an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth –Century Art, Medicine, and Literature," *'Race,' Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1986) 185-222. Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 3-27. Margaret A. McLaren, *Feminism, Foucault, and Embodied Subjectivity* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2002) 102. Ranjana Khanna, *Dark Continents: Psychoanalysis and Colonialism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

¹⁴ I have integrated Critical Race Theory because race is central to postcolonial studies of the body since it is a primary marker of the body's difference through which the discourse of otherness is constituted. For the relevance of race in postcolonial studies, see Ann McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat, Eds. *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) 1-14. Lazarus, Neil. "What Postcolonial Theory Does Not Say," *Race and Class* 53:1 (2011): 3-27.

¹⁵ Karl Marx points to the centrality of slavery for the growth and expansion of capitalism when he notes that "direct slavery is just as much the pivot of bourgeois industry as machinery, credits, etc. Without slavery you have no cotton, without cotton, you have no modern industry. It is slavery that gave the colonies their value. It is the colonies that created world trade; it is world trade that is the pre-condition of large scale industry. Thus slavery is an economic category of the greatest importance" Karl Marx, *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, trans. Lorde D. Easton and Kurt H. Gudad (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1967) 482. Eric Williams, the first president of Trinidad and Tobago and an eminent historian and critic, also describes the relationship between the growth of Western capitalism, slavery, and imperialism. For further reference, see, Eric Williams Eustace. *Capitalism and Slavery* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1966) 51-57, 126-134. For more reading on the overlap of capitalism with Western imperialism and capitalism, see Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005) 309-334.

¹⁶ During the nineteenth century, Sarah Baartman, a Khoikhoi woman, was taken from her community in 1810 and exhibited as a freak show attraction in Europe under the derogatory name, Hottentot Venus. She entertained Europeans by spinning her nude buttocks in a cage. Baartman originated from the Cape region in Africa which Europeans colonised in 1652. Europeans mocked indigenous inhabitants of the region by labelling them Hottentots in imitation of the sound of the Khoisan languages. For more reading about Baartman's tragic history, see Nadia Durbach, "Sara Baartman and the Hottentot Venus: A Ghost Story and a Biography," *Biography* 32:4 (2009): 858-60. Pamela Scully and Clifton Crais, "Race and Erasure: Sara Baartman and Hendrik Cesars in Cape Town and London" *Journal of British Studies* 47: 2 (April 2008): 301-323.

¹⁷ For further reading about the ways in which the body is a physical and material evidence for the growth and development of theories of race as paramount marker of difference in the Western imagination, see Sander L. Gilman, “Black Bodies, White Bodies: Towards an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth –Century Art, Medicine, and Literature,” *‘Race,’ Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1986) 185-222. See also Mary Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010) 7-54. For recent discussions of race and identity construction, see Aniko Hatos, “Where are you from? Identity Construction and the Experience of ‘Othering’ in the Narratives of Sudanese Refugee-Background Australians,” *Discourse Society* 23:1 (January 2012): 47-68.

¹⁸ On the question of the model’s will to show his penis in the photograph, Kent L Brintnall notes that “with respect to ‘Man in Polyester Suit,’ it was the model, Mapplethorpe’s lover at the time, who refused to show his face and his cock in the same photograph” (2011, 119, fn 49). For further reading about this point, see Patricia Morrisroe, *Mapplethorpe: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1995): 245.

¹⁹ Here I am referring to the famous statement by Frantz Fanon: “what is often called the black soul is a white man’s artefact” (2008, 14).

²⁰ For further reading of black queer response to the ways in which Mapplethorpe’s photograph perpetuates racial stereotypes constructed around sexuality and desire, see Samuel Delaney, *Longer Views: Extended Essays*, (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1996) 153-154. See also Essex Hemphill, *Ceremonies: Prose and Poetry* (San Francisco: Cleis, 1992) 38. Thomas E. Yingling, “How the Eye is Cast: Robert Mapplethorpe and the Limits of Controversy,” *AIDS and the National Body*, eds., Thomas E. Yingling and Robyn Wiegman (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997) 59-78.

²¹ Mapplethorpe’s photograph produces a variety of interpretations because, unlike painting, it can be infinitely reproduced. In this case, the medium becomes the message, meaning and event. Its reproducibility pre-supposes the mobility of the meaning of what is photographed. Walter Benjamin notes that photography produces “a plurality of copies for a unique existence” (1939, 223). Unlike painting, which projects what the painter intends originally, the images that photography produces vary according to the context in which they are made and the spatial and temporal frames of reference in which they are located. Thus, the multiplicity of interpretations of Mapplethorpe’s photography reflects the idea of multiplicity Benjamin points out. Unlike the drawings of Baartman which starkly reflects the racial prejudice of the painter as original idea, the representation of the photographed black body is the outcome of the mechanical process that is subject to more than one view. For more reading about the ways in which photography contributes to the critique of the myth of origin associated with the church, state and aristocratic cultural values, see Martin, Lester “Photography in the Age of Electronic Imaging” *Photography: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Liz Wells (New York:

Routledge, 2004) 295-336. See also Celia Lury, *Prosthetic Culture: Photography, Memory, and Identity* (London: Routledge, 1998) 34.

²² Lacan's theory of the mirror stage is useful for Fanon's theory of the body because it allows him to see that the white subject sees itself in relation to the black body through the stage of misrecognition. The latter draws from Jacques Lacan's notion of 'meconnaissance' of the chaotic fragmented perception that the self has of itself in the mirror stage prior to language. For further reading about Lacan's notion of 'meconnaissance', or misrecognition, that characterises the ego at the mirror stage, see Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006) 2. See also Kareen Rob Malone and Stephen R. Friedlander, eds. *The Subject of Lacanian Reader for Psychologists* (Albany, New York: University of New York Press, 2000) 57. For Lacan's influence on Fanon, see Robertson, Michael and Garry Walter, "Frantz Fanon and the Confluence of Psychiatry, Politics, Ethics, and Culture," *Acta Neuropsychiatrica* 2:6 (December 2009): 308-309.

²³ For more critical reactions to négritude as a form of nativism, see Gary Wilder, *French Imperial Nation-State: Négritude and Colonial Humanism between the Two World Wars*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005) 299. See also Gary Wilder, "Eurafrique As the Future Past of 'Black France': Sarkozy's Temporal Confusion and Senghor's Vision," *Black France / France Noire: The History and Politics of Blackness*, ed. Trica Danielle. Keaton, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting and Tyler Stovall (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012) 57-87.

²⁴ For a reference to Butler's theory of gender as citation, see Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993) 3-27. For more reading about Butler's theory of gender as citation, see Karen Trimble Alliaume, "Disturbingly Catholic: Thinking the Inordinate Body," *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler*, ed. Ellen T. Armour and Susan M St Ville (New York: Columbia University press, 2006) 93-119. See also Mary D. Sheriff, "Seeing beyond the Norm: Interpreting Gender in the Visual Art," *The Question of Gender: Joan W. Scott's Critical Feminism*, eds. Judith Butler and Elizabeth Weed (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2011) 161-186.

²⁵ For examples of critics who have reacted to Fanon's reading of the Algerian women through the discourse of the nation, see Bart Moore-Gilbert, "Frantz Fanon: En-gendering Nationalist Discourse," *Women: A Cultural Review* 7:2 (1996): 125-135. See also Madhu Dubey, "The 'True Lie' of the Nation: Fanon and Feminism," *Differences* 10:2 (Summer 1998): 1-29. Jeffrey Louis. Decker, "Terrorism (Un) Veiled: Frantz Fanon and the Women of Algiers," *Cultural Critique* 17 (Winter 1991): 177-195. Zahia Smail Salhi, "The Algerian Feminist Movement between Nationalism, Patriarchy, and Islamism," *Women's Studies International Forum* 33. 2 (March-April 2010): 113-124. Zahid R. Chaudhary, "Subjects in Difference: Walter Benjamin, Frantz Fanon, and Postcolonial Theory," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 23:1 (2012): 151-183

²⁶ This describes a scene that is famously used in the movie *The Battle of Algiers* by the Italian director Gillo Pontecorvo. For a reference to the film, see Gillo Pontecorvo, *The Battle of*

Algiers, dir. Gillo Pontecorvo, *Criterion Collection*. BAT, DVD, 1966. For further reading about the film, see Stephen J. Whitfield, "Cine Qua Non: The Political Import and Impact of *The Battle of Algiers*," *Revue LISA/ LISA e-journal* 10:1 (2012). <http://lisa.revues.org>

²⁷ For examples of reactions to Spivak's work, see Taoufiq Sakhkhane, *Spivak and Postcolonialism: Exploring Allegations of Textuality* (New York: Palgrave, 2012) 109-137. See also Stephen Morton, *Gayatri Spivak: Ethics, Subalternity, and the Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2007) 1-15. It is also very useful to consult Benita Parry's critique of Spivak's neglect of the practice of dance as a way through which the subaltern can speak. See Benita Parry, "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse," *Oxford Literary Review* 9 (1987): 27-58.

²⁸ For more reading of Ahmad's critical engagement with the issue of representation in Edward Said's book *Orientalism*, see Aijaz Ahmad, *Of Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992) 163, 159-220. 214. For recent discussions of Ahmad's critical response to Said, see Robert J.C. Young, "Edward Said: Opponent of Postcolonial Theory," *Edward Said's Translocations: Essays in Secular Criticism*, eds. Tobias Döring and Mark Stein (New York: Routledge, 2012) 23-43.

²⁹ For further reading about the difference between colonialism and neo-colonialism, see Spivak's interview with Young, Robert J C in Spivak (1991, 220-251).

³⁰ Although this area of war is not within the scope of my interest here, it is still useful to point it out as one of the recent concerns of postcolonial studies. For further reading about the decentralised idea of war and cosmopolitanism, see Cécile Fabre, *Cosmopolitan War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), see more particularly chapter 7 entitled "Asymmetrical Wars."

³¹ Edward Said draws the term "contrapuntal" from the field of music and employs it in his reading of culture and politics. For more reading about the ways in which Said uses this term, see Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Knopf, 1993) 31-60. For an explanation of this term and other critical terminology in Said's work, see R.A. Radhakrishnan (2012, 23-27).

³² Diana Brydon holds a Canada Research Chair in Globalization and Cultural Studies. She is also a key figure in community and interdisciplinary studies in Canada. For further reading, see Diana Brydon and William D. Coleman, eds., *Renegotiating Community: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Global Contexts* (Vancouver, UBC, 2008) 1-30 and 246-260. See also Diana Brydon and Marta Dvorak, eds., *Crosstalk: Canadian and Global Imaginaries in Dialogue* (Waterloo, Ont: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2012) vii-1 and 253-272. For Brydon's engagement with global environmental issues as a crucial focus of postcolonial studies, see Diana Brydon, "Earth, World, Planet: Where Does the Postcolonial Critic Stand?" *Cultural Transformations, perspectives on Translocation in a Global Age*, eds., Christine Prentice, Vijay Devadas, Henry Johnson (New York: Rodopi, 2010) 3-31.

³³ For recent studies of disability and postcolonial theory, see Anita Ghai, “Engaging Disability with Postcolonial Theory,” *Disability and Social Theory: New Developments and Directions*, eds. Dan Goodley, Bill Hughes, Lennard J. Davi (Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) 270-286. See also Clare Barker, *Postcolonial Fiction and Disability: Exceptional Children, Metaphor and Materiality* (Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). For studies of dance and disability, see Eimir, McGrath, “Dancing with Disability,” *Disability and Social Theory: New Developments and Directions*, eds. Dan Goodley, Bill Hughes, Lennard J. Davi (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) 143-160.

³⁴ For further reading about the permutation of dance studies in the broad field of cultural studies, see Jane C. Desmond, “Embodying Difference: Issues in Dance and Cultural Studies” *Meaning in Motion: New Cultural Studies of Dance*, ed. Jane C. Desmond (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997) 29-54. Randy Martin, *Critical Moves: Dance Studies in Theory and Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998) 1-28.

³⁵ For a reference about choreography as a system of regulation, see Andre Lepecki, “Choreography as Apparatus of Capture,” *TDR: The Drama Review*, 51:2 (2007): 120-23. See also Lepecki and Allsopp (2008, 3).

³⁶ For the influence of deconstruction on contemporary dance critics, see my next chapter on Oriental dance and eroticism.

³⁷ The physical reaction to colonial oppression is most famously dramatised in the novel *Nervous Conditions* by Tsitsi Dangarembga through the politics of eating or anorexia. For further reading about the politics of eating in Dangarembga’s novel, see Charle Sagnet, “Nervous Conditions: Dangarembga’s Feminist Reinvention of Fanon,” *The Politics of Mothering: Womanhood, identity and Resistance in African literature*, ed, Obioma Nnaemeka (London: Routledge, 1997) 33-49. 35. See also Heike Härting, “The Profusion of Meanings and the Female Experience of Colonisation: Incriptions of the Body as the Site of Difference in Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervosa Conditions* and Margaret Atwood’s *The Edible Woman*,” *Fusion of Cultures?*, eds. Peter O. Strummer and Christopher Balme (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996) 237-46.

³⁸ Fanon’s discourse of anti-colonial resistance does not only include the gendered categories of “man” and “woman.” Rather, it focuses on masculinity as a key constituent of this discourse. Masculinity in Fanon’s work means the use of manly physical strength to resist colonial violence. Masculinity is thus central to Fanon’s conception of Manichean violence. For the explanation of masculinity in Fanon’s work see, Armah Ayi Kwei, “Fanon: The Awakener,” *Negro Digest*, 18:12 (October 1969): 4-9, 9. See also Gwen Bergner, “Politics and Pathologies: On the Subject of Race in Psychoanalysis,” *Frantz Fanon: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Anthony Alessandrini, (New York: Routledge, 1999) 219-234, 227. Check also Tim Edwards, *Cultures of Masculinity* (London; Routledge, 2006) 65-66. For a recent engagement of masculinity in Fanon’s work, see Pierre Orelus, *The Agony of Masculinity: Race, Gender and Education in the Age of ‘New’ Racism and Patriarchy* (New York: Peter

Lang Publishing Inc., 2010) 181. See also Todd W Reese, *Masculinities in Theory* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) 209.

³⁹ Fanon uses the term “decerebralisation” in his letter of resignation which he addressed to the French Minister Resident in the summer of 1956 when he decided to leave his position as a psychiatrist for the French administration in Algeria. While explaining the reasons for his decision, Fanon clarifies that the colonial situation in Algeria causes Algerians mental disorders. He writes: “If psychiatry is the medical technique that aims to enable man no longer to be a stranger to his environment, I owe it to myself to affirm that the Arab, permanently an alien in his own country, lives in a state of absolute depersonalisation . . . The events in Algeria are the logical consequences of an abortive attempt to decerebralise a people . . . a society that drives its members to desperate solutions is a non-viable society, a society to be replaced” (1967, 53).

⁴⁰ For the discussion of Fanon’s analysis of dance as an outlet for the accumulated and impotent violence in anti-colonial resistance in Algeria, see Alice Cherki, *Frantz Fanon: A Portrait*, (trans. Nadia Benabid, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2006) 174. For more reading about the expression of internal violence in dance as a mode of resistance for Fanon, see Jean-Marie Vivaldi, *Collective Ethics and Humanism*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2007) 49. For a discussion of the ritual of dance as a channelling of violence in Fanon’s theory of resistance, see Ketu Katrak, *Politics of the Female Body: Postcolonial Women Writers in the Colonial World* (New Brunswick, N.J. : Rutgers University Press, 2006) 60. See also Paul A. Beckett, “Algeria Vs. Fanon: The Theory of Revolutionary Decolonisation, and the Algerian Experience,” *The Western Political Quarterly* 26:1 (March 1973): 5-27.

⁴¹ For more reading of the dance of possession in the Maghreb, see Edward Westermarck, “The Nature of the Arab *Ginn*, Illustrated by the Present Beliefs of the People of Morocco,” *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 29:1 (1899): 252-269. For the discussion of the possession dance of Gnawa in Morocco, see Maisie Sum, “Staging the Sacred: Musical Structure and Processes of the Gnawa *Lila* in Morocco,” *Ethnomusicology* 55:1 (Winter 2011): 77-111. For an informative discussion of the history of Gnawa as a diasporic African dance in Morocco, see Cynthia Becker, “Hunters, Sufis, Soldiers, and Minstrels: The Diaspora Aesthetics of the Moroccan Gnawa,” *Res*, 59/60 (Winter 2011): 124-144. For further reading about trance dance in the Maghreb, see Eli Somer and Meir Saadon, Stambali: Dissociative Possession and Trance in a Tunisian Healing Dance,” *Transcultural Psychiatry* 37:4 (December 2000): 580-600.

⁴² For more reading about possession in dance, see Omofolabo Soyinka Ajayi, “In Contest: The Dynamics of African Religious Dances,” *African Dance: An Artistic, Historical, and Philosophical Inquiry*, ed. Kariamuwelsh Asante (Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press, 1996) 183-203. 189. Frederick M. Smith, *The Self Possessed Deity and Spirit Possession in South Asian Literature and Civilisation* (New York; Columbia University Press, 2006) 129. Joseph G. Moore, “Music and Dance as Expressions of Religious Worship in Jamaica,” *The Performing Arts: Music and Dance*, eds. John Blacking and Joan W. Kealiinohomoku (The

Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979) 317. For a more recent reading about the ways in which dance and possession unfold as spaces of resistance and subject formation in the case of the black female body in diaspora, see Caroline Brown, (2012; 16, 108, 119, 120, 127, 131,147).

⁴³ For further reading about Yoruba cosmology see Yekeen Ajibade. Ajayi, *Yoruba Cosmology and Aesthetics: The Cultural confluence of Divination, Incantation, and Drum-Taking* (Ilorin: Library and Publications Committee, University of Ilorin, 2009) 1-35. Omofolabo S. Ajayi, *Yoruba Dance and the Aesthetics of Movement and Body Attitude in Nigerian Culture* (Trenton, NJ.: Africa World Press, 1998) 5-8, 21-22.

⁴⁴ Sterling Stuckey asserts that “for the African, dance was primarily devotional, like a prayer . . . dance was to the African a means of establishing contact with the ancestors and with the gods. Because the emotions of the slaves were so much a part of dance expression, the whole body moving to complex rhythms, what was often linked to the continuing cycle of life, to the divine, was thought [by white slave owners] to be debased”(25).

⁴⁵ Soyinka dedicated his poetry collection, *Idanre and Other Poems*, to the Yoruba pantheon of gods. For a reference to this collection, see Wole Soyinka, *Idanre and Other Poems*, (London: Methuen, 1981).

⁴⁶ I discussed the notion of “relationality” through Edouard Glissant’s work in my third chapter on dance in Earl Lovelace’s novel *The Dragon Can’t Dance*.

⁴⁷ For a reference to the concept of historylessness in the work of other West Indian writers, see Naipaul. V.S, *The Middle Passage: Impressions of Five Societies: British, French, and Dutch in the West Indies and South America*, (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1969). For more reading about Naipaul, see Kavita Ivy Nandan, “V.S. Naipaul: A Diasporic Vision,” *Journal of Caribbean Literatures* 5:2 (Spring 2008) 75-88. Patricia Ismond, “Another Life: Autobiography as Alternative History,” *Journal of West Indian Literature* 4:1 (1990): 41-49. For more reading about the use of the concept of “historylessness” in Braithwaite’s work, see Patricia Ismond, “Walcott Vs Braithwaite,” *Critical Perspectives on Derek Walcott*, ed., Robert D. Hammer (Washington DC: Three Continents, 1993): 220-36. See also Edward Kamu Brathwaite, *Roots* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993).

⁴⁸ Harris’s philosophy of culture as reversible and mobile, rather than irreversible and permanent, is inspired by Carl Jung’s conception of “dynamism” and cross-connection” of time, space, and events. Jung argues that time and space do not “exist in themselves” since they are “‘postulated’ by ‘the conscious mind’” (1987, 435). Jung adds that “events in general are related to one another [. . .] as casual chains [and] by a kind of cross-connection.” (1987, 427; italics in original). Harris draws from this Jungian’s conception of cross-connection in his reflection about the ways in which legends, myth, images, and tales of different cultures constantly cross each other so as to produce meaning. Harris’s reading dance is thus produced from this philosophical perspective of culture. For further reading about the influence of Jung on Harris, see Pierre Francois, “Synchronicity and the Unitarian Geo-psyche in Wilson

Harris's Companions of the Day and Night," *The Contact and the Culmination: Essays in Honour of Hena Maes-Jelinek*, eds. Marc Delrez and Benedict Ledent (Liege: Liege Language and Literature, 1997) 241-252.

⁴⁹ Despite reacting to the overuse of the conception of imagination in Harris's critical analysis, critics still bear little or no attention to the ways in which Harris's imagination about dance can be productive for the processes of rethinking postcolonial theories of dance and the body. For critical reactions to Harris' use of imagination, see Benn Dennis, *the Growth and Development of Political Ideas in the Caribbean: 1774-1983*. (Mona, Jamaica: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1987) 167,168.

⁵⁰ For more reading of Kathakali dance drama in Kerala State, see Bharatha Iyer, *Kathakali: The Sacred Dance-Drama of Malabar* (New Delhi; Oriental Books Reprint Corp, 1983). Clifford Reis Jones, *Kathakali: An Introduction to the Dance-Drama of Kerala* (San Francisco: American Society of the Arts, 1970). See also Philip Zarrilli, *Kathakali Dance-Drama: Where Gods and Demons Come to Play* (London: Routledge, 2000).

⁵¹ For the analysis of eroticism in Roy's novel, see Brinda Bose, "In Desiring and in Death: Eroticism as Politics in Arundhati Roy's 'The God of Small Things'," *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 29:2 (April 1998): 59-72.

⁵² For the relevance of physical training and costume in kathakali dance, see Nagendra Kr. Singh, *The Mahabharata in Kathakali Dance Drama* (New Delhi: Global Vision Publishing, 2006): 3-5.

⁵³ For more critical analysis of neo-colonialism in Roy's novel, see Kevin Hannam and Anya Diekmann, *Tourism and India: Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2011) 43. For the novel's ethical engagement with the issue of globalisation, see Chitra Sankaran, "Ethics, Aesthetics, and the Globalised Other in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*," *Global Fissures: Postcolonial Fusions*, eds. Clara. A.B, Joseph and Janet Wilson (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006) 103-120.

⁵⁴ For examples of the critique of Said's allegorisation of the female dancer as an image of the East, see Lisa Lowe, "The Orient as Woman in Flaubert's 'Salammbô' and 'Voyage en Orient.'" *Comparative Literature Studies*, 23:1 (Spring 1986): 44-58. Lisa Lowe, "Nationalism and Exoticism: Nineteenth Century Others in Flaubert's *Salammbô* and *L'Education Sentimentale*," *Macropolitics of Nineteenth Century Literature: Nationalism, Exoticism, Imperialism*, eds. Jonathan Arac and Harriet Ritvo (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991) 213-242. Meyda Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 1-67. Lata Mani, "Multiple Mediations: Feminist Scholarship in the Age of Multinational Reception" *Feminist Review* 35 (Summer, 1990): 24-41. Rina Lewis, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (London: Routledge, 1996) 15-21. Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991) 1-10. Sara Suleri, "The

Secret Sharers: Edward Said's Imperial Margins," *Voice Literary Supplement*, 8:1 (June 1993): 31. Sara Suleri, *Meatless Days* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991) 20. Sara Suleri, "Woman Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition" *Critical Inquiry* 18:4 (Summer, 1992): 756-769. For a critical note about this criticism, see Graham Huggan, "(Not) Reading Orientalism." *Research in African Literatures*, 36:3 (Fall 2005): 24-136. For Said's response to feminist criticism, see Edward W. Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered," in *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000): 198-215.

⁵⁵ For further reading on the history of dance, see endnote 5 of my introductory chapter.

⁵⁶ This idea of the vanishing presence of the meaning of the body in dance is different from the notion of the vanishing presence through which Spivak defines the native informant in colonial discourse of knowledge. For Spivak's argument about the vanishing presence of the native informant, see Gayatri Chakrabarty Spivak (1993, 59-61). See also Spivak (2000, 30). For further reading on Spivak's conception, see Ian Baucom, "Cryptic, Withheld, Singular," *Nepantla Views from South* 1.2 (2000): 413-429.

⁵⁷ In my interview with Karayanni and Andrea Deagon at the International Conference on Belly Dance in Toronto in 2008, I asked Karayanni about his idea of risk in dance, and he answered that he associates risk in dance with deconstruction. This provides another evidence that deconstruction is a stable paradigm through which Karayanni thinks about dance and theorises it. For more reading of the interview, see Belghiti (2011,10).

⁵⁸ For more reading about Karayanni's consistent focus on the dynamics of the imperial gaze in his study of male dance in the Middle East, see Stavros Karayanni,(2009, 315, 17, 35).

⁵⁹ For examples of the nineteenth century orientalist writers and travellers who express this ambivalence about the decency and lasciviousness of Oriental women dancers, see, Edward W. Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London: Everyman, 1966) 384. For Orientalists who display this ambivalence towards male dancers, see John Covell, "Extracts from the Diaries of Dr. John Covell, 1670-1679," *Early Voyages and Travels in the Levant*, ed. Theodor Bent (New York: Burt Franklin, 2010) 99-187. Eugene Schuyler, "Turkistan: Notes of a Journey in Russian Turkistan, Bukhara Kokand and Kuldja," ed. Geofferey Wheeler (New York: Frederick. A. Praeger, 1966) 70-71. Charles Sigisbert Sonnini, *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt* (Farnborough: Gregg, 1972) 323. Although my chapter focuses on Karayanni's description of this ambivalence, other dance critics have also addressed this topic. For more reading on the Western ambivalent reaction to Middle Eastern dance, see Anthony Shay and Barbara Sellers-Young, "Belly Dance: Orientalism, Exoticism, Self-Exoticism," *Dance Research Journal* 35:1 (Summer 2003): 13-37. For a feminist ambivalent response to belly dance as a globalised space, see Dennis J. Downey, Sandrine Zerbib, and Derek Christopher Martin, "Implicit Politics in a Free and Open Space: Belly Dance, Leisure Activity, and Gender Identity," *Research in Social Movements Conflicts, and Change* 31 (2011): 103-140.

⁶⁰ For an example of the ambivalent feeling of arousal, fear, and shock which the Western subject undergoes during the encounter with Eastern dance, see the film *M Butterfly* by the Canadian director David Paul Cronenberg. The film was released in

⁶¹ For the description of Flaubert's experience of being sexually tempted by male dancers in Egypt, see Anthony Shay, "Choreographing Masculinity: Hyper Masculine Dance Styles as Invented Tradition in Egypt, Iran, and Uzbekistan," *When Men Dance: Choreographing Masculinities across Borders*, eds. Jennifer Fisher and Anthony Shay (Oxford University Press, 2009) 287-308. See also Ali Behdad, *Belated Travellers: Orientalism in an Age of Colonial Dissolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994) 53-72.

⁶² Terms such as "universe" and "eternal image" are romanticising categories that idealise the dance and the dancers by detaching them from the tensions that condition and regulate them. For examples of the romanticisation and idealisation of belly dance, see Andrea Deagon, "Dance, Body, Universe," 2 May 2002, People Server, University of North Carolina Wilmington, 14 September 2012, <http://people.uncw.edu/deagon/raqs/DBU.htm> See also Andrea Deagon, "Dancing the Eternal Image: Visual and Narrative Archetypes" 2 May 2002, People Server, University of North Carolina Wilmington, 14 September 2012, <http://people.uncw.edu/deagon/raqs/DBU.htm>

⁶³ For a reference to the images of excess which Curtis uses in his description of Oriental dance, see George William Curtis, *Nile Notes of Howadji* (New York: Edward & Co., 1857): 135.

⁶⁴ For examples of queer theoretical readings of Orientalism prior to Karayanni's book, see Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1992) 341. Joseph Boone, "Vacation Cruises; Or, the Homoerotics of Orientalism" *PMLA*, 11:1 (January 1995): 89-107. Robert L.A. Clark, "Queering Orientalism: The East As Closet in Said, Ackerley, and the Medieval Christian West," *Medieval Encounters* 5: 3 (1999): 336-349. For examples of the contribution in the field of dance and sexuality after the publication of Karayanni's book, see Judith Lynne Hanna, "Dance and Sexuality: Many Moves," *The Journal of Sex Research* 47:3 (2010): 212-241. See also Marusa Pusnik, "Introduction: Dance as Social Life and Cultural Practice," *Anthropological Notebooks* 16:3 (2010): 5-8.

⁶⁵ For examples of works which provide a different perspective of belly dance as a space of resistance and empowerment, see Rachel Krauss, "'We are not strippers': How Belly Dancers Manage a (Soft) Stigmatized Serious Leisure Activity," *Symbolic Interaction* 33: 3 (Fall 2010): 435-455. Dennis J. Downey, Reel. Justine. J., Sonya SooHoo, Sandrine Zerbib, "Body Image in Belly Dance: Integrating Alternative Norms into Collective Identity," *Journal of Gender Studies* 19: 4 (2010): 377- 393. Amira Jarmakani, "Belly Dance for Liberation: A Critical Interpretation of Reclamation Rhetoric in the American Belly Dance Community," ed,

Arabs in the Americas: Interdisciplinary Essays on the Arab Diaspora, ed. Zabel, Darcy. A (New York: Peter Lang, 2006) 145-168.

⁶⁶ The veil has been a literal and metaphoric category of critical analysis in both Arabo-Islamic and Western writings. For more reading on Alloula's narrative on veiled Algerian women, and the ways in which the veil acquires meaning within colonial and national politics, see Lindsey Moore, "'Darkly as through a Veil': Reading Representations of Algerian Women," *Intercultural Education* 18:4 (2007): 335-351. Ziad Bentahar, "Beyond Harem Walls: Redefining Women's Space in Works by Assia Djebar, Malek Alloula and Fatima Mernissi," *Hawwa* 7:1(2009): 25-38. For further reading about the veil, see Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society* (London: John Wiley and Sons, 1975):29-45. See also Leila Ahmad, "Arab Culture and the Writing of Women's Bodies," *Gender Issues* 9: 1 (1989): 41-55. Fadwa El Guindi, *Veil: Modesty, privacy, and Resistance* (Oxford, UK: Berg, 1999) 13-116 Faegheh Shirazi, *The Veil Unveiled: the Hijab in Modern Culture* (Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida, 2001). Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others," *American Anthropology* 104: 3 (September 2002): 783-790. For examples of recent writings on harem, see Marilyn Booth, ed, *Harem Histories: Envisioning Places and Living Spaces* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

⁶⁷ Alloula's analysis recalls Fanon who equally reads the body of the Algerian woman as an allegory of the Algerian nation. . For references to Fanon's interpretation of the veil in anti-colonial resistance, see my introductory chapter. For recent reading of Fanon and Alloula about the politics of the veil and the physical and symbolic violence to which Algerian women were subjected, see Azzedine Haddour, "Torture Unveiled: Re-reading Fanon and Bourdieu in the Context of May 1958," *Theory, Culture, Society* 27: 7/8 (2010): 66-90.

⁶⁸ Born as Badaweya Mohamed Kareem Al Nirani, Carioca took her stage name from a Brazilian samba dancer she liked. For more reading about the change of her name, see Douglas Martin, "Tahia Carioca, 79, Dies; A Renowned Dancer" *New York Times* (September 22, 1999): B12. It is worth pointing out that there is no biography of Tahia in Arabic or Egyptian literature. This is a fact that Edward Said critically indicated during his research about her when he visited her in Egypt in 1999. Said notices that 'there exists no complete record of Tahia's films, no bibliography, no proper biography – and there probably never will' (1999, 3).

⁶⁹ Although Edward Said describes the way in which the relationship between Oriental and Occidental cultures are grounded in the images of strangeness and exoticism that the West constructs about the East, other scholars focus more on the cultural encounter between Western and Eastern cultures independently of these images. For more reading about this perspective, see Mohammed Sharafuddin, *Islam and Romantic Orientalism: Literary Encounters with the Orient* (London: Tauris, 1994).

⁷⁰ Although critics have commented on Said's two articles about Carioca, few critics have done systematic study of these articles in terms of the ways in which dance relates to gender and the patriarchal structure of desire in Egypt. Karayanni for instance limits his indication of Carioca to her "single tile choreography." (*Fear and Desire* 206 n5) Karayanni refers to Said's articles on Carioca just in passing. (207 n7). For further reading on Said's writing on Carioca, see Valerie Kennedy, *Edward Said: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2000): 126, 129-131. See also Anastasia Valassopoulos, "'Long, Languous, Repetitious Line' : Edward Said's Critique of Arab Popular Culture," *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation*, ed, Adel Iskandar and Hakem Rustom (Berkley: University of California Press, 2010): 191-203. 193, 194-7. Timothy Brennan, "The Critic and the Public: Edward Said and World Literature," *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation*, ed, Adel Iskandar and Hakem Rustom (Berkley: University of California Press, 2010): 102-120. 103.

⁷¹ I am aware that I am using the type of allegorical reading which I interrogate and contest both in Said and Karayanni's discussion of dance. For my own awareness of the recurrence of metaphor in my thesis, see my conclusion.

⁷² For more reading on the Islamic conception of *awra*, see the work of the Egyptian male feminist writer and critic Kacem Amine who has inspired imminent Arab feminists such as Fatima Mernissi, Nawal El Sadaoui, and others. For further reading see Kacem Amin, *Tahrir Al-Mar'a* (Cairo: Umum Almakatib Bimistr Wal Akharij, 1928) 15, 16, and 18. See also Leila Ahmed, "Arab Culture and Writing Women's Bodies," *Gender Studies* 9:1 (1989): 41-55. Fedwa Malti-Douglas, *Woman's Body, Woman's Word: Gender and Discourse in Arabo-Islamic Writing* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991) 49, 90, 121-122, and 126-127. Valerie J. Hoffman, "Islamic Perspectives on the Human Body: Legal, Social and Spiritual Considerations," *Theology and Medicine: Embodiment, Morality, and Medicine*, eds. Lisa Cahill and Margaret A. Farley Sowle (Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995) 37-55. For examples of recent publications on the Islamic regulation of the body in gendered spaces, see Russel Belk and Rana Sobh, "Gender and Privacy in Arab Gulf States: Implications for Consumption and Marketing," *Handbook of Islamic Marketing*, eds. Ozlem Sandikci and Gillian Rice (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2011) 73-96. Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Criminalising Sexuality: Zina Laws as Violence against Women in Muslim Contexts" *Sur International Journal on Human Rights* 8:15 (December 2011): 7-33.

⁷³ For further reading about sexuality and the notion of honour in Islamic culture, see Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society* (New York: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1975). See also Fatima Mernissi, "Virginity and Patriarchy," *Women's Studies international Forum* 5: 2 (1982): 183-191. Leila Ahmed, "The Women of Islam" *Transition* 83 (2000): 78-97. For more references to belly dance or baladi as a site through which issues of gender and honour are negotiated in Egyptian culture, see Noha Roushdy, "Baladi as Performance: Gender and Dance in Modern Egypt" *Surfacing* 3:1 (2010): 71-99. Lama Abu-Odeh, "Crimes of Honour and the Construction of Gender in Arab Societies," *Comparative Law Review* 2:1 (2011): 3-29.

⁷⁴ Although my study is not concerned with Freud's theory of the fetish, it is still useful to point out the relevance of this concept in the Freudian theory of sexuality. Fetishism relates to the moment in which the male infant develops fear of castration upon seeing that his mother does not have a penis. Being sure his mother is castrated, the child is terrified and recreates another penis in his imagination through an object which becomes the fetish, that is the substitute for the lost maternal phallus the infant does not wish to forgo. This conception is constitutive of Freud's sexual theory of repression and substitution. Freud defines the fetish as "a token of triumph over the threat of castration and a safeguard against it" (1959, 198). For more reading of the relevance of Freud's theory of the fetish in cultural study, see Emily Apter and William Pietz. *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993): 1-13. For eroticism and fetishism in Marx and Freud, see Jon Stratton, *The Desirable Body: Cultural Fetishism and the Erotics of Consumption* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1996): 25-57.

⁷⁵ In *Capital*, Karl Marx examines how capitalism is a system of production of fetishised commodities whose sale in the market place produces capital which accumulates as profit for the capitalist or owner of the means of production. In capitalism a product is a commodity only when it is displayed and fetishised. Marx notes: "A commodity appears at first sight a very trivial thing, and easily understood . . . So far as it is a value in use, there is nothing mysterious about it. The form of wood, for instance, is altered by making a table out of it. Yet, for all that, the table continues to be that common, everyday thing, wood. But so soon as it steps forth as a commodity, it is changed into something transcendent. It no longer stands with its feet on the ground, but in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas, far more wonderful than 'table turning' ever was . . . the existence of the things *qua* commodities, and the value relation between the products of labour which stamps them as commodities, have absolutely no connexion with their physical properties and with the material relations arising therefrom. There it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic forms of relation between things . . . This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities" (81). Marx argues that a commodity is not defined in terms of its "use value," that is its usefulness and utility for its maker. Nor is it defined through its physical characteristics or the human effort that has been invested in its production. Rather, a commodity is mainly defined through its exchange value, that is the value for which it is exchanged, be it money or other commodities. Marx notes that capitalism invents this fetishised image of commodities so as to dissimulate the material realities through which commodities are produced through individual human labour. This leads to the alienation of the worker from his work and from his body that produces the work. Marx confirms that "the worker therefore only feels himself outside his work and in his work feels outside himself . . . [his] labour is not the satisfaction of a need, it is only a means to satisfy a need external to it. Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists . . . in it he belongs not to himself but to another . . . it is the loss of his self" (39).

⁷⁶ Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism in the capitalist mode of production has proven useful for various neo-Marxist critics, most notably, the American literary critic Fredric Jameson. Reading culture in terms of Marx's theory of commodity fetishism, Jameson examines the ways in which postmodern culture does not reflect reality as it is but fetishises it, or makes it into spectacular, mystified, and beautiful images that sell and stimulate constant consumption. Jameson notices that culture according to the postmodern logic of capitalism undergoes "an immense dilation of its sphere (the sphere of commodities), . . . a quantum leap in . . . the 'aestheticisation' of reality . . . a prodigious exhilaration with the new order of things, a commodity rush, our representations of things tending to arouse an enthusiasm and a mood swing not necessarily inspired by the things themselves" (ix-x). Jameson defines postmodernism as the age of metamorphosis in which cultural representations of reality dilate, expand, and defamiliarise reality since it acquires a spectacular look destined primarily for consumption. Jameson maintains that consumerism which is the cultural logic of capitalism becomes the major feature of postmodern culture, be it literary, cinematic, or architectural. Culture unfolds through its commodification, that is through its mystification into images which increase their potential to sell and be consumed rather than instruct and be useful as a value in itself. Here, Jameson's analysis draws from Marx's definition of commodity fetishism but extends it to the sphere of culture in which the depth of meaning fades away in the production of culture just as the interest in the value of labour fades away before the value of commodity in capitalist and consumerist society. Jameson actually maintains that the "cultural and the economic collapse back into one another and say the same thing" (xxi) since culturally produced images acquire their value as they are aestheticised and made beautiful just like any other product. Jameson here deconstructs Marx's binary opposition between the basic and superstructure that correspond to economy and culture respectively. In this state of affairs, consumption becomes an end in itself in the contemporary global market which also incorporates postcolonial representations of the native subject and body. Marx and Jameson's theories of commodity fetishism allow us to see how Oriental dance is a commodity "intended for consumption" not only by the colonial traveller, as Karayanni points out, but also by the postcolonial critic who contributes to the promotion of this dance as a rare global commodity.

⁷⁷ For further reading of a feminist critique of commodity fetishism see Luce Irigaray, "Women on the Market," *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity*, ed. Alan D. Schrift (New York: Routledge, 1997) 174 -189. Rosalind Gill, "Empowerment / Sexism: Figuring Female Sexual Agency in Contemporary Advertising," *Feminism and Psychology* 18: 1. (2008): 35-60. Lorraine Gamman and Merja Makinen, *Female Fetishism* (New York: New York University Press, 1995). Eillen R. Meehan and Ellen Riordan, eds., *Sex and Money: Feminism and Political Economy in the Media* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002). For a discussion of the fetish that brings together postcolonial and feminist issues, see Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather, Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (London: Routledge, 1995) 181-203.

⁷⁸ As a black feminist theorist, poet, essayist, and gay lesbian activist, Audre Lorde contests not only racism, but also sexism, gender and class antagonism, and heteronormativity among the black and white communities. Lorde produced most of her work in the 1970s when black

women contested male domination in movements of resistance such as the Black Power and Black Arts movements. Black female writers and critics noticed that black men in these movements often situated Black women as objects helping them uplift the black community rather than subjects having their own concerns as women. For examples of Black feminist studies which emerged as a direct response to the masculinist bias of the civil rights movements, see Madhu Dubey, *Black Women Novelists and the National Aesthetic* (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1994) 1-50. For black feminists who were inspired by Lorde's critique of black intellectuals appropriating postmodern ideas, or what Lorde calls "the master's tools," see Barbara Christian, "The Race for Theory," *Cultural Critique* 6 (Spring 1987): 51-63. For further reading about Lorde's rejection of white feminism, see Lester Olson. C, "The Personal, the Political, and the Others: Audre Lorde Denouncing 'The Second Sex Conference'" *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 33. 3 (2000): 259- 285.

⁷⁹ Here, I am alluding to the French feminist theory of "l'écriture féminine" which Hélène Cixous articulates in her essay "The Laugh of the Medusa," published in 1976, a year before Lorde published "Poetry is Not a Luxury" in 1977. Both Lorde and Cixous agree that women writing reclaims the female voice, asserts the agency of the female body, and surpass phallogentrism, or the centrality of patriarchal reason. Yet, Cixous does not address race in her theory since she is not subjected to the racial oppression that inscribes Lorde's body and writings. For critical engagements with the convergences and divergences between Cixous and Lorde, see Alison Bartlett, "A Passionate Subject: Representations of Desire in Feminist Pedagogy," *Gender and Education* 10:1 (1998): 85-92. For a discussion of black female bodies through the paradigm of *écriture féminine*, see Sika Elaine Dagbovie and Nghana Lewis. "Out of Eden: The Emergence of Olympia Vernon and Black Woman Love," *The Mississippi Quarterly* 59: 3/4 (Summer 2006): 509-526. For examples of feminist theories of the writing body, see Anne Rosalind Jones, "Writing the Body: Towards an Understanding of L' *Ecriture Feminine*," *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, eds. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997) 370- 383. Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On The Discursive Limits of "Sex"*, (New York: Routledge, 1993) 3-28. For more critical reading on "écriture féminine" and the questions of race, see Rosalind Jones, Anne. "Writing the Body: Toward an Understanding of L' *Ecriture Feminine*," *Feminist Studies* 7:2 (Summer, 1981): 247-263. For recent reading of this topic, see Gillia Schutte, "The Laugh of the Medusa Heard in South African Women's Poetry" *Scrutiny* 2: 16:2 (2011): 42-55.

⁸⁰ For Examples of intellectual and political challenges of anti-pornography feminism, see Drucilla Cornell, *Feminism and Pornography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (New York: Plume, 1989) and Diana E.H. Russel, *Dangerous Relationships: Pornography, Misogyny, and Rape* (Thousand Oaks, California.: Sage Publications, 1998). See also Carolyn Bronstein, *Battling Pornography: The American Feminist Anti-pornography Movement 1976-1986* (New York; Cambridge University Press, 2011). It is worth pointing out that there is a pro-pornography feminism movement that has developed out of the anti-pornography position. For further reading in that

direction, see Bonnie Mann, *Women's Liberation and the Sublime: Feminism, postmodernism, Environment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006): 96.

⁸¹ For Audre Lorde's experience of diaspora, see Rose Brewer, "Black Women's Studies: From Theory to Transformative Practice," *Socialism and Democracy* 25:1 (2011): 146-156. Stella Bolaki, "'New Living the Old in a New Way': Home and Queer Migrations in Audre Lorde's *Zami*" *Textual Practice* 25: 4 (2011): 779- 798. Maureen C Heacock, "'The Sharpened Edge' of Audre Lorde: Visions and Revisions of Community, Power, and Language," *Sharpened Edge: Women of Colour, Resistance and Writing*, ed. Stephanie Athey (Westport, CNN. Praeger, 2003) 156-186. For writings on Lorde's alienation in European context of women's studies, see Rivira-Fuentes Consuelo, "Sister Outside: An Enduring Vision Embracing Myself, My Sister and the 'Other' " *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 11:3- 4 (2007): 179-187.

⁸² For the meaning of the concept of intersectionality, see Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43:6 (July 1991): 1241-1299. For recent examples of works which address the concept of "intersectionality," see James Joseph Dean, "Thinking Intersectionality: Sexualities and the Politics of Multiple Identities," *Theorising Intersectionality and Sexuality*, eds. Yvette Taylor, Sally Hines, and Mark E. Casey (New York: Palgrave, 2011) 119-139. For a discussion of intersectionality from a masculine standpoint, see Jeff Hearn, "Neglected Intersectionalities in Studying Men: Age(ing), Virtuality, Transnationality," *Framing Intersectionality: Debates on multi-Faceted Concept in Gender Studies*, ed. Helma Lutz, Maria Teresa Herrera Vivar, and Linda Supik (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2011) 89-104. For discussion of intersectionality and the body, see Paula-Irene Villa, "Embodiment is Always More: Intersectionality, Subjection, and the Body," *Framing Intersectionality: Debates on multi-Faceted Concept in Gender Studies*, eds, Helma Lutz, Maria Teresa Herrera Vivar, and Linda Supik (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2011) 171-186.

⁸³ For Lorde's poetic mythologizing of her lovers, see Charlene Ball, "Old Magic and New Fury: The Theophany of Afrekete in Audre Lorde's 'Tar Beach'," *NWSA Journal* 13.1 (Spring 2001): 61-85. For more critical reading of Lorde's erotic writing, see Sarah E Chinn, "Audre Lorde and the Power of Touch." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 9:1 (2003): 181-205.

⁸⁴ For a theoretical description of the colonial body, see the first section of my introductory chapter.

⁸⁵ For a list of Saab's works that includes her war documentaries, see Kareena Cynthia, "Grace and Ecstasy: An Interview with Jocelyn," *Metro Magazine: Media and Education Magazine* 152 (April 2007): 78-81. For a discussion about Saab's contribution as a female director, see Maria Lauret, "Feminism and Culture -The Movie: A Critical Overview of Writing on Women and Cinema" *Women: Cultural Review* 2:1 (1991): 52-69.

⁸⁶ The film draws from a study Saab conducted on youth sexuality and the practice of circumcision of Egyptian women in 1996 but could not turn into the three-hour documentary she had planned. Egyptian authorities did not allow the broadcasting of the interviews she did with young people. I am not directly addressing the practice of circumcision in the film. For a discussion of circumcision from a postcolonial perspective, see Gayatri Spivak, *In Other Words: Essays on Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1988) 151-152. For a reaction to this practice from an Arab feminist standpoint, see Nawal Elsaadaoui, *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*, trans. Sherif Hetata (London: Zen Books, 1980) 50-65.

⁸⁷ For the online reference to the classification of the film as erotic drama, check the film page on face on the link <http://www.facebook.com/pages/DUNIA-KISS-ME-NOT-ON-THE-EYES/328871924390?sk=info> see also James Purtill “Much Ado About *Dunia*: An Interview with Filmmaker Jocelyne Saab,” 24 May 2012, *Egypt Independent, Weekly Newspaper*, 15 September, 2012, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/much-ado-about-dunia>

⁸⁸ The film tackles eroticism from the Sufi poetic tradition of Bachar Ibnou Burd, Ibn Hazm, Ibn Roumi whose verse Bashir teaches and Dunia intends to work on in her thesis. The film also shows that Dunia dances over Sufi music in her dance classes. The film in this sense aims to project an image of eroticism that is deeply embedded in the Islamic culture yet left unnoticed because of the oppression of sexuality in Egypt. For more reading about Sufi erotic poetry, see Mahdi Tourage, *Rumi and the Hermeneutics of Eroticism* (Boston: Brill, 2007)

⁸⁹ For a discussion of the notion of woman as *fitna* in Islam, see Nawal Elsaadaoui, *The Hidden face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*, trans, Sherif Hetata (London: Zen Books, 1980) 203. For more reading about *fitna* as a concept of active female sexuality that is threatening the social order, see Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil*, 31. For the discussion of this term in Quran and Hadith, or the sayings of the Prophet Mohamed, see Saba Mahmoud, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005) 110-111.

⁹⁰ While describing the challenges the film faces because of its theme of circumcision - or ‘khitan’ in Arabic, Jocelyne Saab adds that the Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar, Mohammad Sayyed Al-Tantawi, confirms that there is no Islamic law which legalises the practice of genital mutilation of girls. That is why he gives the government the cover it needed to let the film be released. For a reference to the threats and tension that surrounded the making and the reception of the film, check “Jocelyne SAAB Film Dunia Q&A,” *Vesoul Asian Film Festival*, 15 September 2012 http://wn.com/JOCELYNE_SAAB_DUNIA_Q&A_@_VESOUL_ASIAN_FILM_FESTIVAL_TEASER#/videos

⁹¹ Writing about the cultural context of India, Katrak notes that “women’s bodies are exiled”(2006, 2) through a process in which, under the effect of patriarchal norms, the body is “disconnected from itself as though it does not belong to it” (6). Katrak suggests “movement, dance, and other non-verbal, visual, and aural forms” as spaces through which women can “re-

belong to their bodies” (7) as a way to resist the process of being “colonised within their own bodies” (11).

⁹² For further reference to the imperative force of René Highway’s dance and its location at the crossroad of cultures, see Paula Citron, “Obituary: René Highway, 36: Charismatic Performer,” *The Toronto Star* 20 Oct. 1990: A4. Rosie DiManno, “René Dances to Brother Tune in Cree Tale,” *The Toronto Star* 18 Mar. 1998: 1. Raoul Trujillo, “Memory and Remembering,” *Canadian Theatre Review* 68 (Fall 1991): 22.

⁹³ For further reading of the integrity of dance practices in indigenous culture and the Canadian government’s recurrent attempts to outlaw and ban these practices see Tara Browner, *Heartbeat of the People: Music and Dance of the Northern Pow-wow* (Urbana: Illinois UP, 2002) 28. See also Clyde Ellis, *A Dancing People: Pow wow Culture of the Southern Plains* (Lawrence: Kansas UP, 2006) 66, 69, 110. Katherine Pettipas, *Severing the Ties That Bind: Government Repression of Indigenous Religious Ceremonies on the Prairies* (Winnipeg: Manitoba UP, 1994) x. Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada 1990-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999) 56-102. Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: British Columbia UP, 1986) 175.

⁹⁴ The novel contests the abuse of indigenous children in the Canadian government funded and Catholic church–run Residential Schools. For further reading of the relevance of the Residential School system in Highway’s novel, see Richard J. Lane, “Surviving the Residential School System: Resisting Hegemonic Canadianness in Tomson Highway’s *Kiss of the Fur Queen*.” *Reconfigurations: Canadian Literatures and Postcolonial Identities / Littératures Canadiennes et Identités Postcoloniales*, ed. and intr. Marc Maufort and Franca Bellarsi (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2002) 191-201. Sam McKegey (2005, 79 - 82). Patrick Schmitz and Julia Fleck, *A Report on Native Residential Schooling in Canada and the System’s Repercussions as Presented in Tomson Highway’s ‘Kiss of the Fur Queen’ and Basil Johnston’s ‘Indian School Days’* (Norderstedt: GRIN Verlag, 2012) 14. For more reading of works dealing with residential schools in the history of Canada in general, see Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010) 115. See also William Marrow, “Violence and Religion in the Christian Tradition,” *Teaching Religion and Violence*, ed. Brian K. Pennington (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) 94-117.

⁹⁵ Heather Hodgson writes that “Highway said that he may spend the rest of his writing life trying to sort out his anger at the Catholic church, the compulsory English language, and European cultural imperialism in general” (3).

⁹⁶ For more reading on the artistic collaboration of the two brothers, see Allan J. Ryan, *The Trickster Shift: Humour and Irony in Contemporary Native Art* (Vancouver: UBC Press, University of British Columbia, 1999) 61.

⁹⁷ For further reading about the indigenous body in the discourse of resistance in Eurocentric Canada, see Mary-Ellen Kelm, *Colonising Bodies: Aboriginal Health and Healing in British Columbia 1900-1950* (Vancouver: UBC Press, University of British Columbia, 1998) 57-99. James V Fenelon and Thomas D Hall, "Revitalization and Indigenous Resistance to Globalization and Neoliberalism," *American Behavioural Scientist* 51:12 (August 2008): 1867-1901.

⁹⁸ These events portray the social injustice that native women suffer in Canada and relate more specifically to Highway's memory of Helen Betty Osborne, a native woman who attended high school with Highway and who was raped and murdered in the Pas Manitoba in 1971. For Highway's personal memory of this event, see Johanne Tompkins and Lisa Male, "Twenty-one Native Women on Motorcycles: An Interview with Tomson Highway," *Australasian Drama Studies* 24 (April 1994): 13-28. For a sociological analysis of the gendered and racially perpetrated colonial violence in urban Canada, see Sherene H. Razack, "Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice: The Murder of Pamela George," *Race, Space and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society*, ed. Sherene H. Razack (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002) 121-56. See also Sherene H. Razack, "Makin Canada White: Law and the Policies of Bodies of Colour in the Nineties," *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 15:2 (2000): 91-130. Douglas A. Brownridge, *Violence Against Women: Vulnerable Populations* (New York: Routledge 2009) 164-200.

⁹⁹ For further reading about the Weetigo, see Jennifer S.H Brown and Robert Brightman, *"The Orders of the Dreamed": George Nelson on Cree and Northern Ojibwa Religion and Myth, 1823* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988) 163. Floyd Largent, "Windigo: A Native American Archetype." *Parabola* 23: 3 (1998): 22-25. For further reading about the Weetigo as a critical after effect of colonialism in which "members of a culture can be induced to turn on their own people," see Cynthia Sugars, "Weetigos and Weasels: Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen* and Canadian Post Colonialism," *Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies* 9:1 (2002): 69-91.

¹⁰⁰ It is very useful to point out that Highway's novel does not frame its narrative in a binary logic that glorifies native culture and denounces Western colonial culture. Rather, Highway's novel establishes a confrontational relationship between the two cultures. This confrontational worldview of Highway draws from the Rock Cree worldview which defines the Cree figure of the trickster or Weesageechak as basically enigmatic. For further reading about the trickster in Cree Rock worldview, see Robert A. Brightman, *Ācaoōhkiwina and Ācimōwina: Traditional Narrative of the Rock Cree Indians* (Hull, Quebec: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1989) 64-65. For a critique of nativist reading of indigenous culture, see Craig S. Womack, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

¹⁰¹ For a more queer reading of the image of honey in relation to the development of Gabriel's sexuality, see Andrew John Buzny (2011, 9).

¹⁰² I borrow this term from Sunera Thobani's purposely to refer to the discourse of self and other on which the Canadian narrative of the nation is predicated and which the indigenous discourse is racially stigmatised in the "fabrication" of nationhood. For more reading in this direction, see (Thobani 2007). See more particularly the introductory chapter. For further reading about racist and racialised discourses of otherness that constitutes the narrative of the nation in Canada, see Celia Haig-Brown, "Resistance and Renewal: First Nations and Aboriginal Education in Canada," *Race and Racialisation: Essential Readings* ed. Tania Das. Gupta (Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press, 2007) 168-178. See also the introductory section that preceded this chapter.

¹⁰³ For the use of the story of Cree legend Son of Ayash as a symbolic way to remake community after the effect of the residential school experience in the novel, Sam McKegney, *Magic Weapons: Aboriginal Writers Remaking Community After Residential School* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2007): 163. For further reading about the legend of the "Son of Ayash" in the form of story, see Carl Ray and James Stevens, *Sacred Legends of the Sandy Lake Cree* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971). Jim Morris, "Ayash," *First people First Voices*, ed. Penny Petrone (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1991) 212. Renate Eigenbrod, *Travelling Knowledges: Positioning the Im/migrant Reader of Aboriginal Literatures in Canada* (Winnipeg, Man: University of Manitoba Press, 2005) 65, 66.

¹⁰⁴ Before he dies, Gabriel asks his brother Jeremiah to be joyful and not mourn him. Tomson Highway recalls that his brother René made the same request to him before he died in 1990. For a reference to Highway's indication of this point, see Suzanne Methot, "The Universe of Tomson Highway." *Quill & Quire* 64.11 (November 1998): 1

¹⁰⁵ Canadian literary and critical studies address the ways in which occluded indigenous histories haunt and unsettle Canada's narrative of the nation. For further readings about critical texts which address the haunting and spectrality of colonial violence in the history of Canada, see Emilie Cameron, "Indigenous Spectrality and the Politics of Postcolonial Ghost Stories," *Cultural Geography* 15.3 (July 2008): 383-393. See also Cynthia Sugars and Gerry Turcotte, *Unsettled Remains: Canadian Literature and the Postcolonial Gothic* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009) viii, x, xiv.

¹⁰⁶ For the romanticisation of the indigenous body in dance, see Vernadette V. Gonzalez, "Consuming 'Polynesia': Visual Spectacles of Native Bodies in Hawaiian Tourism," *Studies in Symbolic Interactions*, Volume 33, ed. Norman K Denzin (Bingley, UK: Emerald, 2009) 191-217. For further reading about the ways in which global mass tourism promotes local cultures of dance as a way to erode them, see Maheshvari Naidu, "Indigenous Cultural Bodies in Tourism: An Analysis of Local 'Audience' Perception of Global Tourist Consumers," *Journal of Social Science* 26:1 (2011): 29-39. For further reading of the ways in which dance is a commodified labour in which the dancer is alienated from her body, see Sheenagh Pietrobruno, *Salsa and its Transnational Moves* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006) 7.

¹⁰⁷ The indigenous body has been variously constructed as promiscuous and dirty, for further readings about the ways in which the body of the indigenous subject emerges through these reductive constructions, see Joan Sangster, "Constructing the 'Eskimo' Wife: White Women's Travel Writing, Colonialism, and the Canadian North 1940-1960" *Creating Postwar Canada: Community, Diversity, and Dissent, 1945-1975*, eds. Magda Fahrni and Robert Rutherford. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008) 23-44. Kim A. Anderson "Native Women, the Body, Land, and Narratives of Contact and Arrival," *Storied Communities: Narratives of Contact and Arrival in Constituting Political Community*, eds. Hester Lessard, Rebecca Johnson, and Jeremy Webber (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011) 167-188.

¹⁰⁸ For further reading about the apology of the state of Canada to indigenous people, see Matt James, "Wrestling with the Past: Apologies, Quasi-Apologies, and Non-Apologies in Canada," *The Age of Apology: Facing up to the Past*, eds. Mark Gibney, Rhoda E Howard-Hassmann, Jean-Marc Coicaud, and Niklaus Steiner (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008) 137-153. Beenash Jafri, "Indigenous Solidarity in an Anti-Racism Framework? A Case Study of the National Secretariat Against Hate and Racism in Canada," *Alliances: Re/Envisioning Indigenous –Non-Indigenous Relationships*, ed. Lynn Davis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010) 256-275. For further reading in the politics of state compensation discourse in Canada, see William Kurt Barth, *On Cultural Rights: The Equality of Nations and the Minority Legal Tradition* (Danvers, MA: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2008) 128. Priscilla B. Hayner. *Unspeakable Truth: Transitional Justice and the Challenge of Truth Commissions* (New York: Routledge, 2011) 72.

¹⁰⁹ For the discussion of the Christianisation mission of Cree indigenous people in Canada, see Martin Calvin, *Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur Trade* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1978) 58. For more reading on fur trade and the Christianisation of Cree and other indigenous Canadians, see Barry Pritzker, *A Native American Encyclopaedia: History, Culture, and Peoples* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 512. Tolly Bradford, *Prophetic Identities: Indigenous Missionaries on British Colonial Frontiers 1850-1875* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2012) 92.

¹¹⁰ For the description of indigenous fancy dance in Canada, the forms it takes among male and female dancers, and the way it develops from traditional to contemporary styles, see Tara Browner, *Heartbeat of the People: Music and Dance of the Northern Pow-wow*, (Urbana: Illinois UP, 2002), 129. See also Clyde Ellis, *A Dancing People: Pow wow Culture of the Southern Plains*. (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 2003) 13. Heather Elton, "Culture from the Buffalo Days to the modern Powwow" *Moving History / Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*, ed. Ann Dills and Ann Cooper Albright (Middleton, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2001) 120.

¹¹¹ For further reading about dance as a culturally integral space of healing, see Shelley Scott, "Embodiment Process: Native American Women and Performance," *Native American Performance and Representation*, ed. S.E. Wilmer (Tucson: University of Arizona Press,

2009) 123-135. Richard Katz, Megan Biesele, Verna St. Denis, *Healing makes our hearts happy: spirituality and cultural transformation among the Kalahari Ju/'hoansi* (Rochester, Vt.: Inner Traditions, 1997) 169.

¹¹² For the meaning of the eagle's feathers and animals in Aboriginal mode of knowledge, See Dawn E. Bastian and Judy K. Mitchell. *Handbook of Native American Mythology* (Oxford, England: ABC-CLIO, 2004) 149. See also Patricia Ann Lynch and Jeremy Roberts, *Native American Mythology A to Z* (New York: Info-base Publishing, 2010) xxviii. Eugene Potapov and Richard Sale, *The Gyrfalcon* (London: T&AD Poyser) 2010.

¹¹³ Prominent contemporary Western dance theorists, like Susan Foster, André Lepecki, Randy Martin, and others define dance as a space where the body transgresses the control of power through movement. Lepecki and MacKendrick, most particularly, draw from Jacques Derrida's method of deconstruction to explain how meaning in dance vanishes constantly in bodily movement, in the same way the linguistic signified—or meaning—according to Derrida, defers through the play of signifiers.

¹¹⁴ Bongo, bélé, and pique are traditional African dances which are inscribed in the black body even after it is uprooted and transported to the new world. For further readings about these dances, see Lise Winer, *Dictionary of the English Creole of Trinidad and Tobago: on Historical Principles* (Montreal: McGill-Queen University Press, 2009) 112. For examples of references which describe the three dances in relation to the history of Trinidad and Tobago, see Bridget Brereton, *An Introduction to the History of Trinidad and Tobago* (Oxford, UK: Heinemann, 1996): 106. See also Holis Liverpool, *Rituals of Power and Rebellion: The Carnival Tradition of Trinidad and Tobago*, (California: Research Associates School Times, 2001) 118.

¹¹⁵ Most historical accounts describe the evolution of Trinidad Carnival through this division of historical periods. For examples of these studies, see Richard E. Burton, *Afro-Creole: Power, Opposition, and Play in the Caribbean* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1997) 157-176. Concepcion Mengibar Rico, "The Carnavalesque into Theatre: Carnival and Drama in the Anglophone Caribbean," *A Sea for Encounters: Essays Towards a Postcolonial Commonwealth*, ed. Stella Borg Barthet (New York: Rodopi, 2009) 323-332.

¹¹⁶ For further reading about the form of the institution of Trinidad Carnival in terms of the social structure of the Island, see Andrew Pearse, "Carnival in Nineteenth Century Trinidad," *Caribbean Quarterly* 4: 3/4 (March 1956): 175-193. See also Daniel Miller, *Modernity, An Ethnographic Approach: Dualism and Mass Consumption in Trinidad* (Oxford: Berg, 1994): 131.

¹¹⁷ Richard D.E. Burton describes the period between 1838 and 1884 as the Jamet Carnival period because it was marked not only by the emancipation of slaves but also the overwhelming presence of freed slaves who turned Trinidad Carnival festivities into a space for the expression of their African cultural heritage (1997, 158). The Jamet, which came from

the French word “diamètre” refers to low class or underworld in late nineteenth century Trinidad. The word Jamette also means a loose woman occupying the space between respectability and that of the underworld. For more reading of this meaning of the jamet, see Bridget Brereton (1979, 170). For a discussion of the jamette, space and the body, see Marlene Nourbese Philip, *A Genealogy of Resistance: And Other Essays* (Toronto: Mercury Press, 1997) 77-78.

¹¹⁸ For more reading about Indian version of stickfight and or Hosay, see Frank J. Korom, *Hosay Trinidad: Muharam Performance in an Indo-Caribbean Diaspora* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2003) 110. For the process of Creolising Hosay, see Ajai Mansingh and Laximi Mansingh, “Hosay and its Creolisation,” *Caribbean Quarterly* 41:1 (March 1995): 25-39. Milla Cozart Riggio, “Performing in the Lap and at the Feet of God: Ramleela in Trinidad, 2006-2008,” *TDR/ The Drama Review* 54:1 (2010): 106-149. For the subjection of East Indians to racial segregation in Trinidad, see Hari Prasad Singh, *The Indian Struggle for Justice and Equality against Black Racism in Trinidad and Tobago: 1956 -1962* (Virginia: Indian Review Press, 1993). Judith Anne Weller, *The East Indian Indenture in Trinidad* (Rio Piedras: Institute of Caribbean Studies, University of Puerto Rico, 1968).

¹¹⁹ For critical discussion about Trinidad Carnival as an ethnically and racially exclusive space, see Selwin R. Cudjoe, “Multiculturalism and Its Challenges in Trinidad and Tobago,” *Society* 48:4 (2011) 330-341. See also Guilbault (2007,13). Morton Klass, “East and West Indian: Cultural Complexity in Trinidad” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 83:5 (January 1960) 855-861.

¹²⁰ Apart from his political imminence as the first prime minister of Trinidad, Eric Williams is also an eminent scholar and historian. Williams was among the very first Caribbean critics who challenge the assumption that Western imperialism is based on humanitarian grounds. This perspective of analysis was influential among Caribbean writers and theorists, including C.L.R. James. Williams’ book, *Capitalism and Slavery*, which is based on his Doctorate thesis, paved the ground for vast research in the study of convergence of racism, capitalism, and imperialism in Western culture and history. For further reading about his work, see Barbara L.Solow and Stanley L. Engerman, eds, *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 1-24.

¹²¹ For more reading about African masquerade and oral tradition in Trinidad Carnival see Cudjoe (2003, 88-92). For the role of masks in African culture, see Onuora Ossie. Enekwe, *Igbo Masks: The Oneness of Ritual and Theatre* (Lagos: Department of Culture, Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, 1987): 59. Toyin Falola and Augustine Agwuele, *Africans and the Politics of Popular Culture* (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2009) 240. Bayo Ogunjimi and Abdul-Rasheed Na’Allah, *Introduction to African Oral Literature and Performance* (Trenton. New Jersey: African World Press, 2005) 12.

¹²² The Jamaican critic Carolyn Cooper notices before Aching that blood, which is symbolically rooted in colonial inscriptions of race, is also a site of memory which reflects the

historically promiscuous, vulgar or licentious Caribbean body through music and dance. Cooper maintains that “the emotive trope of blood and bone connotes what may be constructed as ‘racist’ assumptions about biologically determined culture, if the label is applied by the alienating Other. Assumed by the in-group, this figure of speech denotes a genealogy of ideas, a blood-line of beliefs and practices that are transmitted in the body, in oral discourse”(1993, 4). Cooper gives dance as an example of the performative oral discourse that pervades the written discourse of the novel in Jamaican literary tradition. For more reading of Cooper’s notion of the vulgar body, dance, oral culture, noise, and blood, see the introduction of her book.

¹²³ Richard D. E. Burton informs us about the history of the dragon mask in Trinidad carnival. Burton writes that “the dragon mask is first attested in 1906 and formed a vital part of the devil bands that by the 1920s had become the most popular of all bands. As early as 1956, however, its popularity was said to be at low ebb” (215). For more readings on the dragon mask, see Bruce Procop, “The Dragon Band or Devil Band,” *Caribbean Quarterly* 4: 3(1956). 275- 280.

¹²⁴ For more reading of the use of chains in the nineteenth century stick fight dance as allusion to slavery, see Burton (1997, 204). See also Paulette Brown-Hinds, “In the Spirit: Dance as Healing Ritual in Paule Marshall’s ‘Praisesong for the Widow,’” *Religion and Literature* 27:1 (Spring 1995): 107-117.

¹²⁵ For more reading on nativism in the context of Africa, see Jonathan Glassman, *War of Words, War of Stones: Racial Thought and Violence in Colonial Zanzibar*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011) 299. See also Benita Parry, “Resistance Theory / Theorising Resistance or two Cheers for Nativism” *Colonial Discourse / Postcolonial Theory*, eds. Francis Baker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1994) 172-198.

¹²⁶ For examples of works contesting racism in Guyana, see Dennis Bartels , “Class Conflict and Racist Ideology in the Formation of Modern Guyanese Society” *Canadian Review of Sociology /Revue Canadienne de Sociologie* 14:4 (November 1977): 396-405. Kean Gibson, *The Cycle of Racial Oppression in Guyana* (Lanham, MD.:University Press of America, 2003). David Hinds, *Ethno-Politics and Power Sharing in Guyana: History and Discourse* (Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, 2011) 61.

¹²⁷ For the image of global consumerism as cannibalism, see my chapter on Tomson Highway’s novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen*.

¹²⁸ For Robert Young’s analysis of blood lines in relation to concepts of culture and race, see his book *Colonial Desire* (81-83, 106).

¹²⁹ Here I argue that the novel perpetuates the ideology of nationalism through the fact of speaking for the Indian indentured immigrant and implicitly constructing him through his

inability to speak for himself. Although the novel contests the nativist narrative of identity, it still leaves the Indian in the position of the other who only unfolds through the self and/ or centre of the discourse of cultural nationalism. It is very important to point out that the novel is not written by an Indo-Caribbean writer but sensitive to its presence from a dominant perspective. Although the novel represents a rare literary moment of dealing with Calypso and Carnival from a multi-cultural perspective, it still silences the cultural and literary Indo-Caribbean tradition. Pariag is never made to articulate as a character. For further reading of the literary history of Indo-Caribbean writing, see David Dabydeen and Samaroo Brinsley, eds. *Across the Dark Waters: Ethnicity and Indian Identity in the Caribbean* (London; Mcmillan Caribbean, 1996). Frank Birbalsingh, ed. and intro, *Indenture and Exile: The Indo-Caribbean Experience* (Toronto: Ontario Association for Studies in Indo-Caribbean Culture, 1989). See also Frank Birbalsingh, ed. *Frontiers of Caribbean Literature in English* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1996). It is noteworthy to add that Birbalsingh's latter collection includes the poem "Coolie Odyssey" in which the British Guyanese poet David Dabydeen describes, as its title indicates, the odyssey of the Indian diaspora and the uprooting of East Indian coolies. This nomination is a racial slur for people of Asian descent who were slaves in the Indian subcontinent and the Philippines in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. The poem focuses rather on the Indian coolies who were transported to the plantations of Guyana and the Caribbean islands between 1845 and 1917. For more readings of earlier Indo-Caribbean literature dealing with the East Indian as the excluded other in Trinidad, see V.S. Naipaul, *A House for Mr Biswas* (New York: Knopf, 1995).

¹³⁰ This is one of the moments in which Sylvia's sexuality unfolds only to reflect that of Aldrick or Guy's or the other men's around her. This mediating role that female sexuality plays in the novel is part of the patriarchal discourse that dominates in the narrative where the female body only mirrors the development of male characters, as we notice in Dolly's relationships with Pariag. Besides, female sexuality is also seen through the male gaze in other instances in the novel and implied in the discourse of gendering the nation. For more reading in that direction, see Brand (1995, 34 and 35).

¹³¹ Fanon's study has influenced race theorists and philosophers such as Stuart Hall, David Golberg, and Kobena Mercer who all argue that race does not exist as a thing in itself; it only exists as an idea which discourses of power invent and construct to validate colonial violence.

¹³² Here I am referring to Sara Ahmed's idea of strangeness associated with the experience of encountering the other and inventing her as otherness. For further reading, see Sara Ahmed (2000, 149-161).

¹³³ I am thinking here of the character of Dunia in the film *Dunia Kiss me Not on the Eyes* by the Lebanese director Jocelyne Saab. Dunia refuses to dance as a way to question the forces that abuse her body in the name of culture. For more reading of this point see my chapter on eroticism.

¹³⁴ For a critique of Jameson's theory of "national allegory," see Aijaz Ahmad, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory,'" *Social Text* 17 (Fall 1987): 3-25. For Jameson's response, see Fredric Jameson, "A Brief Response," *Social Text* 17 (Fall 1987): 26-27. For a critical engagement with Ahmad's critique of Jameson, see Imre Szeman, "Who's Afraid of National Allegory? Jameson, Literary Criticism, Globalisation," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 100:3 (Summer 2001): 205-257.

¹³⁵ This state of the dance making itself seen through its refusal to be seen reinforces the paradigm of otherness that is central to colonial knowledge construction. Lovelace here recalls Alloula who describes the ways in which resistance unfolds through veiling of one's self, which is another way to refuse to display oneself to the colonial gaze. For this reason, I suggest that this anti-colonial pattern of resistance is problematic because it falls in the trap of self-exoticisation at the moment it resists to be exoticised by the colonial gaze.

¹³⁶ It is very important to note that the performative art of music is recurrent in the postcolonial imaginary. The image of music as a mode of intertwining cultures in the novel recalls Edward Said's use of the music metaphor of the contrapuntal through which he reads the culture of the coloniser in conjunction with that of the colonised. Pariag uses the image of music as ways of bringing conflicting cultures together in a period of high nationalism in Trinidad and Said's use of the contrapuntal are ethically grounded mode of resisting violence. For the history and cultural politics of the mixing of Indian and Afro-Creole music, see Manuel (2000, 460).

¹³⁷ This is exactly the way in which nativism operated in the United States of America between 17th century and mid 20th century against immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, Jews, and blacks. Besides, like the nativists in US, Afro-Creole Trinidadians were also y immigrants who opposed the immigration of other races to the land they took for theirs. For more reading of the stereotypes of Indians in Trinidad, see Brereton (1979, 186). For more reading of American nativism, see Juan F. Perea (1997, 293).

¹³⁸ For my critical reading of postcolonial theory from the perspective of dance, see my chapter on eroticism, and particularly my reading on Stavros Karayanni.

¹³⁹ Deleuze and Guattari explain that "a rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb 'to be,' but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, 'and. . . and. . . and. . . .' This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb 'to be.' " (1987, 24). For Glissant's clear statement about the influence of Deleuze and Guattari on his philosophy of relationality, see Glissant (1995, 1).

¹⁴⁰ For Fanon's critique of the local bourgeoisie, see Frantz Fanon (2004, 152-155).

¹⁴¹ Besides his interest in music criticism, Mackey is also a poet, a novelist, and a literary and cultural critic who has written extensively on such Caribbean authors as Wilson Harris and Edward Kamau Brathwaite.

¹⁴² I am thinking about Chinese and Syrian ethnicities in Trinidad. For a historical study of these communities, see Brereton (1996, 55).

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