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Orientalisk Fantasi:

En postkolonial diskursanalys av västerländska magdansösers föreställningar av Egypten och dansfestivaler i Egypten

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Oriental Fantasy:

A postcolonial discourse analysis of Western belly dancers' imaginations of Egypt and dance festivals in Egypt

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Abstract

Title: *Oriental Fantasy: A postcolonial discourse analysis of Western belly dancers' imaginations of Egypt and dance festivals in Egypt*

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Belly dance is popularly practised in the West, and every year, thousands of enthusiasts and professionals from around the world travel to attend belly dance festivals in Egypt, which is considered the cultural centre of the dance. This bachelor's thesis examines the discourses produced by Western or 'white' belly dancers from Sweden and Finland, on the topics of tourism in Egypt and belly dance festivals in Egypt. The texts are analysed using James Paul Gee's discourse analytical framework, combined with postcolonial theory, complemented with an intersectional approach. From the postcolonial and feminist perspectives, belly dance discourse in the West and tourism discourse are problematic, as they perpetuate Orientalist tropes and unequal global power structures, which build on colonial discourse. It is hoped that by identifying and questioning these aspects of discourse that are problematic in terms of equity, this study will make a small contribution towards mitigating its adverse effects, and towards social change.

Key words: Tourism, belly dance, Oriental dance, Egypt, women, white women, postcolonialism, intersectionality, Orientalism, Discourse, Nordic exceptionalism

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Belly dance is an example of a touristic site where Western and Arab imaginations of Egypt are complexly intertwined. (L.L. Wynn, 2007)

1. Introduction

Every year, thousands of enthusiasts and professionals from all over the world travel to attend belly dance festivals in order to further their knowledge and experience, shop for costumes and experience the culture(s) from which the dance is thought to originate. Egypt and in particular Cairo is the main destination for this type of tourism: it is like a kind of pilgrimage that many dancers aspire to make. Although there is now a growing number of dance festivals in Europe, the United States and Asia, Egypt still holds the greatest allure to belly dancers, who consider it the source or cultural centre of belly dance (McDonald 2010, pp. 52).

Belly dance—which is known as *raqs sharqi*, meaning Oriental or Eastern dance in Arabic[1]—is popular in the West, where, according to sociologist Krista Banasiak, the dance is presented, advertised and practised as a sort of gateway to an 'ancient' culture which is contrasted and seen as an alternative to Western materialism and intellectualism (Banasiak 2014, p. 2). Banasiak further elaborates that these Western imaginations of belly dance are problematic from postcolonial and feminist perspectives, which deem belly dance discourse to be "rife with oppressive tropes of Orientalism" (Ibid, compare with Maira 2008). Still, Orientalist or not, testament to the tremendous attraction of belly dance is the large number of foreigners who come to Egypt as tourists to deepen their knowledge of the dance, or to work as dancers—the majority of them Westerners (Wynn 2007, p. 215-219; Mohamed, interview October 2014).

This dance is an iconic part of Egypt's culture and a symbol of national identity (McDonald 2010, p. 52; Wynn 2007, pp. 211-212). It is an Egyptian custom to hire belly dancers—who represent joy and fertility—for important occasions such as weddings, births and engagements (Nieuwkerk 1998; Nieuwkerk 1995, p. 2). Belly dancing is also a "must-see" tourism attraction in five-star hotels and Nile cruise ships (Wynn 2007, p. 217).

However, the current situation in Egypt—marred by political unrest and marked by the latest wave of religious fundamentalism that has been rising since the 1970s—is negatively affecting the situation of the dancers working in the country, be they local or foreign (Nieuwkerk 1998). And despite the

[1] See Appendix B for a note on the term 'belly dance'.

Egyptians' apparent love for *raqs sharqi*, being a dancer is generally considered disreputable in Egypt as well as the rest of the Arab world (Wynn 2007, p. 221; Arvizu 2004, p. 164), and it is the local Egyptian dancers—many of whom consider their profession merely as a way to earn a living—who bear the brunt of societal discrimination and stigma (Nieuwkerk 1998; Nieuwkerk 1995, p. 2 & 181).

Foreign dancers who visit Egypt as tourists for dance festivals or to attend private lessons with renowned Egyptian teachers are virtually untouched by the stigma that local dancers face. While foreign dancers working in Egypt do experience some discrimination—as they tend to stay in the country for a longer time and interact more extensively with locals than visiting dancers do—they come to Egypt by choice and have the option of leaving when they so wish, after having obtained the experience or *social currency* of having worked as a dancer in Cairo, which is thought to guarantee them "success as a dancer, teacher or choreographer back home" (Wynn 2007, p. 218-221). The excess supply and eagerness of foreign dancers desiring the perceived prestige of performing in Cairo is said to have driven down the market rate for all performing dancers, making it even less viable as a profession for Egyptians, who may not have many other choices (Ibid).

Tourism is one of Egypt's biggest industries, contributing about 11.3% of the country's GDP (Egypt SIS [5] 2013); between 67 to 76 percent of the country's tourists are European (CAPMAS 2014). Belly dance festivals in Egypt—which cater mainly to Western dancers—constitute a niche in the tourism industry. It can be deduced that the tourism industry in Egypt—like many other former colonies—is reliant on Western tourists, and this reliance is problematic from a postcolonial point of view, as it perpetuates past colonial structural relationships (Tucker & Akama 2009, p. 504); and the business of belly dance in Egypt is influenced by the demands of foreign dancers, especially Westerners—and this is problematic because it reproduces global inequalities.

Being a practitioner of belly dance myself, I have for years pored over information in print publications, websites and social media groups dedicated to the dance and its culture(s) of origin. Equipped with the knowledge obtained during my studies in this tourism programme, I became interested in examining how imaginations of Egypt and the dance are shaped, reinforced and replicated by the discourses produced by myself and my fellow dancers. Having attended the annual Stockholm Belly Dance Festival (SBDF) in Sweden for a number of years—the SBDF organisers also arrange several festivals in Egypt every year—I have met many dancers, mainly from around Europe during the event. Many of them have been to Egypt, or like myself are intending to travel there, and this, combined with the knowledge of the native Egyptian dancers' situation, makes me wonder: What

discursive practices enable us to be tourists, what gives us the agency to opt to travel (or not) to another country for leisure or for other reasons of our own choosing?

As belly dance discourse in the West is generally influenced by the Orientalist viewpoint (Banasiak 2014, p. 2; Maira 2008), a critical approach to discourse analysis using postcolonial theory is used to scrutinise the material in this thesis. By critically examining these discourses, their embedded inequalities can be brought to light, be better understood, and hopefully mitigated, with time.

1.1 Purpose and research questions

In this paper I have chosen to study how Finnish and Swedish women who practise belly dance perceive Egypt, Egyptians, belly dance festivals, and their own experiences of the dance. Their opinions and statements on these topics when they meet and have discussions with their fellow dancers constitute discourses. I will argue and show how social inequality, from a postcolonial viewpoint, is produced and reproduced through these discourses. My research questions are:

1. *How do colonial power structures and relationships continue to shape Egypt's tourism products, including belly dance and belly dance festivals, for the consumption of Western visitors?*
2. *Do dancers from non-colonialist Sweden and Finland have colonialist/Orientalist perceptions of Egypt? If they do, how do they express these perceptions?*
3. *How do Western dancers exercise their privilege as visitors or potential visitors to Egypt, and how does this privilege manifest in the tourism experience?*

1.2 Previous Research

In order to gain an overview of the topics that this paper focuses on, a literature review—which is a critical and analytical summary of the work of other writers—has been conducted. The main objective of a review is to position this study within the body of literature and provide the reader with an understanding of its context and the present state of knowledge of its subject. The literature review reveals how other researchers have approached similar analyses, facilitating the process of refining ideas and developing a clear focus and direction for this study (Finn et al 2000, p. 234-235). Briefly described here are the secondary sources—academic articles and books—that have been most useful for my purposes.

Lisa L. Wynn's 2007 lengthily-titled book—*Pyramids & Nightclubs: A Travel Ethnography of Arab and Western Imaginations of Egypt, from King Tut and a Colony of Atlantis to Rumors of Sex Orgies, Urban Legends about a Marauding Prince, and Blonde Belly Dancers*—has been an invaluable source of information on various types of tourism, cultural and social discourses in contemporary Egypt. The last chapter in the book, which examines the history and discourses behind the different ideas of Egypt, with a subsection dedicated to belly dance, is of particular relevance.

Caitlin McDonald's doctoral thesis, *Belly Dance and Glocalisation: Constructing Gender in Egypt and on the Global Stage* (2011) was not only a helpful reference for the dance's past and present situations in Egypt and the West—particularly from United Kingdom and the USA—but also offered insights into dancers' festival experiences, as the author had conducted field work at the Nile Group Festival in Cairo and the Rakkasah West festival in California.

Another doctoral thesis, Karin Högström's *Middle Eastern Dance in Stockholm: Femininities, Possibilities and limitations* (2010, in Swedish) was a good resource on the Swedish perspective, dance scene and discourses.

Two of Karin van Nieuwkerk's publications provided valuable background information on how belly dance and belly dancers are perceived and treated in Egypt: *A trade like any other: female singers and dancers in Egypt* (1995) and the article "'An Hour for God and an Hour for the Heart': Islam, Gender and Female Entertainment in Egypt" (1998).

Krista Banasiak's paper "Dancing the East in the West: Orientalism, feminism, and belly dance" challenges the critique of Orientalist, feminist and gaze theorists against the practice of belly dance, arguing that they "overlook the experiential aspect of dance", making subjects passive and stripping them of agency (Banasiak 2014, p. 3). This article—which highlights the way that Western or "white" women in Canada practise, experience and use belly dance as a tool for empowerment and self-acceptance—aims to present a more complete picture of the motivations behind and meanings in their practice, casting light on the women's subjectivity, focusing on their "lived experiences" and giving them voice.

All the literature listed above link together belly dance, postcolonialism and Orientalism to various degrees and through different approaches. While Wynn's book, McDonald's dissertation, Högström's thesis and even Nieuwkerk's 1995 book explore the links between belly dance, tourism and the West, I decided to also use a non-belly dance-related source focusing on tourism analysis to further ensure

that this work has an unequivocal touristic perspective: “Veni, Vidi, Adios” by Josefina Syssner and Khalid Khayati—a chapter from the book *Det globala reseprivilegiet* (which I translate as '*The global travel privilege*') edited by Mekonnen Tesfahuney and Katarina Schough. Syssner and Khayati present and discuss three privileges that Western tourists possess: the privileges of *voluntary/unconstrained mobility*, *selective vision* and *immediate exit* (my own translation). The concept of these privileges—which clearly were identified with a postcolonial eye—relate to the discursive practices that enable one to be a tourist, and the social practices that a tourist has the agency or power to perform.

What role then does my thesis play in this context, and what new material am I bringing to the table? Besides critically studying the intersection of belly dance and tourism discourses through the lens of postcolonialism and highlighting global inequalities, I attempt also to utilise the lens of Nordic exceptionalism, by examining intersectionally how the cultures and backgrounds of Western women from two Scandinavian countries affect their discourses. And because in the majority of tourism gender research, the focus has almost exclusively been on women as *objects* or *producers* of tourism, rather than its *consumers* (Pritchard 2004, p. 318; d'Hauteserre 2004, pp. 240-241), I hope to make a modest contribution to the small but growing body of work focusing on women as tourism *consumers*.

2. Methodology

A qualitative interview study with belly dancers was carried out in October and November 2014. The transcribed interviews constitute the material for the study, supplemented by “insider”/personal observations, as well as previous research. The collected data will be processed using critical discourse analysis, through postcolonial and intersectional perspectives.

2.1 The concept of ‘Discourse’

'Discourse' is a term and concept often used in academic texts within many different disciplines, such as sociology, linguistics, anthropology, feminist studies, cultural studies and so on. The well-known French philosopher Michel Foucault is one of the key theorists on discourse—his works are especially influential in the social sciences; other academics such as Norman Fairclough (critical discourse analysis), Ernesto Laclau & Chantal Mouffe (discourse theory) and James Paul Gee are also known for their contributions in the field. The concept of discourse is rather tricky to define, resulting in many definitions, but broadly speaking, it may be described as the specific language patterns, terms and structures—the 'kind of language'—used in different contexts (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002; Andersson 2011). To take a very simple example, the kind of language you use at work with colleagues or your

boss will most likely differ from that which you use with your family or close friends, and this is for a variety of different reasons that are based on the identities, purposes, intentions and desires of those involved, as well as their relationship, the situation and conditions in which they communicate, societal norms and other factors.

Marianne W. Jørgensen and Louise Phillips suggest that discourse refers to "a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)" (2002, p. 1). Discourse is also manifested in the way we express ourselves, how we see ourselves and how we deal with everyday life; discourse both is constructed by, and contributes to constructing, our identity—our "ways of being in the world", and our ways of participating in different sorts of social groups/cultures/institutions (Andersson 2011, p. 38; Gee 2005, p. 7). While discourse can be expressed in text, speech and images (Andersson 2011, p. 38), this thesis will focus on discourse in the form of transcribed speech i.e. text.

American sociolinguist James Paul Gee maintains that everything in life, for everyone, is a big mixture of thoughts, words, events, actions, interactions and objects in Discourses, and we are all members of a great many different Discourses, which can overlap and affect or influence each other both positively and negatively, and which can interact with each other to produce new hybrids. In his work, Gee refers to language-in-use—i.e. how language is used 'on site' to *enact* activities and identities (which I understand to mean to *perform* or *support* activities and to *express* or *support* identities)—as discourse with a 'little d'. Discourse with a 'big D' refers to the combination of language with other things/elements such as social practices (behaviour, interactions, beliefs, values, customs, perspectives) and various sorts of objects, symbols, tools and technologies. This combination of language and other elements is used to create and assign certain meanings to oneself and to others; Discourse is continually produced, reproduced, maintained and transformed (Gee 2005, p. 7). Note however that while different Discourses can cross or intersect each other and interact, they just as often exclude or bypass each other completely (Brinkmann & Kvale 2014, p. 258).

Now that the concept of discourse has been established, let's look at the purpose of analysing discourses. In linguistics and social science, discourse is analysed with the aim of revealing how spoken language shapes, and what it accomplishes in, the lives of individuals and in society. Discourse analysis aims to make explicit that which is implicit and usually taken for granted in the production of speech—such as attitudes, values, assumptions and other social practices. By scrutinising and consciously thinking of what is implicit and usually taken for granted in the social practice of

discourse, aspects that are problematic in terms of equity and humane treatment of people can be identified, questioned and rectified (Gee 2011, p. 8; Gee 2005, p. xii).

Foucault has contributed much to the development of the analysis of discourse, and many approaches have roots in his ideas (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 12; Brinkmann & Kvale 2014, p. 258). Foucault adheres to the premise that language, knowledge and truth are not reflections of a pre-existing reality, but rather are constructed in and by society through social practices. He developed a theory about power/knowledge in which he argues that power is not inherent in any particular individual or group (such as the state), but is instead present or enacted in a range of different social practices. He contends that power should be understood as both a productive and oppressive or restraining force: that power creates both the social world and its boundaries (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, pp. 13-14). It follows then that there is always a power relationship in the production of knowledge. For instance, that which is considered 'true', 'genuine' and 'authentic' is defined by those who have the power to define it as such, as sociocultural analyst Janicke Andersson argues (2011, pp. 40-41).

Looking at discourse analysis from another perspective, James Paul Gee uses in his approach the terms 'politics' and 'social goods' to describe how the social world is shaped using language. 'Social goods' in this sense refers to anything that a group of people believes to be a source of power, status or value (eg. money, control, intelligence, knowledge, beauty, morality, etc). Gee's definition of politics refers to how social goods are "thought about, argued over and distributed in society". Gee contends that when we use language, we always—through our use of grammar—take a particular perspective on what is 'normal' and not, what is right or wrong, and so on; and this has profound implications for how we believe or wish social goods are or should be distributed, and how we behave and act in regards to these beliefs and wishes. And according to Gee, it is within social relations where social goods are involved—created, maintained and distributed—that people are harmed or helped (2005, p. 2).

2.2 The approach to discourse analysis

The approach I've chosen to process the material in this thesis is critical discourse analysis, drawing on the seven *building tasks* and five *theoretical tools* in James Paul Gee's framework. Gee's method was chosen because its comparatively holistic approach to discourse analysis is useful for examining the material in an intersectional manner (see section 3.2). I have used his books, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis* (2005) and *How to do Discourse Analysis* (2011) as my main guides.

The element that makes discourse analysis 'critical' is that it "aims to reveal the role of discursive practices in the maintenance of the social world" (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 63), which includes the creation and reproduction of unequal relations of power, for example, between the different genders, social classes, and ethnic majorities and minorities. Critical discourse analysis is done by combining textual analysis "with sociopolitical and critical theories of society and its institutions" (Gee 2008, p. 20)—an interdisciplinary approach, in other words. In the case of this thesis, the sociopolitical theory is *postcolonialism*, complemented with the *intersectional* approach. These theories will be explained further in chapter 3 of this thesis.

The main Discourses examined in this thesis are the Discourse of tourism in Egypt and the Discourse of the belly dance festival. Using the critical approach to discourse analysis, I will attempt to outline the ways in which these Discourses are constructed on colonial discourse, and simultaneously producing new discourses. I will at the same time try to employ the intersectional approach to examine the nuances and complexities involved.

Gee's seven *building tasks* of language are areas of 'reality' that we always simultaneously construct whenever we speak or write. Since we always use language to build these seven things/areas, we can ask seven questions about these areas in order to deconstruct and analyse a piece of language-in-use (Gee 2005, p. 11). The seven *building tasks* are *significance*; *practices* (activities); *identities*; *relationships*; *politics*; *connections*; and *sign systems and knowledge*. We build and design what we want/have to say in order to create or to suit a particular situation; however, the situation we find ourselves in also has an influence on how we speak. We use language to imbue things/phenomena with value and give them meaning—e.g. to describe Soheir Zaki as a 'great dancer' is to identify her as a 'dancer' and elevate her status as well as praise her skill (task 1: significance); language is used to get other people to recognise a certain kind of activity is happening, to communicate an activity to someone else—e.g. a dancer will make 'small talk' with other dancers during a festival to establish rapport and to make new friends/contacts (task 2: practices); when we speak or write, we always take on an identity, and the kind of language we use depends on which identity is operative or in effect at the point of use—e.g. a dance teacher/performer will speak to her students using her identities as teacher and dancer, and to potential clients as businessperson and artist (task 3: identities); language is used to indicate the sort of relationship one has, or wishes to have, with the listener or with others—e.g. a dancer may speak to her idol in a more formal manner to show respect and reverence, and to colleagues in an informal way to signify closeness and belonging to the same group/level (task 4: relationships); we use language to convey a perspective on how we think 'social goods' are, or should

be, distributed—e.g. a dancer saying that belly dance was much more 'classy' and 'authentic' in the old days, implies that classiness and authenticity are desirable traits or social goods, and that they are lacking in the dance scene of today (task 5: politics – see last paragraph of 2.1); language is used to connect or disconnect things, to make one thing relevant or irrelevant to another—here, the theoretical tool of *intertextuality* can be used as well—e.g. much contemporary usage of the term *Orientalism* refers to Edward Said's definition in the well-known book of the same title (task 6: connections); and finally, language can be used to privilege or disprivilege specific sign systems, ways of knowing or belief systems—e.g. English may in some situations be privileged over Arabic, academic language over everyday language, one form of dance over another, etc. (task 7: sign systems & knowledge).

These *building tasks* can be further complemented with five *theoretical tools* that draw on different theories about how language is connected to the world and to culture: *situated meaning*, *social languages*, *intertextuality*, *figured worlds* and *big 'D' Discourse* (Gee 2011, p. 150). These *theoretical tools* are primarily relevant to how identities and activities are constructed, and how people recognise identities and activities that are built around them by others. The *situated meaning* tool—which draws on cognitive psychology theory about how meaning works—asks the researcher to examine the meanings of words and phrases in specific contexts, as it functions on the assumption that we actively build meanings "on line" or on the spot when we use language in specific situations (e.g. the word "funny" can mean amusing, comical, strange, impertinent or suspicious, depending on the context). The *social languages* tool—based on sociolinguistics theory about how different ways of using language function to enable people to enact different social identities and carry out different types of social practices—asks the researcher to examine how words and grammatical structures are used to indicate and enact a given social language (a simple example: a man calling an attractive female a "beautiful woman" when he speaks to her, and referring to her as a "hot chick" with his male friends, expressing different identities in the two interactions, which carry different functions intended for different audiences). The *intertextuality* tool—which draws on literary criticism theory—asks the researcher to examine how words and grammatical structures (through direct quotes or allusion) are used to refer to other "texts" (spoken or written) or other styles of language (social languages) (e.g. the authors of *The Tourist Gaze* basing the book's title on a concept in one of Foucault's texts on the medical gaze). The *figured worlds* tool—based on psychological anthropology theory about how groups of people/cultures form and use theories (which function as simplified models of how things work and to determine what is typical/normal) to make sense of the world and get on with living and communicating without always having to reflect on everything—asks the researcher to examine what figured worlds are assumed with the words and phrases that are being used. This tool also asks what

components are in these figured worlds (who are its participants, what are its values, activities, environments, institutions, ways of interacting, etc.). And finally the *big "D" Discourse* tool—drawn on theories from a variety of fields (see section 2.1)—asks the researcher to examine how language (as well as behaviour, way of interacting, beliefs, values, dressing, objects, technologies, etc.) is used in certain contexts by people to enact specific identities and engage in specific activities (Gee 2011, pp. 150-181; Gee 2005, pp. 20-21).

Different *building tasks* and *theoretical tools* will be more prominent/relevant than others when applied to different texts, so they will be employed, modified or omitted as required.

2.3 Subject selection and data collection methods

The empirical data for this thesis was collected through qualitative face-to-face semi-structured interviews, two one-to-one interviews and one group interview with two dancers. I used the audio recorder application on my mobile phone and, aiming to avoid the pitfalls of relying on only the recordings and transcriptions, also took notes during the interviews. This enabled me to take into account the physical presence of my interviewees (encompassing body language and other non-verbal cues) and the social atmosphere of the interview situation, to capture what I interpret as the gist of each answer, and to retain the meanings essential to the topic at hand and the purpose of the interview (Brinkmann & Kvale 2014, pp. 205-206).

I had four interview subjects, two of them Swedes and two Finns, all of them women and all of whom would generally be perceived as Western or 'white'. Furthermore, all of them have attended the SBDF multiple times, and have travelled, or intend to travel to Egypt for the Nile Group festival or other belly dance festivals. The interviewees were chosen for some of these specific criteria ('white' Swedes and Finns) so that their Discourses may be analysed using the postcolonial perspective.

During the interviews, I employed an interview guide—a list of questions—which I have attached at the end of this document as an appendix. I did not always adhere strictly to the list of questions, and occasionally asked follow-up questions to prompt the interviewee to elaborate on a relevant matter. My aim was to obtain an understanding of the interviewee's ideas about Egypt—visiting the country, their imaginations of Egypt and its people, and Egypt as the centre of belly dance; their ideas about belly dance festivals; and their own identities as belly dancers.

My chosen approach to the qualitative interviews is based on the "balanced position" described in the book *InterViews* by psychologists Svend Brinkmann and Steinar Kvale. It is balanced in the sense that the interviews I conducted were designed as both research instruments and social practices; data resulting from an interview can be conceived as a report that reflect the interviewees' reality and lived experience outside the interview (research instrument), and simultaneously as an account that is "occasioned by the situation", i.e. a reality that is constructed by the interviewee and interviewer (social practice) (Brinkmann & Kvale 2014, pp. 51-54). Although researchers using a discourse-analytic approach in their studies tend to treat interviews as social practices, Brinkmann & Kvale believe—as do I—that the two approaches are complementary rather than contradictory (Ibid).

All interviews but one were conducted in English, which is my mother tongue, but not the native language of any of the interviewees. However, they understood and expressed themselves well enough in English for the interviews to be conducted successfully, albeit with varying fluency, depending on the interviewee. One interview was conducted in Swedish, of which I have adequately good command. The differing language fluency issue led occasionally to the need for clarifications for both the interviewer and interviewee during our conversations, and I am aware that some nuances of language may have been lost in translation—and this will be taken into account during my analysis—although I always tried to obtain a genuine/natural response to the questions. To ensure that I had correctly transcribed the interview that was conducted in Swedish, I enlisted the help of a native Swedish speaker to listen to the audio files and proofread my transcription.

The excerpts from the Swedish-language interview which appear in the analysis have been then translated into English; I have chosen to do so in order for this thesis to be accessible to a wider audience. Care has been taken to ensure the translations are as accurate as possible.

I feel that it is important to bring up these issues because discourse is about language—not different languages e.g. Swedish versus English per se, but how language constructs our world, and I reason that the differing cultural backgrounds of the interviewees and interviewer should be taken into consideration both by myself in my analysis and by the readers of this thesis.

With regards to the environments in which the interviews were held, I had initially planned to conduct the interview with the two Finnish dancers separately and at the dance school in Stockholm, where it is relatively quiet, but time was limited and it was dinner time by the time I could get a hold of them. They were tired and hungry after five hours of dancing and I decided to follow them to a restaurant to interview them both at once. The atmosphere in the restaurant grew progressively noisier as the

evening wore on. I had a similar problem with one of the Swedish dancers, whom I met during lunchtime at a cafe. These circumstances could not really be avoided, however, as my interview subjects were only available at those times. I raise this issue to disclose factors that may have affected the interviews.

The audio recordings of the interviews were subsequently transcribed by me. A transcription, far from being a simple clerical task, is an interpretative process, requiring a high level of skill and good judgement to translate or transform one narrative mode to another, i.e. from oral discourse to written discourse, while retaining the accuracy and 'truthfulness' required for research (Brinkmann & Kvale 2014, p. 203ff; Yow 1994, p. 228). During the process of transcription, nuances such as tone of voice, cadence, body language, facial expressions, pace of speaking and so on—which may be useful to obtain a more accurate and complete message/piece of information—would most likely be lost (Brinkmann & Kvale 2014, p. 204). Transcriptions have been described by some researchers as pale reflections and "decontextualised renderings of live interview conversations" (Yow 1994, p. 227; Brinkmann & Kvale 2014, p. 204). Therefore it is important always to remember that a transcription is an interpretation built on the selection of the one who has transcribed it (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 80). Nonetheless, transcribing interviews structures them in a form more suitable to closer analysis, and thus, this makes transcriptions sufficient as primary sources for researchers of social studies (Brinkmann & Kvale 2014, p. 206; Yow 1994, p. 227).

Since according to Brinkmann & Kvale, "there is no true, objective transformation from the oral to the written mode" (2014, p. 213), I have chosen a more verbatim style of transcription in an attempt to allow the respondents to speak for themselves—this means that I have attempted to include what I perceive as meaningful pauses, repetitions, emotional expressions like laughter, and so on. But at the same time, I have attempted to ensure that the resulting text is readable and coherent by choosing to omit many of the filler sounds such as "ah", "umm", "hmmm", and filler words/phrases such as "you know", and repetitions, unless I think that they contribute in some way to the meaning of what is being said. My questions, comments and clarifications (of relevance) are noted [within square brackets], when presented in this thesis.

2.4 Introducing the interview subjects

Here I will briefly introduce the interviewees in order to give the reader a background context for each of them, to facilitate comprehension of the analysis in chapter 5. Care has been taken to preserve the anonymity of all the informants—pseudonyms are used—and only information that may have a

bearing on the study results are included (refer to section 2.5). I have chosen to call the Finns I interviewed Marjatta and Anneli, and the Swedes, Helene and Lisbeth. They have all attended the SBDF for many years and know of the Nile Group festivals in Egypt through their participation in the SBDF.

Marjatta is 52 years of age, works in management and lives near the Finnish capital, Helsinki. She has been dancing for about 18 years and is a belly dance hobbyist, although she has in the past had part in running a dance-related business. Despite having planned to visit Egypt several times, Marjatta has never been there yet, but expresses a great desire to visit the country.

Anneli is 45 and works as an information expert, living in south-eastern Finland. She has been involved in belly dance for about 20 years and is a member of a dance group, in which she is the unofficial leader. Anneli describes her group as semi-professional, but says that it's more like a hobby to her. She has been to Egypt between seven to ten times, for between seven to ten days during each trip. She has attended the Nile Group festival once, and during her other trips took private classes or joined group trips organised by a fellow Finnish dancer. Both Anneli and Marjatta maintain that belly dance is not a career for either of them as such, but it is their passion.

Lisbeth is 31 years old, working as a post-doctoral researcher, living in southern Sweden. She has been dancing for 10 years and is a member of a dance group. Lisbeth says that her group is not a professional one in the sense that they do not rely on income from dancing for a living, but adds that the group practises together regularly and performs shows for remuneration. Some group members also teach workshops and courses. Lisbeth has never been to Egypt but would like to go “at some point”.

Helene is 52, works as a development leader and lives in southern Sweden. She has been dancing for 14 years and describes her involvement in the dance as teacher, student and member of a dance group. Helene has visited Egypt three times, for a week each time, and has attended the Nile Group festival once. The other trips have been for leisure or “holidays”.

2.5 Ethical considerations

When working with qualitative research involving respondents/informants, there always exists ethical issues that must be taken into consideration. As Brinkmann & Kvale suggest, these ethical aspects—which include informed consent, confidentiality, consequences and the researcher's role—must be assessed and kept in mind when undertaking research, due to the asymmetrical power relation between

the interviewer and respondent, with the interviewer in the position of relatively greater control or power (2014, p. 99). Interviewers should attempt to perform their research in a morally reasonable and responsible manner, as the integrity of the researcher is critical to the quality of the scientific knowledge (Ibid, pp. 96 & 100). However, it is important to note that the aforementioned ethical aspects should be conceptualised as problem areas that should continually be addressed during the research process, taking into consideration real-life ambiguities and uncertainties (Ibid, pp. 91-93).

The names of my respondents and some others mentioned during the interviews have been changed to protect their privacy. While, as Brinkmann & Kvale assert, there is a "conflict between the ethical demand for confidentiality and the basic principles of scientific research" (2014, p. 95), the consequences of the study for the respondents should be reflected upon. The openness and intimacy of the interview situation may lead respondents to express opinions and reveal information they may later regret having shared (Ibid, p. 96). This is especially relevant in the case of my respondents, with whom I am fairly well acquainted and have good rapport. Therefore, I have chosen to use pseudonyms to avoid the possibility of causing embarrassment, surprise or distress to the people involved (Yow 1994, pp. 92-95; Brinkmann & Kvale 2014, pp. 95-96).

Informed consent involves the "complete disclosure of the rationale of the research project beforehand"; it is ethically *correct* to do so, in respect for the respondents' autonomy or their capacities to make decisions, and to avoid harming them (Brinkmann & Kvale 2014, pp. 93-94). However, complete disclosure may negatively affect the actual performance and outcome of the interview—and it would "render much qualitative interview research impossible" (Ibid, p. 94). Withholding certain information from respondents—which according to Hammersley (Ibid, p. 182) and Yow (1994, pp. 91-92) amounts to deception and is thus ethically questionable—may sometimes however result in knowledge that can contribute to a greater understanding of a little known subject, to social change and improvement, and so on (Brinkmann & Kvale 2014, p. 94). From an ethical point of view, the potential long-term benefits of the study with regards to the importance of the knowledge gained as well as benefits to the respondent should outweigh the risk of harm to the respondent (Yow 1994, p. 91; Brinkmann & Kvale 2014, pp. 95-96). Yow points out however that it is not easy to calculate these risks (1994, p. 91); and this is also partly why I chose to change the names of my respondents and some of the people they mention—to safeguard their privacy and minimise risk of harm to those involved.

I informed my respondents in the beginning of the interview that the study is about belly dance festivals and tourism in Egypt, but I did not disclose to them my methodology, i.e. critical discourse analysis using a postcolonial approach. I cannot now be sure as to whether disclosure of the latter would have affected or changed their responses in any way, as the terminology used is specific to the social sciences, and the interviewees are working in fields related to natural science and technology. At the end of each interview, I asked the respondents if they had any questions for me, or anything to add, but none of them made further inquiries about my research, instead expressing the hope that they have helped me in my studies.

Being myself a practitioner of belly dance, I find myself (in some ways) in the position of an insider within the group that I am studying, and this can give rise to certain issues that need to be addressed. Being an insider impacts not only the researcher's interactions with respondents, but also the way in which the research results are interpreted and presented (O'Connor 2004, p. 169). Due to the fact that I, as a researcher, am part of the discourses I study (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 22), makes it thus doubly important for me to keep in mind my insider position throughout the research process. Being an insider offers the possible advantages of having greater ease in establishing rapport with the respondents and being able to interpret the data more reliably due to shared knowledge with the group; but at the same time, the familiarity of being an insider may cause the researcher to make assumptions as to what is being said, instead of asking for clarifications, as an outsider would (O'Connor 2004, p. 169). The insider position amplifies the issue of empathy—which is sometimes regarded as a virtue in qualitative interviewers—as being potentially problematic as well; researchers are warned against being 'too empathetic', because identifying too closely with the group that one is studying may cause one to be biased in their favour, thus causing one to fail to see the bigger picture, and distorting the research results (Brinkmann & Kvale 2014, pp. 98-99).

There are two major aspects (pertinent to this study) that I have in common with my respondents—the fact that we are all women and belly dancers—but there is a difference between them and myself that might be worth noting here: unlike them, I am not 'white'. I think that these characteristics, among others, put me in a unique position and offer me an unusual opportunity to perform my research as both insider and outsider in the various Discourses of which my respondents are members. Again, keeping in mind the issues of empathy and of being an insider and outsider, I made the deliberate, constant effort to maintain my objectivity with regards to the respondents, their points of view and their actions, throughout my work on this thesis, as I realise that it is of great importance for the quality of my research.

2.6 Limitations

The reader of this thesis should be aware that this study is limited by a number of aspects. These include the scope and time available for the writing of a bachelor's thesis. The transcribed interviews or texts in this study are of course just a small sample of what is being said by belly dancers about Egypt, festivals, the dance itself and how it relates to their identities. The texts only express the realities of 4 dance practitioners from two Nordic countries who are not full-time professionals and have been dancing for a relatively long time. While the writer is fully aware that there are non-Arab/Middle Eastern women from different ethnic backgrounds that practise belly dance, the analysis will focus mainly on the experiences and social/discursive practices of 'white' or Western women, in accordance with the postcolonial perspective. Intersectionally speaking, the Discourses that affect and are produced by 'white' or Western dancers with different backgrounds—in terms of e.g. culture/nationality, age, native language, level and duration of involvement, etc.—could well be quite different. Given more time and resources, it would have been interesting to interview a wider range of 'white' dancers from different countries.

Again, keep in mind—from the discourse-analytic perspective—that the texts resulting from the interviews reflect a reality that is constructed by the respondent and interviewer; this might be limiting in the sense that the researcher might be blind to some aspects within the Discourse, due to her position in relation to the study, which contributes to determining what she can see and present as results (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 22). Further compounding this possible limitation is the fact that the interviewees were aware that I am a part of the dance community and thus may not always explicitly explain certain things that are taken as common knowledge—or "taken-for-granted understandings" (Ibid)—among dancers; I would therefore need to clarify or define these 'understandings' in my analysis, which, despite my best efforts, may or may not be in perfect accord with what the respondents really mean.

It would also be interesting to study the contrast/differences between the contexts, social practices and Discourses of dancers (both foreign and native Egyptian) working as performers for 'regular', non-dancer tourist audiences e.g. on Nile cruise ships and hotels, and dancers who teach/perform for (overwhelmingly foreign and non-Arab) dance practitioners at festivals and private classes. An online ethnographic or netnographic study of platforms on the internet for belly dance-related discussion and information dissemination—such as Facebook groups and other social media, website forums, blogs and online publications—could also offer a valuable contribution to the study of belly dance Discourses and social practices.

Despite its limitations, I hope that this thesis will in some way contribute to the growing body of knowledge on tourism studies and its postcolonial and intersectional perspectives, and that it will help to arouse interest for further research in these areas.

3. Theoretical frameworks

The analysis of the empirical data in this thesis will be based on postcolonialism and intersectionality, two different theoretical perspectives that have several key dynamics in common: power, identity and inequality.

3.1 Postcolonialism

Postcolonial theory or postcolonial studies is an umbrella term encompassing a collection of theories used to examine the various colonialism-linked phenomena—including culture, literature, politics, history and economy—of former colonies of the European empires (in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and South America), and their relation to the rest of the world (Hart & Goldie 1993, p. 155). It is uncertain exactly when the study of postcolonialism began, but a growing number of scholars have contributed and continue to contribute to the field; among the most important (and most referenced) are Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Franz Fanon and Homi Bhabha.

Postcolonial studies focus on the West's perceptions and depictions of former colonies, and examines how the identities of the coloniser (“us”/the West/the core/First World) and colonised (“them”/the Other/the periphery/Third World) have been, and continue to be, created, recreated and perpetuated through the control of knowledge till the present day (Jonsson & Syssner 2011, p. 223; Tucker & Akama 2009, p. 505; d'Hauteserre 2004, p. 235). Researchers must keep in mind however that postcolonialism has its origins in the Western intellectual tradition—and is therefore inextricably linked to colonialism; thus, while conducting postcolonial studies, one should make a deliberate attempt to ensure that the subject's voice is not drowned out in the bid to re-assess it, and try to ensure that that voice is analysed from other, non-Eurocentric points of reference, in order to make the research more globally significant and relevant (d'Hauteserre 2004, pp. 236-237).

The term postcolonialism is itself subject to debate in academia as not all scholars agree with the "post" prefix; their argument is that it would imply that the inequities of colonial rule have ended, while in practice, many of these former colonies are also neocolonial in the sense that they are still in some way and to some degree economically, culturally and politically influenced by former imperial powers,

despite nearly all of them having achieved formal political independence (Loomba 2005, p. 12; Tucker & Akama 2009, p. 504). Thus, instead of meaning "after" colonialism, which implies that colonialism and its effects have ended, the prefix "post-" in postcolonialism should be taken to mean a thinking beyond colonialism and the identities produced during that era, and an examination of how the global society we live in today is still characterised by the power structures and cultural processes established during the colonial era (Eriksson et al 1999, p. 16).

As mentioned above, postcolonial studies encompasses many theories, but all of them share several common aims: to examine the position of the colonial/postcolonial subject; to question the salutary or beneficial effects of empire and colonisation (such as 'civilisation'); and to bring to light issues of racism and exploitation (Hart & Goldie 1993, p. 155). Postcolonial scholars employ a range of methods and theories in their studies—such as discourse analysis and psychoanalytic theory—and the field is strongly influenced by poststructuralism, which emphasizes the role of language in the formation of identity, institutions and politics, i.e. language as it is exercised in social practices (Eriksson et al 1999, pp. 17-18). The fundamental feature of language from the postcolonial perspective is based on the idea—put forth by philosopher Jacques Derrida, among others—that language is a system of symbols and words structured around *binary oppositions*, and these relations of difference and contrast is what produces meaning. For example, the concept of "male" takes its meaning from its opposite, "female", and the same goes for day/night, black/white, and so on. The problem with the binary structure however, is that it is simplistic and rather absolutist, that it carries hidden, asymmetrical power relations and that it does not allow for grey zones. Using critical strategies such as Derrida's deconstruction, it is possible to analyse how meaning is constructed via language in an attempt to destabilise the binary structure and displace or weaken its inherent societal power relations (Ibid, p. 18), and thereby also allow other discourses that don't fit neatly into these opposing categories to emerge.

Literary theorist Edward Said, whose works have greatly influenced the field, is best known for his book *Orientalism* (first published in 1978), in which the construction of the Orient[2] and the Other in European scholarship is analysed. Said contends that the Oriental Other is portrayed in European literature (from the 1700s to the present) as exotic, mysterious, sensual, violent, irrational, backward, primitive, despotic, barbaric, sly, passive and sometimes even subhuman—in contrast with the West, which is depicted as civilised, peaceful, rational, progressive, democratic, technologically advanced

[2] The Orient in this case refers to Middle Eastern, Asian and North African societies—"the East", in relation to Europe or "the West".

and active (Said 2003, eg. pp. 38-39, 108; Eriksson et al 1999, pp. 20-21; Tucker & Akama 2009, p. 505; Jonsson & Syssner 2011, p. 226). Western identity is continually created and reinforced in contrast to the West's perception of the Other. The notion that the West brings a civilising influence to the barbaric and primitive Orient has been, and still is, used to justify acts and attitudes of colonisation, racism, occupation, and exploitation, as well as war and violence (Said 2003, pp. Xv-xvii). The same notion also has been and still is being applied to Africa (Eriksson et al 1999, p. 20).

Racialised encounters stem from a background and history of "exploitation, inferiorisation and exclusion"—which can result in feelings of aversion, fear, disgust or even hatred (Bredström 2011, citing Avtar Brah, p. 109). A prominent example of this is the way Arab and Muslim males in particular are portrayed in the media, as "ruthless Iraqi 'insurgent' males, suspicious Muslim immigrant men, brutal Afghan fundamentalists, and militant Palestinian youth" (Maira 2008, p. 335). Racism and Orientalism can also be manifested in deep admiration, envy and a strong desire, almost a longing to *be* the Other; this desire and admiration can often take on a sexualized expression (Bredström 2011, p. 109). Aversion and attraction to the Orient/Other are not mutually exclusive, but can occur simultaneously, resulting in ambivalence. As Sunaina Maira puts it, Orientalism is characterised "by the tension between fear/disgust and desire/lust" (2008, p. 335).

Theoretician Antonio Gramsci argued that power is always exerted on political and cultural levels, and control of knowledge is one of the methods used to achieve this. Gramsci's—and later Foucault's—theories on the clear relationship between power and knowledge influenced postcolonial theoreticians, who argued that Europe's colonial empires established a global order—a kind of cultural and intellectual hegemony—in which European knowledge and culture was seen as the norm, and therefore superior to non-European cultures, which were regarded as deviations or immature precursors of Western civilization (Jonsson & Syssner 2011, p. 226). It thereby follows that control over text and language—which is the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and through which notions of "truth", "order" and "reality" are established—is one of the main features of imperial oppression. The European colonial discourse is so pervasive, deep-rooted and enduring that it continues to dominate any form of representation or interpretation of the Third World by the First World, including tourism discourse (Tucker & Akama 2009, p. 505).

One of the arguments put forth by philosopher Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in works such as *In Other Worlds* and *Can the Subaltern Speak?* is that Western dominance of culture and knowledge is not easily undone, but it can be explained, criticised and perhaps mitigated, with time. She contends that

postcolonial thought encompasses many different facets and levels, and the perspective will differ depending on the ethnic group, class or gender in question (Jonsson & Syssner 2011, p. 227). Her works combine the postcolonial and feminist perspectives.

Eriksson et al, referring to feminist scholars McClintock and Gilbert, argue that feminism is a central part of postcolonial studies due to the close relationship between gender and racism, and that colonial discourse must be analysed based on the prevailing gender power structures in Europe (1999, p. 23). This link can be observed in this thesis, for example in section 4.4 ("imperialist feminism" among Western belly dancers) and in the analysis.

Homi K. Bhabha is a critical theorist who has developed several concepts: *hybridity*, *mimicry*, *difference* and *ambivalence*—terms which attempt to expand the issues of identification and stereotypes in the colonial context, and which describe the ways in which colonised peoples have resisted the power of the coloniser (Huddart 2006, p. 1). *Hybridity* and other concepts from Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*, were created as attempts to undermine the simple polarization of the world into "self" and "other"; Bhabha argues that "cultures", as we know them, are the results of attempts to still the process of the mixing of cultural identities—a process of hybridity that is ongoing, as cultures are always in contact with one another and are constantly evolving (Ibid, p. 4). This concept has become more and more relevant in an increasingly globalised society.

Another important figure is psychiatrist and philosopher Frantz Fanon, whose major contribution concerns the psychological consequences of colonisation on the colonised, and the human, social and cultural consequences of decolonisation (Eriksson et al 1999, p. 7). In Fanon's book *Black Skins, White Masks*, he developed the concept of the colonised subject's *dual consciousness*, in which they must embrace two different cultural identities simultaneously - their own and that of the colonisers; this leads to a sort of ambivalence with which many scholars from Europe's colonies regard their identity (Jonsson & Syssner 2011, p. 224).

Congolese philosopher Valentin Yves Mudimbe's contribution is his argument that the primitive Africa of popular imagination (as depicted in art, history, the media, literature and so on) is a social construct created by colonial powers and Western knowledge institutions to justify economic and territorial colonialism (Eriksson et al 1999, p. 20). In his book *The Invention of Africa*, Mudimbe defines colonialism as three interconnected processes, namely the conquest and occupation of physical space (political), the retraining of the natives' consciousness (cultural) and the incorporation of the local economic system with Western capitalism (economic). Like Spivak and Said, Mudimbe asserts that

colonialism is a part of a global modernisation process which integrated political, cultural and economic power, justified by the superior, rational West (Jonsson & Syssner 2011, p. 228).

In a nutshell, postcolonialism is defined as reflexive Western thought—an intellectual and politicised reaction against Western imperialism, colonialism and Eurocentrism—and is meant to offer a critique of Western structures of knowledge and power by analysing the very methods by which knowledge has been constructed. Postcolonial theory rejects ethnocentrism and fundamentalism, challenges the Eurocentric notion that the West is the keeper of universal values, and considers the cultural identity as relational; therefore it is interesting to study how this identity is (re)formed when people encounter phenomena beyond their range of comprehension (Jonsson & Syssner 2011, p. 228).

3.1.1 Tourism as a postcolonial cultural phenomenon

Postcolonial theory is an essential tool for the study of tourism, which is an ever-growing international industry based on past colonial structural relationships, which continue to be perpetuated today (Hall & Tucker 2004, p. 2). Indeed, it can be argued that tourism can be regarded as a form of neocolonialism, where independent countries continue to suffer intervention and control from a foreign state—this includes economic control. The continued economic domination of developed countries is made possible by neoliberalism—the philosophy that supports and drives economic globalisation, which largely benefits the already strong economies of developed countries and creates conditions that make developing countries vulnerable to exploitation (Buades 2010). Tourism is a vital source of revenue in many former colonies, which despite having attained independence, continue to be in some way dependent on Western countries. These ex-colonies have become popular tourism destinations and the remnants of their colonial past have been made into tourism attractions (Hall & Tucker 2004, p. 2).

Much Western travel literature focusses on popular destinations in the Orient, which is described as exotic (i.e. foreign, unusual and strange), busy, chaotic, colourful, lurid and ripe for enjoyment and consumption (Syssner & Khayati 2010, p. 42). Mekonnen Tesfahuney observes that Eurocentrism is evident in the travel and tourism industry, where it is implicit that those referred to as tourists are most often Westerners, or “white people” (2010, pp. 109-112). Founded on notions of neocolonialism and imperialism, whiteness is considered a normative feature of the tourist as a subject, and the white tourist sets the standards for the very idea of travel, activities, experiences, entertainment and leisure, and their needs, preferences and desires set the premise for the design of tourism destinations (Ibid). This follows that "white privilege" is very much evident when Western tourists—whether or not they

come from an actual former colonising country—travel to poorer countries, many of which are former colonies (see section 1.2 for Syssner & Khayati's three privileges of Western tourists).

3.1.2 The idea of Nordic exceptionalism

Colonialism and imperialism concern not only the former colonised societies and their colonisers; they also have had deep and long-standing effects on the national/cultural identities of other European countries such as Sweden and Finland, which did not formally or directly participate in the colonisation process (Eriksson et al 1999, p. 17). This brings us to the concept of *'Nordic exceptionalism'*. According to Kristín Loftsdóttir and Lars Jensen in the book *Whiteness and Postcolonialism in the Nordic Region*, *Nordic exceptionalism* encompasses several different ideas, including "the Nordic countries' peripheral status in relation to the broader European colonialism", and the notion that "Nordic self-perception is rooted intrinsically differently from the rest of Europe" (Loftsdóttir & Jensen 2012, p. 2). *Nordic exceptionalism* implies having a sort of moral superiority and a disconnect, and distancing from, Europe's colonial past.

However, while Nordic countries were indeed 'peripheral' to the major metropolitan cultures (such as Great Britain and France), they were involved in colonial projects (Eidsvik 2012, p.14) and actively participated in the production of Europe as the global centre, thus profiting from this experience (Loftsdóttir & Jensen 2012, p. 1). As the interview subjects for this thesis are from Sweden and Finland, it is these two Nordic countries I will focus on in this subsection.

There exists a popular perception that Sweden lacks a history of racism and oppression of ethnic minorities. This is partly due to a repression, after the end of World War II, of the racist past—which is shared with most other countries in Europe—and partly due to Sweden's self-image as a moral superpower that, for example, regularly sends assistance to the 'third world' and was a very vocal critic of apartheid (Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet 2005, p. 44). The Nordic countries have since the 1970s actively engaged in anti-racist and anti-imperial activities, which have served to construct the Nordic self-image and self-narrative in stark contrast to colonialism (Loftsdóttir & Jensen 2012, p. 2; Eidsvik 2012, p.14). But this has been done without the Nordic countries questioning their own involvement in colonial and racist activities, and consequently has led to a denial of economic exploitations and cultural oppressions (Ibid; ibid).

Incongruent with the self-view of Sweden and the Nordic countries as peace-loving, global 'good citizens' is Sweden's treatment of its minority Sami and Roma peoples[3] (Diskriminerings-ombudsmannen (1) & (2)), and the fact that that *Statens institut för rasbiologi*, the world's first research institute for the study of eugenics, race biology and human genetics was established in Uppsala by the Swedish government in 1922—not so very long ago (Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet 2005, p. 44). The 2014 general election saw the Sweden Democrats (SD)—a far-right anti-immigration political party—winning 12.9% of the votes for parliament, more than double of the 5.7% they received in the 2010 elections (Valmyndigheten 2014). In a media interview, SD party secretary Björn Söder cited Jews and the Sami people as examples of groups who, in his view, can be Swedish citizens, but not Swedes if they do not "assimilate" (Aftonbladet, 14 Dec. 2014).

As was stated in the Swedish government report *Det blågula glashuset – strukturell diskriminering i Sverige*, "Sweden's history is a part of Europe's history. The same racism that arose and spread in Europe, has thus occurred and occurs in Sweden. The racist view of, for example, people from Africa and Asia has been widely disseminated in Sweden, being almost a part of popular culture." (Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet 2005, p. 44)

Due to *Swedish exceptionalism*—a deliberate or sub-conscious assumption that Sweden is somehow 'different' from other countries—there is a denial, a difficulty that many 'white' Swedes feel with regards to recognising and admitting that ethnic discrimination does occur in today's society. While Sweden has laws against discrimination and racism, this attitude of exceptionalism is a problem that makes it very difficult to address these issues, both within legislation and in society (Ibid).

Nordic exceptionalism applies to Finland as well. Anna Rastas contends that the idea that Finland is innocent in relation to colonialism is constructed mainly on the fact that the Finns themselves have never established any colonies (Rastas 2012, p. 90). Indeed, Finland used to be a part of Sweden for about 700 years, up till the early 1800s, and then it was a part of the Russian Empire before becoming an independent state in 1917 (Loftsdóttir & Jensen 2012, pp. 3-4; Rastas 2012, p. 90). Nonetheless, Finns have, like other Europeans, gained economically from colonialism when they settled in Swedish colonies in North America, as well as with other Scandinavians in the Congo (Rastas 2012, p. 90); and the Finns were as privileged as any other white Europeans while they sojourned in, for example, British-ruled places in Africa—but yet, according to their self-perception, Finns should not be labeled

[3] Sweden's national minorities are the Jews, the Roma, the Sami, the Swedish Finns and the Tornedalers (Regeringskansliet 2007).

colonialists or be in any way tainted by colonialism (Ibid, pp. 98). Rastas described a prominent example of Finnish exceptionalism by the (white majority) Finns' defence of and justification for the use of the word *'neekeri'* (the equivalent of 'negro' and 'nigger' in English) to address or describe black people. This is done by claiming that in Finland, the word is not racist or derogatory, but rather 'neutral' and 'harmless'—therefore ignoring its history and meaning it carries, dismissing the arguments against its use, and disregarding the well-being and presence of black people in Finland (Rastas 2012, pp. 92-95). Here again, there is a denial of the existence of racism, and here again is the self-image of moral superiority and virtuousness that makes it difficult to address the issue of discrimination and to make changes to alleviate it.

In order to tackle the issue of discrimination, Sweden and Finland as societies must recognise and admit their historical connections to colonialism as well as the fact that racism is alive and kicking in today's societies. This is necessary as a means to deal with a global reality of which these two countries are a part; a reality which includes immigration and the transnational flows of people (Loftsdóttir & Jensen 2012, p. 8).

3.2 Intersectionality

Intersectionality refers to the study of specific intersections and interactions between two or more elements of identity and social categories such as gender, race, class and sexuality, with emphasis on the values assigned to them and their differences, their inherent power structures and the complex multiple inequalities that emerge or are produced. This concept is used to highlight the idea that these intersections create specific conditions or circumstances that should be analysed and handled as they are, with all the nuances involved, and not merely reduced to one of their elements (Bredström 2011; Watson & Scraton 2013). For example, the experience of a white (Caucasian) female bellydancer will differ from that of a white male dancer, or an Arab female dancer, or an Asian male dancer.

The term “intersectionality” was coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, an American law professor, who wrote an article about how black women's experiences of discrimination in the workplace are formed by the fact that they are both black and female, a condition that is not addressed by prevailing laws against gender or racial discrimination (Bredström 2011, p. 100; Davis 2008, p. 68).

It may be observed that intersectionality research is generally based on two traditions: the black feminist critique of gender studies' narrow/biased focus on gender, and the post-modern loosening of

social categories (Bredström 2011, p. 103). The rationale for the latter tradition is that the elements of identity or categories of difference serve to both divide/discriminate/limit as well as to unite.

In intersectional studies, empirical data focusing on the qualitative life experience of individuals is valued and seen as "giving voice" to those in marginalised positions. In Leslie McCall's 2005 paper on the complexities of categorical thinking and intersectionality, she introduces three methodological approaches (anti-, intra- and intercategorical), which are frequently referenced in intersectionality research. These three approaches are defined in terms of their positions towards categories, or the ways in which categories are used to analyse the complexity of intersectionality in social life (McCall 2005, p. 1773). The first approach, "anticategorical complexity", rejects or deconstructs analytical categories: social life is considered too complex to make fixed categories—which McCall refers to as "simplifying social fictions"—as they would mainly serve to produce inequalities while producing differences. This approach most successfully "satisfies the demand for complexity" (Ibid). The need for this approach in social and political analysis has been expressed by Edward Said in his 2003 preface of *Orientalism*, in which he describes categories such as "the West" or "Islam" as "falsely unifying" and "reductive", and argues that the potentially dangerous influence of these categorisations or the stereotyping of large numbers of disparate individuals should be greatly reduced (Said 2003, p. xxii).

The second approach, "intracategorical complexity", questions the process of categorisation and maintains a critical stance towards it, but at the same time acknowledges the established relationships that social categories represent; however, the main feature of this approach is its focus on particular social groups whose identities traverse the boundaries of traditionally constructed groups.

The final but lesser-known approach, "intercategorical complexity", uses categories strategically, requiring the researcher to temporarily apply existing categories to document relationships and changing configurations of inequality among social groups and their various, sometimes conflicting dimensions (McCall 2005, p. 1773).

It would seem that categorisation or boundary making/defining is generally seen in a rather negative light within intersectional studies, but it clearly has its uses because, as researcher in gender and ethnicity Anna Bredström puts it, issues concerning individuals who fall under a particular category can only be addressed and applied to them as a category or group (Bredström 2011, p. 104). And, as Eriksson et al gleaned from cultural theorist Stuart Hall's text *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, oppressed and marginalised individuals have been able to raise and wield social and political influence by uniting under a common 'essence'—such as being of a certain race or a certain gender—and in doing

so, by strength in numbers, are able to make their voices heard, and to bring to light their previously invisible experiences (Eriksson et al 1999, p. 41).

In any case, researchers should be aware of the limitations of boundary making and take measures to consider the many complexities involved and the inevitable overlapping of categories when conducting their studies, in order to gain a better and more complete understanding of their subject(s).

4. Background contexts

In order to provide the reader with a better understanding of the various Discourses analysed in this thesis, their different components and contexts are described in this section. Subsections 4.1 and 4.2 will outline Egypt's history, current political and social situations, as well as the role of tourism in the country's economy; 4.3 introduces the reader to the status of belly dance in Egypt, and how it is intertwined with culture, society, religion and national identity; 4.4 covers how the dance is practised in the West; and 4.5 presents the function of festivals, and provides a background on the Nile Group festival in Egypt.

4.1 The Egyptian context

With a population of over 87 million, Egypt is a part of North Africa and the Arab world, and is the most populous country in both (CAPMAS 2015, UN Statistics Division 2014, League of Arab States 2015). It is a predominantly Sunni Muslim country—90% Muslim and 10% Christian, according to a 2012 estimate—and its official language is Arabic, though English and French are understood by the educated classes (CIA World Factbook 2014). Egypt's capital, Cairo, is also its largest city—with over nine million inhabitants (Egypt SIS [1] 2014).

Transcontinental Egypt plays a vital role in international trade and travel due to its strategic geographic position in the north-eastern corner of Africa and south-western Asia, and the fact that it controls the Suez Canal—which was completed in 1869 and is one of the world's most heavily used shipping lanes—as well as the Sinai Peninsula and the Isthmus of Suez. Considered a cradle of civilisation—which saw some of the earliest historical developments in writing, agriculture, urbanisation, organised religion and so on (Fouad 2014)—Ancient Egypt and its rich cultural legacy have been, and continue to be, of immense interest to archaeologists, historians and tourists alike. Egypt has been invaded and occupied by various forces throughout the millennia, including the Ottoman empire, the French and most recently the British. Britain invaded and occupied Egypt in 1882, assisted by France—an

occupation that officially ended with the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, which proclaimed Egypt an independent state, but allowed for Britain to continue stationing troops along the Suez Canal to protect British financial and strategic interest (Milner 2011). The British finally withdrew all their troops from Egypt in late 1956 after the Suez Crisis, during which they attempted to retake the Suez Canal from Egypt with military force with the help of France and Israel, but were pressured by the United States and the UN to agree to a ceasefire and eventual withdrawal from Egypt, due to fears that the Soviet Union—which had economic relations with Egypt and threatened intervention—would use the crisis to gain influence in the Middle East (*On this day 26 July 1956: Egypt seizes Suez Canal*, 2008).

Being a republic, Egypt's President, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi (since May 2014), is the head of state and head of executive power; while its Prime Minister, Ibrahim Mehlab, is the head of government. Egypt and the Arab World has been facing a series of unrest, bloodshed and instability since the start of the Arab Spring—which began in December 2010—when major demonstrations and protests (against political corruption, human rights violations, authoritarianism, unemployment and more) were held in many countries throughout the Arab world, resulting in the removal of several rulers from power. One of these upheavals was the Egyptian revolution of 25 January 2011, which resulted in the overthrow of long-time president Hosni Mubarak; Muslim Brotherhood member Mohamed Morsi was elected into power as president in June 2012, only to be ousted a year later (Kingsley [1] 2013). During the 30 June 2013 revolution, it was reported that protesters ranging in numbers from hundreds of thousands (Carlstrom 2013) to millions (Fayed & Saleh 2013) called for Morsi's resignation. The then-Defence Minister and General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi led a coalition to perform a *coup d'état* on 3 July to remove Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood from power. Al-Sisi then went on to win the May 2014 elections by almost 97%, from a voter turnout of 47.5 percent (*El-Sisi wins Egypt's presidential race with 96.91%*, 2014).

In terms of human rights, Egypt demonstrates a number of weaknesses, such as the use of excessive force and killings by the police during demonstrations, mass arrests and torture, restricted freedom of expression, lack of women's rights and gender inequality, and more (World Report 2014). Sexual harassment and assault of women and girls in public spaces have been, and continue to be, a problem, without any definitive action from the government to stop the practice; in the summer of 2013, women's rights groups reported 186 sexual attacks on women in the duration of one week in Tahrir Square, Cairo (Ibid). Three journalists from the news portal *Al Jazeera*, who have been detained since 29 December 2013, are still imprisoned in Egypt under the accusations of falsifying news and assisting the now-banned Muslim Brotherhood movement (*Dark day for media freedom as Al Jazeera*

journalists convicted, 2014). And since the overthrow of Morsi in 2013, al-Sisi has—without the counsel of an elected parliament—enacted legislations that severely restrict freedom of expression, association and assembly (Kingsley [3] 2014).

4.2 Tourism: the driving force of economic development

As mentioned in section 3.1.1, tourism can be seen as neocolonialism, i.e. a phenomenon that perpetuates the colonial legacy of domination and subjugation. Some aspects that illustrate the former colonial powers' continued dominance over their ex-colonies are political and economic control, shown in the reliance of many developing countries on tourism revenue, and in the flow of tourism, which tends to be from developed to developing countries—the latter demonstrates the mobility and purchasing power of nationals from these countries. Economic leakage, which is common in the tourism industry, describes a situation where the bulk of the tourist's expenditure doesn't arrive or stay in the destination, going instead to airlines, hotels and other international companies in developed countries (Tesfahuney & Schough 2010, p. 15); for example, according to a study by Smith and Jenner, only 35% to 50% of a tour operator's price is received by Egypt (Holden 2006, pp. 95-97).

Tourism—described as "the driving force of economic development" on Egypt's state information service website (Egypt SIS [4] 2013)—is one of the most important sectors in the Egyptian economy, which at its peak contributed approximately 40% of its total services exports, providing 19.3% of foreign exchange and employing 12.6% of Egypt's entire labour force—it is cited as the country's most important employment-generating industry (Egypt SIS [5] 2013). It contributed about 11.3% of Egypt's GDP from both direct and indirect contributions, which include travel and tourism-related services such as restaurants and hotels (Ibid).

There is a definite disparity in economic power between Egyptians and the average tourist to Egypt, as the latter—be they Western, Arab or Asian—is significantly wealthier than most Egyptians (Wynn 2007, pp. 210). To illustrate this point, it is estimated that each tourist in Egypt spends an average of USD100 a day, which is more than the monthly salary of most hotel workers (Mitchell 1995, p. 10). Statistics from 2011 indicate that 25.2% of the Egyptian population live at or below the national poverty line (The World Bank 2015), with 23.7% hovering just above it (Kingsley [2] 2013).

According to the World Bank, Egypt is a 'lower middle income' country—and in the interest of comparison for this study, we will also look at Sweden and Finland, which are categorised as 'high income' countries (The World Bank [1], 2014). In 2013, Egypt's GNI per capita was USD3,140 (US

dollars) and its PPP was Int$10,790 (international dollars[4]). In the same year, Sweden's GNI per capita was USD61,760 and its PPP was Int$46,680; while Finland's GNI per capita was USD48,820 and its PPP was Int$39,930. GNI (gross national income) and PPP (purchasing power parity) are both economic indicators; GNI is used to indicate a country's economic performance while PPP measures its quality of life (The World Bank [1] & [2] 2014; Beyond Economic Growth, Glossary 2004).

Anthropologist Lisa L. Wynn points out that the ways in which the economic power of the tourists are manifested include forms of political and cultural privilege, such as protection by the tourist police, a tolerance by the authorities of activities that would be prosecutable if undertaken by Egyptians, as well as the funding of cultural productions (e.g. theatre plays, dances), museums and excavations of archaeological sites which are geared primarily towards foreign tourists (Wynn 2007, pp. 210-212). Wynn suggests that demonstrations of Egyptian national and cultural identity—which include popular culture such as movies and music exported to Arab audiences in Gulf countries, as well as belly dance shows consumed by Egyptians and Arab tourists—are at least in part shaped by their non-Egyptian consumers; the implications here are that tourism discursively affects all Egyptians, even those not directly linked to the industry (Ibid).

There is also a disparity between Egyptians and the average Western tourist in terms of mobility or ability to travel. Egyptians generally face difficulties in obtaining visas for travel abroad to certain destinations, including the UK, the USA and countries in the European Union (El Masry 2013). According to the Henley & Partners Visa Restrictions Index—a global ranking of countries according to the travel freedom that their citizens enjoy—people holding Egyptian passports can enter 48 countries visa-free, in contrast with Finland, Germany, Sweden, USA and UK that top the ranks, having visa-free access to 174 countries (The Henley & Partners Visa Restrictions Index 2014). This aspect alone can be seen as problematic, as a large number of primarily Western dancers travel to Egypt yearly and return to their home countries to teach and perform the dance (Wynn 2007, pp. 217-219), whereas only a limited number of Egyptian dancers and dance teachers who are well-known and/or have connections in other countries are able to travel abroad to perform and teach the dances of their culture[5]. But for most of the local dancers working in cabarets who face poverty and other hindrances such as language barriers, travelling abroad is not even an option.

[4] The international dollar is a hypothetical unit of currency that has the same purchasing power over GNI as a U.S. dollar has in the United States (The World Bank [2] 2014).
[5] From my personal observations of advertising material for dance festivals around the world.

Europeans—which include Russians, according to Egyptian statistics—constitute the largest number of tourists in Egypt[6]. From 2003 to 2013, Europeans comprised between 67.1 to 75.9 percent of tourists, and Arabs constituted the second largest group, between 14.2 to 21.9 percent; the rest are Americans [2.9 to 3.9 percent] and 'others' [4.1 to 14 percent] (CAPMAS 2014).

In her travel ethnography *Pyramids & Nightclubs*, Wynn observes that there are two main types of tourism in Egypt: Western tourism—which is oriented towards imaginations of Ancient Egypt, with its magnificent monuments that inspire awe even from the perspective of modern technology; and Arab tourism—which involves more contemporary imaginings of Egyptian culture, in which Egypt is seen as the centre of Arab cinema, music and belly dancing, and in which Cairo is seen as the cultural hub of the Arab world (Wynn 2007, p. 4 & 126; Egypt SIS [5] 2009). According to Wynn, these two types of tourism represent the most typical destinations and activities for Arab and Western visitors in Egypt, but there are of course other types of tourism as well, such as "sun-sea-and-sand" tourism in the Red Sea resorts of Sharm el-Sheikh and Hurghada—popular mainly with Westerners but some Arabs too; religious pilgrimages; hunting safaris as well as desert and nature tourism (Wynn 2007, p. 209; Egypt SIS [4] 2013).

Wynn argues that recognising and highlighting the category of Arab tourists is important because it challenges the common assumption in tourism research that only Westerners can be "authentic" tourists, who consider travel as a leisure activity—this is due of the idea that only Western countries have the economic power to generate mass tourism; and—as tourism is associated with modernity—acknowledging the Arab tourist also challenges assumptions that modernity is solely a Western phenomenon (Wynn 2007, pp. 14-15). Wynn's assertion echoes what Tesfahuney (see section 3.1.1) observes about the Eurocentrism and white privilege in the tourism industry, as well as in tourism research (Tesfahuney 2010, pp. 109-112).

Wynn also contends that contemporary Western tourism in Egypt is the legacy of European colonialism, and the value of Egypt's ancient monuments and artefacts are not only due to the fact that they are part of Egypt's cultural heritage (Wynn 2007, p. 126). These monuments and artefacts are also imbued with importance and worth due to a range of historical circumstances—including colonialism and occupation—which has shaped Western imaginations of Egypt, and this is also reflected in today's archaeology politics and tourism patterns (Ibid).

[6] According to a survey by AlexBank (the Bank of Alexandria), the top 10 biggest tourism markets (between 2007 and 2009, beginning with the biggest) were: Russia (13.4%-16.6%), Germany, Britain, Italy, France, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Poland, Sudan and Netherlands (Tourism industry in Egypt 2010).

In the past two decades, there have been terrorist attacks targeting tourist attractions and resorts in Egypt, such as the ones in Luxor (*Tourists massacred at temple*, 1997), Cairo (*Cairo tourists come under attack*, 2005), Sharm al-Sheikh (*Toll climbs in Egyptian attacks*, 2005), Dahab (*Triple blasts rock Egypt resort*, 2006) and Sinai (*Egypt tourist bus attacked in Sinai*, 2014). The perpetrators and their motives aren't always apparent, but the attacks are often linked to Islamic extremists (refer to the articles in this paragraph). After each attack, there is always a period of recovery for the tourism industry, but none of the past terrorist attacks seem to have had as adverse an effect on the number of tourist visitations as the 2011 and 2013 revolutions. Coupled with media reports of civil unrest, the travel warnings issued by Western countries—such as Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom advising citizens against travel to Sinai, and against non-essential travel to most other places in Egypt, apart from the tourist areas—have certainly had a significant impact on visitor numbers (Utrikesministeriet Finland 2014; Sveriges Ambassad i Kairo 2014; Gov.uk: Foreign Travel Advice Egypt 2014; Kingsley [2], 2014).

The year 2010 was a record year for Egypt, which received 14.7 million tourists, but the number fell to 10 million in 2011, rose again in 2012 with 11.5 million, and fell sharply to 9.5 million in 2013 (*Tourism down 17.9% year on year in 2013: CAPMAS*, 2014; *Egypt tourist numbers fell a third in 2011: Official stats*, 2012). Tourism revenue was down by more than 50 percent to £3.6 billion in 2013, compared with £7.7 billion in 2010 (Kingsley [1], 2014). In an economy as heavily reliant on tourism as Egypt, this drop in visitors and revenue is devastating, and many Egyptians working in the tourism industry have been forced to seek other employment (Kingsley [2], 2014). In 2014, visitor numbers to the Red Sea resorts saw an improvement, but historic sites such as Cairo, Luxor and Aswan were still relatively quiet (Ibid). The combination of drastic drops in tourism revenues, foreign investment, growth and other factors has led to soaring food prices, high unemployment and a shortage of fuel, plunging Egypt into an economic crisis which is hitting the country's poorest the hardest (Kingsley [2] 2013).

4.3 *Raqs sharqi* in Egypt

Egypt is commonly thought to be the source, the place from which belly dance or *raqs sharqi* originated—or at least considered the cultural centre of the belly dance world—and is the site of pilgrimage for many dancers from around the globe, especially from Europe, the United States and the former Soviet Union (McDonald 2010, pp. 52 & 136; Högström 2010, p. 15; Maira 2008, p. 333; Mohamed, interview October 2014). It is for this reason that I chose to focus on dancers' imaginations

of Egypt in this thesis. The dance is so ubiquitous in the country that it has become a symbol national identity (McDonald 2010, p. 52; Wynn 2007, pp. 211-212).

It should be noted however that the dance is also practised in other Middle Eastern countries such as Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, and in particular, Lebanon, as well as Turkey and Iran[7], where it is known as *oryantal dans* and *raghse arabi* respectively[8] (Högström 2010, p. 15; McDonald 2010, p. 52;). It is also interesting to note that although *raqs sharqi* is often viewed as a feminine dance (McDonald 2010, p. 185; Högström 2010, p. 55), and the overwhelming majority of practitioners are female, a few of the more sought-after Egyptian teachers—such as Tito Seif—are male.

It is an Egyptian tradition to hire belly dancers and other entertainers to perform during the most important occasions in people's lives—such as births, engagements and especially weddings, where they represent joy and are believed to bless the marriage with fertility (Nieuwkerk 1998; Nieuwkerk 1995, p. 2; *The Bellydancers of Cairo* [DVD] 2006). Performers are an object of prestige, and hiring them is a luxury: the more numerous, expensive and famous the entertainers, the greater the prestige gained by the host family (Nieuwkerk 1995, p. 2). Besides being hired for private celebrations, belly dancers also perform in nightclubs and discotheques (ranging from those in 5-star hotels to the cheapest cabarets), Nile cruise ships, restaurants, theatres and in the media (movies, music videos, television) (Nieuwkerk 1998; Wynn 2007, pp. 219 & 221).

As mentioned earlier, *raqs sharqi* is a symbol of national identity and a significant part of Egyptian culture, beloved by most Egyptians (Aswany 2014); it is thus a site of cultural pride, but also simultaneously a site of religious derision and shame; the latter will be elaborated upon in 4.3.3.

4.3.1 Occidental influence in Oriental dance

Academic discourse holds that belly dance as it appears in Egypt today is the result of a variety of influences, including Western imaginations of this 'traditional' dance (Wynn 2007, p. 215), transnational artistic exchanges and cross-cultural encounters between Egypt and the West as well as Egypt and the Arab World (Ibid, pp. 26 & 222; Nieuwkerk 1995, p. 42; Maira 2008, p. 322). With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, Egypt became an attraction for mass tourism (Nieuwkerk 1995, p. 40), and dancers were some of the most important tourist draws (Ibid, p. 21). The canal opening led to

[7] Public performance of all dance has been banned in Iran since the Islamic Revolution of 1979 (Kiann 2002), but I have observed that *raghse arabi* is rather popular among the Iranian diaspora.
[8] These include my own experiences and encounters with Egyptian teachers as well as Iranians in Sweden and Malaysia; and observations during belly dance festivals in Sweden and on online forums, websites, YouTube and social media.

the development of two different entertainment circuits: one catering mainly to foreigners, namely the colonial rulers, as well as European and Arab tourists—represented by nightclubs and variety theatres inspired by their counterparts in the West; and one aimed at the locals—represented by performances at weddings and other festive occasions (Ibid). The "Oriental" shows aimed at Western tourists featured belly dance, which incorporated many show elements imported from the West (Ibid. p. 41). These entertainment circuits are still current in the Egypt of today and function largely in the same fashion—a link to the colonial past; it can thus be said that belly dance continues to be closely linked to tourism, not just as a tourism attraction and representation of Egyptian culture, but also because many foreign belly dancers currently performing in Egypt first set foot in the country as tourists (Wynn 2007, p. 217).

Several researchers contend that one of the more obvious legacies of Westernisation or the 'Hollywoodization' of belly dance in Egypt is the development of the glittering two-piece costume. According to Nieuwkerk, the Egyptian dance costume of the 19th century was rather plain, comprising a simple wide skirt or trousers, a waistcoat and an undershirt (1995, p. 42). To fulfil a Western fantasy of Oriental decadence and exoticism, the basic costume was embellished with beads, sequins, rhinestones and veils, eventually evolving to the form that is still current today: the sparkly, decorated bra top and skirt with slits (Nieuwkerk 1995, p. 42; Wynn 2007, p. 217). There is some debate about how this two-piece costume was introduced to Egypt, but it is generally agreed that it evolved through transnational cultural exchanges around the turn of the century to the early 1930s (Ibid; Ibid). Writer and performer Wendy Buonaventura, who is often quoted in literature about belly dance, contends that Hollywood's portrayal of the dance in early American films greatly influenced Egyptian film makers, and via this route its Westernised, Orientalist aesthetics were gradually introduced into Egypt's nightclubs (Ibid; Ibid). Wynn also refers to Sarah Graham-Brown, who suggests that the two-piece costume may have instead been inspired by an Indian dance costume and brought to Egypt by the British (2007, p. 217).

To put succinctly what is being suggested in this subsection: contemporary belly dance is rather far removed from its Egyptian origins, constituting "an almost entirely new, Orientalised and auto-exoticised dance genre that retains only fragments of the earlier belly dance aesthetic", as argued by Banasiak, citing Shay (Banasiak 2014, p. 2).

4.3.2 Egypt as the centre of belly dance

The Egyptian film industry did not just influence belly dance costuming in nightclubs, it was instrumental in establishing Egypt as the (imagined) centre of belly dance. Since the establishment of the first Egyptian film studio, Studio Misr in 1934, Egypt has been recognised in the Arabic-speaking world as the centre of the entertainment industry—particularly film (McDonald 2010, p. 137; Nieuwkerk 1995, p. 61). Movies in the 1940s and 1950s nearly always featured belly dancers and singers, who were the stars—acting was of secondary importance (Nieuwkerk 1995, p. 61). Egypt's cultural influence is the Arab world is undisputed: it produces the most widely viewed movies and TV series; its recording artists are more numerous and fame most widespread; and it has the news media with the greatest reach (Wynn 2007, p. 140). Due to Egypt's prolific entertainment and media exports, the Egyptian colloquial dialect is the most commonly recognisable throughout the Arab world (McDonald 2010, p. 137; Wynn 2007, p. 8).

In the late 1800s, French and English imperialism in Egypt brought scholars and writers such as Gustave Flaubert who wrote accounts of their sojourns in the Middle East, which included sections on enthralling encounters with dancers; these exotic Orientalist fantasies of Egypt, which were used as a metonym to represent the culture of the entire Middle East, were then recreated for Western audiences at international expositions and world fairs in the form of 'belly dancing' performances (Wynn 2007, p. 215; McDonald 2010, p. 136). Academic and popular sources frequently refer to “Little Egypt”, a dancer who was purportedly one of the biggest attractions at the 1893 Chicago International Exposition—she probably was not even Egyptian, or even same person in all the instances the name was evoked; however, the name “Little Egypt” seems to encapsulate “a particular imagination of women, dance, the Middle East and World Fairs”, namely, an Orientalist imagination (Wynn 2007, pp. 215-216; McDonald 2010, pp. 136-137).

Following the reasoning in the two previous paragraphs, Wynn infers that “belly dance is an example of a touristic site where Western and Arab imaginations of Egypt are complexly intertwined” (2007, p. 215). Stereotypical images of belly dancers in full costume riding camels against a backdrop of the pyramids of Giza, or wearing “pharaonic”-inspired outfits while making poses similar to those in ancient art—among other things—serve to reinforce these imaginations.

A considerable number of foreign dancers flock to study and work with the dance in Cairo, attracted to these imaginations of Egypt; so numerous are these foreign dancers and so eager are they to obtain the experience of working with dance in Cairo that they knowingly or unknowingly undercut local

dancers, driving market prices down (McDonald 2010, p. 53; Wynn 2007, p. 219). This leads to further reducing native Egyptians' incentive to take up a profession that pays little and is laden with stigma (Wynn 2007, pp. 219-222; McDonald 2010, p. 68; Arvizu 2004, p. 165).

Wynn contends that for many foreign Oriental dancers, working in Cairo is a highly sought-after *social good* that guarantees "success as a dancer, teacher or choreographer back home"; these social goods or social currency include "experience, exposure to different dance styles, an aura of 'authenticity' and the prestige of having worked as a dancer in Cairo" (Wynn 2007, p. 218-221). Foreign dancers—many of whom come from Europe, the United States, Russia and so on; in other words, mainly white women—are much less affected by the stigma and social valuation of dancers in Egyptian society, since their stay in Egypt is usually relatively short, and since for most of them, dancing is not just a way to earn a living (Ibid).

In August 2003 there was a motion taking effect in January 2004 to ban all non-Egyptians from working as belly dancers, as Oriental dance "is a purely Egyptian art form that shouldn't be subject to foreign intrusion" (Arvizu 2004, p. 159; Wynn 2007, p. 222). The ban was retracted in September 2004 after Russian dancer Nour and Australian dancer Caroline Evanoff—both based in Egypt—presented several strong arguments against it (Wynn 2007, p. 222). Some of these arguments included the fact that foreign dancers contribute to the local economy by paying taxes to the government, wages to their Egyptian musicians, backup dancers, agents and managers, as well as living expenses such as rent; foreign dancers—both professionals working in Cairo as well as dance tourists—also stimulate the market in costly Egyptian-made costumes and dance lessons from Egyptian teachers and choreographers renowned in the international dance community (Ibid; McDonald 2010, p. 68 & 215).

Taking into consideration the conditions created by the social practices and discourses of Western belly dancers, their involvement in the Cairo dance scene and their influence on the economy and policies of the country could be in some ways regarded as a form of neocolonialism. On the other hand, the influx of foreign "belly dance tourists" has as mentioned earlier created a market for goods and services related to the dance; promoted global recognition, appreciation and enthusiasm for it; and has been a strong motivating factor for Egyptian dancers, musicians, costume makers and choreographers "to actively preserve and disseminate knowledge of the dance that may not have happened otherwise" (Arvizu 2004, pp. 159-160).

4.3.3 Religion & society: 'An hour for God & an hour for the heart'

In Karin van Nieuwkerk's 1998 paper on Islam, gender and female entertainment in Egypt, she examines the conflict and paradoxically, the coexistence between Egyptians' love for belly dance and their Islamic faith, which continues—to different degrees—to be influenced by fundamentalism. The current wave of religious fundamentalism and conservatism in Egypt has been growing in influence since the 1970s, affecting many aspects of society and creating an unfavourable environment for all fields of art and entertainment (Nieuwkerk 1998). Nieuwkerk states however that while religion has a significant and profound influence on the Egyptian people's attitudes towards art and entertainment, many people maintain 'an hour for God and an hour for the heart', which suggests that they feel that religion and amusement are not mutually exclusive or incompatible (Ibid).

But despite this coexistence of faith and entertainment, female entertainers—which include singers and dancers—feel an ambivalence towards their profession. This ambivalence stems from their awareness that despite their importance as conveyors of joy and amusement, society in general regards them with disdain, and considers their professions as *haram* or dishonourable and taboo (Ibid; Nieuwkerk 1995, p. 2; *The Bellydancers of Cairo* [DVD] 2006). Some women in the urban lower classes work as dancers because it is one of the few avenues of income available to them; some of them were born into families of entertainers and are thus continuing their family tradition; while an even smaller group choose to dance, as it is their passion—all of them brave daily insults, abuse and rejection because of their profession (Nieuwkerk 1995, p. 76; *The Bellydancers of Cairo* [DVD] 2006; *Dancers - Mirayat el-Masrah* [film] 2007). In general, the practise of dancing professionally is disliked but tolerated by the community when a woman does it to support her family (Nieuwkerk 1995, p. 181). To these dancers, their profession is “a trade like any other” in that it fulfils a societal function and allows them to earn a living (Ibid, p. 1), but the stigma they face indicates that society has another viewpoint.

In her examination of religious discourse and texts, Nieuwkerk found that the acceptability of female entertainers depends on the degree to which their performances could potentially be sexually arousing for males. She deduces that in religious discourse, female dancing is considered the most shameful form of entertainment, more so than female singing, as the sexual excitement that is aroused by looking [at dancing and movement] is considered more potent than that which is caused by listening [to singing], and also due to the notion that women are generally more enticing than men (Nieuwkerk 1998).

Comparing two discourses on gender and sexuality by Fatna Aït Sabbah and Fatema Mernissi, Nieuwkerk observes that in the Muslim culture, which is heteronormative, the female body is generally perceived and defined as an exclusively sexual object, and this obscures its other dimensions, namely its economic or productive aspects. The male body—although it takes on a sexual dimension in the presence of a female—has several dimensions, such as in the economic and political fields. A woman, merely by moving (working, walking, or just being) in the male space—that is, outside the home, in public—is perceived as a sexual being, no matter what she is wearing or doing. And thus, a female dancer, who moves her culturally sexualised body publicly, on stage, in exchange for a salary, is considered similar to a prostitute (Nieuwkerk 1998; Nieuwkerk 1995, p. 45). According to Wynn, many middle-class Egyptians consider dancers as loose women, and the term *ra'asa* or "dancer" can be applied as a pejorative term almost synonymous with "whore" (Wynn 2007, p. 221). Referring to someone as the son/daughter of a belly dancer is also an insult (Ibid; Aswany 2014; Arvizu 2004, p. 164).

As mentioned earlier in subsection 4.3, it is an Egyptian tradition to invite belly dancers to perform at weddings—so how do Egyptians reconcile their simultaneous contempt for dancers and their enjoyment of watching the dance? As one of Nieuwkerk's interviewees says, "Those jobs are shameful and detestable... but I do like to watch it. Once in a lifetime we invite them; it is *haram*, but the fault is theirs" (Nieuwkerk 1998). By placing the blame of sin that may result from viewing a dancer's performance on the dancer, this person demonstrates the reasoning that enables Egyptians to watch dancers with a relatively clear conscience. And the same conservative Egyptian man who looks down on dancers would have no qualms purchasing a costume for his wife and having her dance for him; belly dancing in a conjugal setting is clearly considered *halal* or permissible (Aswany 2014).

Besides the stigmatization and ostracism of dancers by "decent" folk, there are other ways that religious influence has affected the belly dance scene in Egypt. These include the attacks on and closures of nightclubs in 1977 and 1986; nightclubs in general tend to feature belly dancers, and to the fundamentalists, nightclub culture—which represents opulence and corruption—should be suppressed (Ibid). Another effect of religious influence is stricter censorship in theatres and media; contemporary belly dance performances were banned from television at the time that Nieuwkerk's 1998 paper was written. But that rule has clearly been revised since the television show called *Al Rakesa* (translated as 'The [Belly] Dancer') premiered on 1 September 2014 on the private satellite channel, *Al Kahera Wal Nas* amidst much controversy (*Belly dancer Dina acquitted of 'debauchery,' continues controversial show*, 2014).

The legal status of dancers has also been weakened by religious pressure, as is demonstrated by the difficulty for new dancers in obtaining licenses to perform (Nieuwkerk 1998). This leaves them vulnerable to exploitation and left without legal protection or pensions (Nieuwkerk 1995, p. 63). Even belly dancers who possess government permits are subject to the scrutiny of the morality or religious police, who have the authority make arrests over rather arbitrary rules such as costumes that show more skin than is permissible by law, or overly provocative dancing (Aswany 2014).

The political discourse on the dance has long been ambivalent as well. In the 1970s, President Anwar Sadat is purported to have praised the celebrated dancer Soheir Zaki by dubbing her "the Om Kalthoum of dance" and declaring that "as she sings with her voice, you sing with your body"—this comparison of a dancer with a national icon, made by a head of state, positions belly dance as a positive symbol of national identity (McDonald 2010, p. 55). A little more recently in 2003, an official from the Ministry of Labour claimed belly dance as "an Egyptian thing" but simultaneously that it is "not a hard job" (Ibid)—encapsulating in a single sentence the Egyptian ambivalence regarding the dance. Some reasons of this ambivalence will be outlined in the following subsection.

4.3.4 Learning and performing dance in the social and professional realms

Part of Arabs' discourse on belly dance is that "everyone knows how to do it" and "it doesn't take any special training; we learn from our mothers!" (McDonald 2010, p. 56). Egyptian teacher and choreographer, the renowned Rakia (Raqia) Hassan—who is the organiser of the Ahlan Wa Sahlan festival—asserts that "Oriental dancing is something inside every Egyptian" (McDonald 2010, p. 53). I have personally heard similar utterances numerous times from Arab or Middle Eastern women of my acquaintance, who cite that they know how to belly dance because it is part of their culture and "in their blood"; this has also been the experience of other non-Arab/non-Middle Eastern dance teachers (Högström 2010, p. 120), and is part of the general public's (both Arab and non-Arab) discourse on the dance (Ibid, pp. 172-173; McDonald 2010, p. 92).

As dancing is a part of wedding celebrations in Egypt and in many Middle Eastern countries, and most girls and women from these places are familiar with the social variant of the dance through exposure, observation and participation (Nieuwkerk 1995, p. 75). These factors can perhaps explain why in social discourse, Arabs claim that they know how to belly dance and do not differentiate between social dance—which is often done in gender segregated situations, and the "show" or performance version of the dance—which is usually done for mixed audiences, both depending, of course on the social and religious norms of the country in question. In her doctoral dissertation, Karin Högström refers to Mats

Nilsson (1998) in describing these two variants as *den lilla traditionen* (the lesser tradition)—indicating informal learning and dancing, and *den stora traditionen* (the greater tradition)—which refers to that which is performed on stage and taught in courses and dance schools (Högström 2010, p. 118).

This stance that Arabs have against obtaining formal training in *raqs sharqi* is reflected in their low interest and attendance in belly dance festivals. Mohamed Abou Shebika revealed during my interview with him that only a handful of Egyptians and other Middle Easterners participate at the Nile Group festivals: "They come to learn because they are not educated in dance and they want to be educated. But not so many. The Arab or Egyptian not so many. […] Most of the people […] if they are interested in the dance they already study and dance in groups."—referring to folkloric groups like the state-sanctioned Reda troupe (Mohamed, interview October 2014).

The professionalisation of the performing arts industry in Egypt, which began in the 1960s, created a rift between what is considered "high" and "low" art, and brought prestige to some at the expense of others (Nieuwkerk 1995, pp. 62-63). While there is a trade union and officially-recognised institutes for ballet and folkloric dance, there is no official government institute that trains dancers in *raqs sharqi* (Ibid). In order to perform in public, dancers need a permit, which can be obtained if one fulfils several criteria: having formal training, being a member of the dancers' union, and having at least 5 years' work experience in these dances (Ibid). This has left many talented and experienced belly dancers with no formal training at a serious disadvantage. The government agency that issues licenses to dancers has also made it difficult to get new licenses due to growing pressure from Islamic fundamentalists (Ibid).

4.4 Belly dance in the West

While section 4.3.1 covered Western influence in belly dance in Egypt, this section will briefly outline how the dance is portrayed and practised in the West. As mentioned in section 4.3, belly dance—or rather one of its earlier forms—was introduced into Western imagination through the writings of travellers such as the French author Gustave Flaubert, American author George W. Curtis, Orientalist scholar Edward Lane and writer Isabella Frances Romer (McDonald 2010, p. 97). The first European visitor—that we know of thus far—who described native Egyptian dance in English was a Lady Mary Montagu, who in 1717 wrote of the "differentness" and sensuality of the dance (Nieuwkerk 1995, p. 22; McDonald 2010, p. 97). Subsequent writings by various authors have detailed the dance as

"shameful", "indecent" and "savage", yet fascinating, "voluptuous" and exotic, setting the tone for decidedly Orientalist imaginings whose repercussions are still evident today (Nieuwkerk 1995, p. 22).

The term 'belly dance' is believed to have originated from the French descriptive expression *danse du ventre* (Nieuwkerk 1995, p. 41; McDonald 2010, p. 95; Buonaventura 1998, p. 106). Many researchers agree that the phrase *danse du ventre* came into popular use after the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, when entertainment director Sol Bloom used them to promote his shows—featuring dancers from the Arab world—knowing that the term evoked titillating and exotic impressions (Rakha 2006; Nieuwkerk 1995, p. 41; McDonald 2010, p. 95). (See Appendix B for more on the term 'belly dance')

The World's Fairs or exhibitions in London, Paris and Chicago were linked to the Industrial Revolutions in Europe and North America, and the colonial expansion into Africa, Asia and Latin America (Nieuwkerk 1995, p. 41). These exhibitions, which served as both trade fairs and tourist attractions, showcased the "conquests of Western imperialism" and the "success of the colonialist project"—juxtaposing raw materials, as well as 'primitive' peoples from faraway lands and their native art and entertainment (see section 4.3.2 on the dancer "Little Egypt"), with Western goods and technological developments (Banasiak 2014, p. 2; McDonald 2010, pp. 97-98; Nieuwkerk 1995, p. 41; Buonaventura 1998, p. 101).

There exists a history of Western performers being inspired by images and descriptions of Oriental dance and performing their interpretations of it; they include Colette, Ruth St. Denis and Maud Allen, who were active from the early 20th century (McDonald 2010, pp. 98-99; Maira 2008, p. 322). With the possible exception of Colette's (who had travelled to Algeria and Morocco and thus had some experience of the Arab world), the performances from these dancers were pure Orientalist fantasy (Ibid). This trend continues till today, especially with the creation of new belly dance sub-genres such as tribal fusion, Gothic fusion and ATS (American Tribal Style), which have complete or varying degrees of separation from the dance's Middle Eastern roots.

Following this line of thought (as mentioned in section 4.3.1), Banasiak, citing Anthony Shay, argues that belly dance in its current form is far removed from its purported origins, having undergone a process of Orientalisation and exoticisation that has made it aesthetically pleasing to Westerners (Banasiak 2014, p. 2). She states that some feminist and Orientalism theorists interpret this evolution as problematic due to its appropriative nature, and that they view the very structuring of the dance as pandering to the heterosexual male and colonial gazes—perpetuating the unequal power relations between the genders as well as between Westerners and 'Others' (Banasiak 2014, pp. 2-3).

The number of Western women practising belly dance professionally or as a form of serious leisure has been increasing since the 1970s (Banasiak 2014, p. 3), and this is at odds with prevailing Western feminist discourse. Banasiak however argues that the gaze theory is limiting and makes the subjects passive, not taking into account the experiential aspect of the dance; she contends that the women who practise the dance do so actively, and that they are are individuals with agency. These dancers "bring their life histories and social positions to the process of experiencing, interpreting, and using" the dance in their daily lives (Ibid).

While Western/non-Arab women employ belly dance as an expression of and a tool for empowerment, sisterhood as well as feminine and sexual liberation (Maira 2008, p. 333; McDonald 2010, p. 205; see also section 5.2.5 of the analysis), Maira contends that they also see themselves as 'protectors' of sorts for the dance, positioning themselves as "the saviours of these declining traditions that natives are too blind to appreciate in their misguided quest for modernity" (2008, p. 337). Maira also suggests that a form of imperialist feminism is prevalent among belly dance teachers and performers, whose discourse of the dance's origins encompasses "the oppression of Arab and Muslim women by patriarchal societies and fundamentalist forces" and "the rescue of belly dance by white women, which becomes a metaphor for the rescue of Arab and Muslim women" (Ibid, p. 336).

Congruent with this self-assigned position of being the saviour and protector of this dance is the Western belly dancer's creation of what Renda Dabit[9] calls 'white woman mythology' (Ibid, p. 332). This 'mythology' associates belly dancing with "the female body, childbirth, female power, and Goddess worship", which Dabit asserts is fabricated and therefore inauthentic and problematic (Ibid). But more critically, Dabit questions "how economic and racial relations of power are expressed or obscured by the mythologies of "belly dance feminism,"" which in turn relates to who defines, markets and profits from a particular representation of the dance (Ibid). This is a clear reference to the commercialisation of belly dance in the West, largely by Western dancers, in the form of clothing lines, instructional videos, workshops, dance and fitness classes, and so on (McDonald 2010, pp. 152 & 165; Maira 2008, pp. 331-332).

4.5 Festivals: The Nile Group & the rest

For this thesis, I have chosen to focus on festivals organised by the Nile Group in Egypt, which my interview subjects have either attended or intend to attend, or of which they are at least aware. To

[9] Renda Dabit is a Palestinian American woman who owns an events agency that books belly dancers, and is Sunaina Maira's respondent.

obtain some background knowledge of the festivals, I interviewed Mohamed Abou Shebika, 50, who is co-organiser of the Stockholm Belly Dance Festival (SBDF) in Sweden as well as the Nile Group festivals. Professionally trained in the *tabla* (a Middle Eastern goblet drum), Mohamed moved from Egypt to Sweden in 1995, and with his Swedish wife Suzanne—who is herself a belly dancer—started the dance school Egyptiskt Kulturcentrum (EKC) in Södermalm in 1997. He currently resides in Stockholm, working with organising belly dance events, and owns shops selling costumes and other items related to belly dance. The first SBDF was organised by EKC in 2000, and has been an annual event ever since. The first Nile Group festival was held in 2005 by a trio of close friends, Mohamed and two dance teachers, Aida Nour and Freiz Sayed; the latter two enlisted Mohamed's assistance and skill in managing and marketing, due to the success of the Stockholm festivals.

It can be assumed that all dance festivals have a presence on the internet (websites and social media pages), but they attract participants primarily through an informal network of dance practitioners around the world (Golia 2007, p. 57), and this is where Mohamed and EKC's role in attracting European dancers to Egypt came in, although the teachers themselves are the key attractions, and the individual dancer's own initiative and interest in the dance also factors in:

> *So now I'm helping them for everything they need to know, I help, I give them connection with everybody because you know in Sweden is also central in Europe […] And the festival here in Sweden also the people know it. […] Everybody famous in Nile Group, all the teachers famous. [...] The people wanted to dance with these teachers, so they come. [...] So you don't need to market, everybody know. Like here in Sweden why do you come here, you are dancer, you are coming here to dance. [...] When you love dance, when you love something, you look, you try to know more.*
>
> (Interview - Mohamed, 26 October 2014)

The Nile Group organises several events a year, the majority of them in Cairo; in 2015 there will be four festivals in Cairo (January, April, June and November) and one in Sharm el Sheikh (June). The Cairo festivals will be held in the 5-star Pyramisa Suites Hotel. At the time of writing this thesis, there were no details about the location of the festival in Sharm el Sheikh—which has been an annual event since 2012—but it is advertised on the organisers' website that there will be "sun and swimming" in addition to the workshops, competition and shows (Nile Group Events 2015). The decision to hold an annual summer festival in Sharm el Sheikh is probably due to the organisers recognising an opportunity to attract dancers that may otherwise have spent their vacation time and budget elsewhere if not for the opportunity to enjoy a sun, sea and sand holiday while furthering their dance education—killing two birds with one stone, so to speak.

According to Mohamed, approximately 200 or 300 people—the majority from Europe, Asia and Russia—attend each festival on average, though the number of course varies. Attendance numbers dropped during and after the revolutions because people were afraid to visit Egypt, and even Mohamed and Suzanne have cancelled their trips to Mohamed's homeland when the situation there was uncertain.

The format or structure of the Nile Group festivals are similar to other belly dance festivals in Egypt and around the world: they always feature dance workshops and shows, shopping and usually competitions as well. Live Arab music is also a big attraction, and is virtually a prerequisite in an Egyptian festival, though it is not always offered elsewhere.

As a regular attendee of belly dance events, I have observed that besides *raqs sharqi* or belly dance (see section 4.6), most festivals offer workshops in other dance forms as well. These are usually Egyptian and Arabic folkloric dances that belly dancers learn and perform in order to to exhibit variety in their repertoire; some examples are *raqs baladi* (Egyptian urban folk/social dance), *raqs al assaya* or *saidi* (folkloric cane dance from the Said or Upper Egypt), *raqs na'ashat* or *khaleegy* (dance from the Persian/Arabian Gulf characterised by head/hair tossing), *raqs al shamedan* (Egyptian candelabra dance), *raqs sha'abi* (dance to popular working-class music) and so on.

The shows feature the famous teachers or 'headliners' of the festival, as well as other guest dancers and festival participants—who perform solo or in groups, to recorded or live music. Competitions, if they are held, are usually incorporated into the shows; they offer an opportunity for dancers to showcase their talents, to earn approval and validation from the aforementioned famous teachers, and to earn the prestige of winning, of course. The champion is sometimes offered the chance to teach at the next festival.

Supporting elements such as comfortable (usually 5-star) accommodation, food and sightseeing tours are usually also arranged or at least offered by festival organisers. The participant may engage in multiple roles or identities while attending a festival, including those of student, performer, spectator, consumer, contestant and, of course, tourist. Her reasons for attending the festival would most likely include several or all of the following: to learn, to gain inspiration, to socialize, to exhibit or express herself, to consume, to enjoy, to reinforce her self-worth and to gain prestige.

4.5.1 Pilgrimages and festivals: historical and contemporary functions

Professor of tourism Andrew Holden suggests that tourism in secular societies can be seen as a ritual or sacred journey, sharing some characteristics with pilgrimage in that they are conducted with the aim

of spiritual fulfilment, that they require leisure time and financial resources, and that they are approved by society (Holden 2006, p. 146). Holden refers to Nelson Graburn, who suggests that tourism can be seen as a ritual involving leisure, travel and out-of-the-ordinary activities, undertaken during special occasions; a ritual which helps us define and identify what is ordinary and everyday life; a secular ritual that has "replaced the religious or supernatural experiences of more traditional societies" (Ibid). Holden also refers to Victor and Edith Turner, who describe the three-stage ritual process as follows: first, the separation from the routine/ordinariness of everyday life; second, the entry into a transitional, "rite of passage" where the order of normal life and its obligations dissolve, and new relationships are formed based upon a loosening and/or levelling of structures of social differentiation (age, gender, social class, etc.); and third, the state of *communitas*, which refers to the unique social bond between strangers who are brought together in a foreign environment by a common goal or fact—the fact that they are in some way travelling together or gathering in an unfamiliar place for a common purpose can give the special feeling or bonding of *communitas* (Ibid, pp. 147-148). In line with these ideas of pilgrimage and ritual, Egypt and in particular Cairo can be seen as a site of pilgrimage of sorts for dancers who ascribe to the Egyptian style of *raqs sharqi*, as people from different cultural backgrounds and nationalities travel to a place foreign to them for the same purposes: to learn to dance and to experience the culture and environment in which the dance is thought to originate. In the workshops, everyone is a student, and everyone is a dancer. Some dancers interviewed at the Nile Group festival in Cairo reported feeling a sense of solidarity and camaraderie, like they were part of a larger global phenomenon as they were surrounded by like-minded people from all over the world (McDonald 2011, p. 151). This sense of community can of course also apply to festivals outside of Egypt.

Pilgrimages and rituals have in common with festivals their separation from ordinary, everyday life. According to tourism geographer Bernadette Quinn, events and festivals are centuries-old significant cultural practices that reflect a need by people of all cultures to designate certain times and places for public, communal celebration (Quinn 2009, p. 485). These events tend to feature pleasurable activities or entertainment and are held to publicly celebrate some concept, happening or fact—thus attracting attention, creating interest, and enlivening places where they are held; in other words, they can function as tourist attractions and reinforce the status of places as tourism destinations, as they have done throughout history (Ibid).

Festivals, which are transient but usually recurring events, can function as an important way for communities to assert, reinforce and reproduce their collective identities—as a cultural group, a nation state and a sense of place—as well as social norms, cultural values and beliefs (Ibid). Such events can

also serve to support and maintain the image of established power (religious or secular) and endorse its institutions (Ibid); and festivals can also "both emerge from and reinforce a distinct sense of place" (Getz 2004, p. 419). An interesting example of this is festivals in Europe and the US that refer to Cairo and Egypt, reinforcing, supporting and maintaining Egypt's image as the center of belly dance: Cairo Festival Budapest (Hungary), Cairo By Night (Sweden), Egyptian Fever Festival (Poland), Egyptian Dream Festival (Austria) and NYCairo Raks Festival (US).

Many researchers have noted the proliferation of festivals and events in recent decades and have linked this growth to their tourism potential and the orientation of economies towards the consumption of experiences, among other factors (Quinn 2009, pp. 485-486). The belly dance scene is no exception to this explosion in growth; besides the Nile Group and Ahlan wa Sahlan festivals, there are other Egyptian events including the 'Raqs, of Course', Salamat Masr and Camp Negum Dance & Music festivals (all of which are held in Cairo; emerging from and reinforcing "a distinct sense of place", to quote Getz), and there is a significant and growing number in the rest of the world: Oriental Hype Festival (Finland), Rakkas Istanbul (Turkey), Eilat Festival (Israel), Oriental London Festival (UK), Oriental Passion Festival (Greece), Belly Dance China Superstars Festival, Heshk Beshk (Italy), Jawhara Oriental Festival (France), Las Vegas Bellydance Intensive & Festival (US), Rakkasah West (US), Tariq El Nougoum Festival (Russia), and so on.

5. Results & Analysis

In this analysis section I focus on 'big D' Discourse (as defined by Gee), as the aim of my analysis is to reveal how language is used to express beliefs, values and perspectives. As mentioned in section 2.2, the main discourses examined are the Discourse of tourism in Egypt and the Discourse of the belly dance festival.

The analysis is divided into two subsections: 5.1 will cover belly dancers' ideas of Egypt and their travels there, while 5.2 focuses on the belly dance festival. Parallels will be drawn between tourism discourse and that of the belly dance festival, showing where and how they overlap and interact. Throughout, I will also endeavour to show how a part of the Discourse of the Western female's belly dance practice builds on *Orientalist* discourse. I will argue and demonstrate that these discourses build on *colonial* discourse, which works on the assumption that unequal global power structures—which in turn have roots in the colonial era—have a significant effect on, and are in fact being perpetuated by, the international tourism industry.

Although the concept of *intersectionality* has been most prominently employed in gender studies, it is especially useful in helping us understand the underlying power relations between the different parties referred to in this thesis—by, for instance, taking into consideration their socio-economic privileges (or lack thereof), as well as their cultural identities and the associated values and discourses. I will attempt to uncover the complex multiple inequalities that are produced in the interactions between these parties by examining the interview texts through the lenses of *postcolonialism* and *intersectionality*, via James Paul Gee's discourse analytical framework. It is hoped that identifying and questioning these aspects of discourse that are problematic in terms of equity, this analysis will make a modest contribution towards mitigating the problem.

5.1 The Discourse of tourism in Egypt

In section 4.2, I mentioned LL Wynn's book *Pyramids & Nightclubs*, in which she outlines the two main types of tourism in Egypt, namely Western tourism which focuses on imaginations of Ancient Egypt and its monuments, and Arab tourism which involves more contemporary imaginings of Egyptian culture. I will attempt to show in this section that although the Western belly dancer's ideas of Egypt are generally speaking more inclined towards the contemporary due to their involvement in the dance, their imaginings are produced through a framework of postcolonial attitudes.

I would describe these imaginings, or this collection of ideas—which encompass certain values, activities, environments, institutions, etc.—using Gee's theoretical tool, *figured world*; i.e. they constitute the Egypt of the belly dancer's *figured world*. This *figured world* contributes to, for example, the choices belly dancers make when planning their trip to Egypt; what they do when they are there (social practices); the way they perceive, experience and talk about the country (*social languages*, *Discourses*), and so on.

5.1.1 A 'gateway drug' to a fascination with Egypt and Arab cultures

This subsection demonstrates how belly dance serves as a starting point for imaginations of Egypt and the development of Discourses that where the topics of belly dance, Egypt, Arab culture and tourism meet. For many belly dancers, their interest in the Middle East is very much connected to their involvement in the dance. When asked what drew them to belly dance, all the interviewees related how their involvement in the dance began:

> *I was in Spain, studying Spanish [...] and they had these afternoon activities that were not language related [...] So one of them was you could try bellydance. [...] Of course I had heard of it, but I had never thought about it or seen it or anything, I just tried it and was hooked.*

(Interview - Lisbeth, 29 October 2014)

> *During an office party, (name of a belly dance group) performed as a surprise, and... then I was hooked, I knew I wanted to learn how to belly dance. […] It was that simple. I had never seen it before, so...*
>
> (Interview - Helene, 7 November 2014 [my own translation])

> *Well, I finished school, I was thinking I have to do something physical. [...] So in the paper there is a class of oriental dance, and I went, and almost immediately, I was hooked. [me: Did you know anything about oriental dance before?] Nothing.*
>
> (Interview - Anneli, 26 October 2014)

Lisbeth, Helene and Anneli each state that their first encounter with belly dance made them 'hooked' on the dance. The use of the informal expression 'hooked', which means to be addicted/devoted to or obsessed with something, indicates that something about the dance holds a powerful attraction for them. Each of the ways they first came in contact with the dance was random, by chance, and they all admitted not knowing much about the dance before their encounter; this suggests that belly dance was something quite different from anything they had ever previously experienced. For Marjatta, her first encounter with belly dance was also by chance:

> *I was with my son we were in er... how do you say... where the children play/place (?), and on the other side they were playing the oriental music. And I don't know what happened to me […] when I heard the music, I just followed the music and when I saw the ladies dancing, and I was like, OK this is my thing, this is everything I want to be there […] very strange feeling, like I can't do anything except but follow.*
>
> (Interview - Marjatta, 26 October 2014)

The way Marjatta describes her encounter—that she didn't know what happened to her and that the music compelled her to follow it—gives the impression that she was enthralled by Oriental music and dance; again suggesting a powerful attraction to belly dance. The phrase "this is my thing, this is everything I want to be" underscores the fascination she felt (and still feels) for the dance.

The discourses produced by the women, of being 'hooked' and enthralled by belly dance brings to mind the way the Orient is often portrayed from a postcolonial point of view: seductive, exotic, mystifying, compelling; appealing to the emotions and imagination rather than logic and reason (Jonsson & Syssner 2011, p. 229).

As Karim Nagi observes, belly dance is like a 'gateway drug' that inspires people to take a greater interest in, and become enamoured by, other aspects of Egyptian and Arab culture (Nicole 2010); the women interviewed here are no exception. When asked whether their involvement in belly dance has led to other new interests, the women replied:

Things like wanting to... learn the Arabic language [...] And... I guess I have taken a deeper interest in, like, Middle Eastern-.. like everything, culture, geography, politics, history...
(Interview - Lisbeth, 29 October 2014)

I've been studying Arabic, yes, I've been taking some courses on Arabic, private and university courses. What else... and different dances also.
(Interview - Marjatta, 26 October 2014)

Yes, yes absolutely. To read more about what it means with Orientalism and all that. [...] So one wants to delve further into ... what all this stands for, really.
(Interview - Helene, 7 November 2014 [my own translation])

As can be discerned from Lisbeth's and Marjatta's quotes, the Arabic language and "everything Middle Eastern" are *sign systems & knowledge* that are privileged over others in the belly dance context; it is implicit that acquiring skill and knowledge in these areas are seen as desirable *social goods* when one is a belly dance practitioner. Helene's mention of Orientalism indicates not just a wish to deepen her knowledge about the issues surrounding the dance, but perhaps also to show her awareness of Orientalism and her cultural sensitivity, which may be an aspect of her *identity* as a serious dance practitioner. Cultural sensitivity, correctness and understanding are also significant *social goods* in the figured world of a 'serious' belly dancer. (McDonald 2010, pp. 83-84).

[...] you have to learn the music, of course, different kinds of styles and... rhythms... And after you kind of have learnt the music, then the normal European or American music is so boring!
(Interview - Anneli, 26 October 2014)

In Anneli's quote, Arabic/Oriental music and rhythms are privileged over European or American music within the context of the belly dancer's *figured world*. Knowledge and familiarity with Oriental music are seen as essential *social goods* that belly dancers "have to" acquire. Anneli however describes European or American music as 'normal' and 'boring', which puts Oriental music firmly into the 'Other' category in her *figured world*, an exotic, exciting and compelling *Other*.

When asked if the political/social situation in Egypt interest them, Anneli and Marjatta had this to say:

Anneli: Um.. it doesn't so much interest me, it just... pushes through.
[me: So you're not so interested, but when you hear "Egypt", you are a bit more aware...]
Marjatta: ... than if you hear "Uruguay" then you don't listen so much, but they say "Egypt" then you're like, "Oooh..."
Anneli: "...what's happened in Egypt? Oooh..."
[me: It's because of your connection to dance, that's why...?]
Anneli: Yes.
(Interview - Marjatta & Anneli, 26 October 2014)

In this segment, the discourse indicates that the interviewees' attention to the political and social situation in Egypt is part of their fascination, and the phrase "it doesn't so much interest me, it just... pushes through" shows that this awareness and attention does not originate in logic and reason, but instead from their emotional attachment to, and imagination of, the dance.

This fascination with *Other* cultures and *Other* lands—which is in contrast with the interviewees' 'normal', everyday life—is a manifestation of Orientalism (compare Bredström 2011, p. 109; Maira 2008, p. 335; Said 2003, p. 51). Even with an awareness of Orientalism—which interviewee Helene mentioned—Oriental culture and how it is perceived still continues to serve to create and reinforce Western identity (Said 2003). But this Orientalist fascination, which in some cases (such as with the interviewees) leads to a thirst for knowledge about the Middle East (albeit rather selective), can in turn lead to a deeper understanding and insight, eliciting greater affinity and appreciation for its cultures.

5.1.2 Tourism as a quest for experience and meaning

The previous section described how their involvement in belly dance has piqued the interviewees' curiosity about the Middle East, and in particular, Egypt. It follows that they would have already visited, or have the desire to travel to, the place that is commonly considered the 'source' of belly dance. When asked about their hopes and expectations from a trip to Egypt, each interviewee mentioned the desire to have an 'experience', a word commonly used in tourism discourse.

> *I wanted to see the pyramids, absolutely... the Egyptian Museum, I wanted to see of course... I wanted also to see the old bazaar... then I also wanted to see the Valley of the Kings […]. [me: what did you hope to gain from your trip to Egypt?] Nothing more than an experience... that is what one gets. Then one meets a lot of people that one gets to know in the bargain.*
> (Interview - Helene, 7 November 2014 [my own translation])

> *More experience. The culture. And the people also. All. Everything you can take from there... spiritual things... how do you say. I don't want to knock off the history things, bring the rocks home or something like that.... [me: Like you want to experience the atmosphere...] Ya.*
> (Interview - Anneli, 26 October 2014)

> *I would actually hope to... be able to... have first-hand experience of Egypt... actually. That is pretty much it. Of course I would liked to have also learnt some of the language, and some more dancing, but I mean, you kind of have to see how things go, maybe it's easy to get a hold of teachers, maybe it's really hard, maybe you learn a lot, maybe you don't learn very much at all... I mean.. but by being there I just hope to absorb... just have an experience of it.*
> (Interview - Lisbeth, 29 October 2014)

Helene, Anneli and Lisbeth want to have 'an experience' or 'more experience' in and of Egypt—not just by visiting popular tourist attractions, but also through encounters with Egyptian people, learning

some Arabic and 'absorbing' the atmosphere, culture and other intangible elements: 'spiritual things'. This brings to mind Erik Cohen's typology of experiences, which explains five different motivations that tourists have or *modes* that they are in when they go on vacation (Cohen 1979, cited in Holden 2006, p. 145). The one most relevant here is the *experiential mode*, through which the tourist searches for meaning away from his or her home society by having new experiences—while still feeling a sense of belonging at home (Ibid). Dean MacCannell theorises that tourism is a paradigm of modernity: tourism is a temporary escape from the monotony and existential emptiness of modern life; it is the search for 'different' and 'genuine' experiences, as well as 'authentic' places, cultures and people (cited in Tesfahuney & Schough 2010, p. 12). The practice of searching for meaning and 'authenticity' in an 'Other' land and culture reproduces and reinforces postcolonial relationships, as, according to Hazel Tucker and John Akama, it shows a desire to "fix the 'ethnic' identities of peoples in tourism destinations into perpetual 'Otherness'" (Tucker & Akama 2009, pp. 512-513).

The interviewees' discourses appear to reflect Cohen's experimental mode typology and MacCannell's theory; while they did not explicitly mention genuineness or authenticity, it is implicit that that is what they seek. Additionally, Lisbeth's discourse connects her desired Egyptian experience to dancing and learning, which frames the experience as a *social good* that can enhance her knowledge of Egypt, which is in turn a *social good* that enhances a belly dancer's status and reinforces her identity.

5.1.3 The friendly and 'funny' Egyptians

In the following passage, the Finnish interviewees describe what they thought of the Egyptian people. Anneli has encountered Egyptians both in Egypt and at dance festivals in and outside the country, while Marjatta's experiences have been with Egyptians in Finland and those she met at festivals. The differences between the interviewees' culture and Egyptian culture are highlighted.

> *Anneli: [Egyptians are] very friendly. And they have peculiar humour. Also in restaurants. You don't know them but they start to make jokes... if you let them.*
> *Marjatta: Speak funny English... normally they say "I like it too much". "How do you like this choreography? I like it too much" [laughs]*
>
> (Interview - Marjatta & Anneli, 26 October 2014)

Here, Anneli uses the word 'peculiar', which distances her from the Egyptians and their sense of humour and behaviour. 'Very friendly' is usually a positive description, but when combined with "you don't know them but they start to make jokes", it seems to signify some ambivalence. Marjatta uses the word 'funny' which could mean both amusing and peculiar/not normal; and saying that 'funny

English' is the norm for Egyptians implies that the way they speak English generally deviates from the (presumably Western) norm.

> *[me: And you also feel the same about Egyptian people? Very friendly... funny, and...] Yeah but there is something laying back there in.. in some of them... The friendship can have its price. [laughs] It's different than in Finnish culture, when you're friends, it's different. Sometimes there's something... waiting something behind. [me: Ah you mean they have other... they have expectations?] Yeah other kinds of expectations. Like for example with [name of Egyptian] when I invited her to my home, she expected that I'm serving her all the time. Like, things like that... We're friends, but it doesn't mean that I'm serving her. [...] It's the same with the Egyptian people that live in Finland, they think of friendship in a different way.*
>
> (Interview - Marjatta, 26 October 2014)

In the above passage, difference is once more emphasized, this time on the topic of friendship. The phrases "there is something laying back there", "there's something waiting behind" and "the friendship can have its price" suggest or subtly allude that there is some slyness, deviousness or insincerity on the part of the Egyptians. And this is compared to the interviewee's own Finnish culture (identity), where the opposite is implied. At the end of the excerpt, she once more differentiates the Finnish and Egyptian cultures. This differentiation and contrast is a classic way of describing and perceiving the *Other* (see section 3.1). In the example she provided, referring to the Egyptian friend she invited to her home, Marjatta expresses exasperation that they do not share the same idea of friendship and implies that her friend is in some way taking advantage of her hospitality by expecting to be served. What Marjatta does not consider (or may not know) is that in the Middle East, hospitality is an ages-old virtue; it is cultural practice and a matter of good manners to serve and treat all guests as very important persons (Schulman & Barkouki-Winter 2015; Shaheen 2015), which explains her Egyptian guest's expectations.

5.1.4 Mistrustful gazes beyond the tourist enclave

In this passage, Helene describes one of her trips to Egypt with her family:

> *When we had been outside [the tourist areas] when we went on vacation... when we had not been in Cairo... we had been in Hurghada, and where we went was not a tourist destination, so to speak. Yes... it was a bit unpleasant. We went outside the tourist enclave. [me: So it was on purpose...?] Yes, yes... we wanted to see how it looked like... where the Egyptians were... [me: The real...?] Yes, exactly... I didn't think that anything would have happened but it felt a bit unsafe in a way. [me: OK. So you wanted to go out, and it was a little unpleasant.] Yes, yes. And keeping in mind the political situation as it is right now, one should not go outside the tourist areas, I don't think so. I would not do that today, if I went there.*
>
> (Interview - Helene, 7 November 2014 [my translation])

Helene first identifies herself and her family as holidaymakers, a little different in relation to regular tourists because they purposefully ventured beyond the tourist enclave in a bid to observe the native Egyptians. She confesses that it was a little unpleasant or even scary (*otäckt* in Swedish), and that it felt a bit unsafe (*osäkert*). She also connects travel and tourism in Egypt to politics, placing particular significance and emphasis on safety. When asked what exactly made her feel unsafe, she replied:

> *It was probably more how one was looked at... how they gazed at one. [me: Was it just the gaze, or...?] Yes, yes. Like, a little suspicious... and one thinks that if something happens here, where would one go? One does not know the area. [me: But you are acquainted with the area in Cairo? Or in the tourist areas?] No. Not the first time, but later when one has been there several times, one knows it... in some way it felt that there were more tourists circulating there. [me: Where you could see people who were... like you.] Yes, exactly. However foolish that sounds... [me: So you felt safe.] Yes.*
>
> (Interview - Helene, 7 November 2014 [my translation])

Helene and her family felt disconcerted by how they perceived they were 'looked at'. Their intention was to observe, but they in turn became the observed. And she used some key signifying words in this passage: mistrustful or suspicious (*misstänksam*)—was the word she used to indicate that she was not received by the locals in the way she had expected. This brings to mind the colonialist image of 'the sinister *Other*' that saturates Western culture (Bredström 2011, p. 100), as well as three of the four cultural reactions to tourism described by Andrew Holden, based on Doxey's Irridex: *segregation* of tourists and locals; then *opposition* and *antagonism* by locals towards tourists (Holden 2005, p. 154). Helene experienced in Hurghada what Darya Maoz (quoted in Urry & Larsen) refers to as the *mutual gaze*, a concept which describes "the resistance and power of hosts/locals when interacting face-to-face with tourists", as a complement to Urry's concept of the one-way *tourist gaze*, which focuses on the power tourists exercise over places they visit (Urry & Larsen 2011, p. 204). Maoz argues that—in line with Foucault's power/resistance duality—the power relations between the locals and tourists is "complex and reciprocal", and that "both groups simultaneously undergo and exercise power" (Ibid, p. 205). This results in ambivalence on the part of the tourist, as is illustrated in this section.

The words 'unpleasant' or 'scary', and 'unsafe', in this context, signified that Helene found her experience outside the 'tourism enclave' to be rather negative (*situated meaning*). Safety (a prerequisite for relaxation) and respect (being treated in a pleasant manner) are important *social goods* for the majority of modern-day tourists, who generally expect and intend for their holiday to be pleasurable and leisure-oriented (Urry & Larsen 2011, p. 1; Syssner & Khayati 2010, p. 46). However, as interviewee Helene experienced and as Reiner Jaakson contends, fear and concern over personal safety have become in recent decades part of neocolonialist tourism in the contemporary 'Champagne

Glass World' (a metaphor for a polarised world of rich and poor), where "tourists may not always be welcomed and often are resented" (Jaakson 2004, p. 176-177; refer also to section 5.1.7).

The use of the words 'enclave' or 'enclosure' (*stängsel*) versus 'area' (*område*) is also of interest. In using the word 'enclosure', she indicates that she may have found the "screens" that demarcate tourist areas from non-tourist areas, limiting and contrived (see Syssner & Khayati 2010, pp. 46-47). But when she uses the word 'area', she seems to imply feeling a kind of safety in numbers in tourist areas, where there are other people like her, and where she feels she will be accommodated and protected because she is a tourist (see section 4.2 on tourists' privilege). The tourist enclave/area and its context can be described as a *figured world* where all the people working there are employed to "serve, accommodate and satisfy" tourists (Jonsson & Syssner 2011, p. 232); where the facilities and amenities such as accommodation, eateries and shops, and the activities and arrangements conform to standards that are in accordance to tourist' requirements or demands (Urry & Larsen 2011, p. 62); and where the visible and invisible 'screens' serve to protect tourists from a plethora of undesirable sounds, smells and sights—as well as from unwanted interaction with people who are neither tourists nor employed to serve tourists, people who may be unwelcoming and possibly even hostile (Syssner & Khayati 2010, p. 47).

5.1.5 The stereotype of the sexually aggressive Arab male

Among the expectations Lisbeth has if she were to travel to Egypt—most of which are understandably dance-related—is concern over the possibility of sexual harassment:

> *I would actually hope to... be able to... have first-hand experience of Egypt... actually. That is pretty much it. [...] Yeah... actually just... get an impression of the place, first-hand... including sexual harassment on the streets, which apparently seems to be very common. That is one of my slight concerns with this plan. It seems to be very common, people who live there talk a lot about it... women. [...] (laughs) I don't want to have sexual harassment, but I wouldn't worry so much about going alone if I went for a festival...*
>
> (Interview - Lisbeth, 29 October 2014)

Like Helene, Lisbeth places significance and emphasis on concern for personal safety, in Lisbeth's case even before she has even set foot in Egypt. She connects or bases her assumption that sexual harassment of women is very common in Egypt to "people who live there", presumably alluding to

information from dancers with whom she is acquainted on social networks such as Facebook, and media articles written about the issue[10].

Lisbeth does not explicitly mention men as the perpetrators of said harassment, but it is implicit that she means Egyptian men. She names women as the ones who “talk a lot about” it. She expects and worries that she would experience sexual harassment if she visits Egypt on her own, especially if it is outside the festival enclave and context (see 5.2.1 on the *festival enclave*).

While it is not unheard of for female tourists who travel alone to be subjected to "the sexualised and controlling gaze of local men" (Jordan & Aitchison, cited in Urry & Larsen 2011, p. 63), and English-language media/organisations report that sexual harassment and assault of women in public spaces is a problem in Egypt (see section 4.1), this discourse is in itself problematic from a postcolonial point of view. It brings to mind Edward Said's argument about the European cultural/colonial tendency to depict the Orient as uncivilised and savage, and reproduces the Orientalist stereotype of the lecherous Arab male (Maira 2008, p. 335). Intersectionally speaking, this discourse involves and focuses on the interaction between Western or other foreign women and Egyptian men, and disregards the fact that the sexual harassment and assault of women are not unique to Egypt, but occurs in Sweden and the rest of the Western world as well, where the perpetrators include Western men.

5.1.6 A DESIRE TO OBSERVE AND STUDY THE *OTHER*

In relation to their travels or possible travels to Egypt, Marjatta and Helene mentioned wanting to observe the ‘real’ Egyptians, where they usually go about their daily lives—in their “natural habitat”, so to speak. Section 5.1.4 covered Helene's experience of seeing “how it looked like... where the Egyptians were... ” (my translation, interview – Helene).

Marjatta, who has never been to Egypt, replies that the following is what she would like to see and experience there:

> *The normal people. (laughs) Because our teachers always say that see from them when they walk and when they talk and so... […] I want to observe the normal people living because I haven't seen it. Of course I want to be in the festival too [...]. I just want to walk in the street in Egypt. So I actually I don't care so much about the history as I say... It's ok but it's not what I... no camels, no tourist trips, no... just maybe a big show in the nightclub […]. The*

[10] This presumption is based on my personal observations, as being on some of the same social networks and social media groups as Lisbeth, I have also read articles and posts by other dancers about the issue of sexual harassment in Egypt.

> *band plays so hard and the dancer is original, that kinda of thing. The first priority of course is the people. So many years I have heard the stories.*
>
> (Interview - Marjatta, 26 October 2014)

She refers to her dance teachers, presumably Egyptian, who advise the students to observe the mannerisms of the Egyptian people—this is part of the non-Egyptian student's effort to dance more like an Egyptian (see section 5.2.2). Marjatta calls them "the normal people"; the situated meaning of the word 'normal' here is taken to mean the local Egyptians. As Urry & Larsson argue, observing or gazing at the locals/natives, and "to use and move through their everyday spaces and gaze upon them with curiosity" is something that tourists generally assume that they have the right to do (2011, p. 62). This can create among locals the feeling of being objectified under the gaze of tourists, feeling constantly watched, as if they are on display as they live their daily lives (Ibid).

The tourists' feeling of entitlement in treating the locals or the Other(s) as objects to observe and study is—according to Tesfahuney & Schough—a consequence of colonialism and empire-building, where the tourist is heir to the conqueror and colonialist (2010, pp. 14-15).

Of course, because Marjatta has never been to Egypt yet, she is just imagining what she would do when she is there; there's the possibility she may have an experience similar to Helene's (as described in 5.1.4)—curiosity, suspicion or even hostility from the locals, who clearly have the agency to gaze *back* at the tourist.

Marjatta also says "I don't care so much about the history […] no camels, no tourist trips, no", which demonstrates her exercise of the *privilege of selective vision*; this privilege enables her to only focus on what interests her, and to shut herself off from the other elements which are also part of the country she is visiting—including the political, social and economic situations (Syssner & Khayati 2010, p. 44). In practice however, the *privilege of selective vision* is most evident within the context of a tourist enclave or trip, where everything is designed to meet tourists' expectations, including the service (Ibid, p. 47). If Marjatta just "walks in the street in Egypt", outside the context of "tourist trips", she may not be able to completely overlook the aspects of the country that are not part of her imaginations of it, including its history, and its less appealing aspects.

5.1.7 The privileges of unconstrained mobility and immediate exit

In this subsection, I will first briefly outline the above-titled privileges—which exist as a consequence of existing unequal global power structures that have roots in the colonial era (Tesfahuney & Schough 2010, pp. 14-15)—then demonstrate how they are manifested in the interviewees' discourses. Global

mobility is a privilege enjoyed by a relatively small proportion of the world's population, due to various factors, chief of which are access to financial capital, and a series of international agreements that reduce the possibilities for people from poor countries to travel to rich countries (Syssner & Khayati 2010, pp. 40-41). The majority of this privileged group are Westerners, who enjoy the *privilege of unconstrained mobility*, that is, the freedom to travel from their rich homelands to poorer countries, or to other rich countries, and most fundamentally, the privilege to remain at home if so they choose: they risk little if they choose not to travel (Ibid). Contrast this with the situation of today for almost 60 million refugees and internally displaced people who have been forced to flee their homes and countries due to war, violence and persecution—the highest number since World War II (Graham 2015).

Interviewee Lisbeth has not been to Egypt, but would like to go "at some point". The following is her answer to how she would plan for a trip there:

> *I would probably start planning when it's actually getting a bit more... actually closer to reality. Right now I just have some vague thoughts that it would be nice to perhaps visit one of the festivals [...] in the optimal dream case scenario (I would like to) actually stay there for a month or two... living somewhere in Cairo for example and going to classes, like language classes on a daily basis, and taking private lessons with (dance) teachers as well.*
>
> (Interview - Lisbeth, 29 October 2014)

Like most tourists, Lisbeth focuses on what she would like to do during her eventual trip; it is implicit that she would not have much/any problems financing her trip or being allowed passage through border control to and from the destination. The reasons why she has not yet made her trip are personal (for example, work, relationships and so on), but the point is that she possesses the resources and the agency to decide for herself whether (and when) to stay in Sweden or to travel, and that she has no doubts or qualms that she will enjoy unfettered passage through man-made borders on her journeys—these are a matter of course for Westerners, and seen as their 'rights', but are not part of the realities of the majority of the world's population (Tesfahuney & Schough 2010, foreword; Syssner & Khayati 2010, pp. 39-44).

Marjatta has been planning to visit Egypt several times but has yet to do so due to personal reasons. Here she is asked about what impression she has of the country:

> *It has changed during the last years a lot of course because of the political situation, so I'm worried. Because I have been thinking of the people there (Finns living in Egypt), I know many and so... some have moved out of Egypt because of that. I don't know if I really can say if I want to travel there now, because yes, I want to go to Nile Group but I don't know about*

Egypt in that sense, it is scary. I look at the Al Jazeera news and then I wonder how it will be turn out...

(Interview - Marjatta, 26 October 2014)

Here again, there is no doubt at all that Marjatta has the resources and freedom of mobility to travel if and when she so pleases; she can choose to stay at home in Finland because she thinks that Egypt might be unsafe and 'scary' due to the uncertain political situation. If the majority of tourists share Marjatta's fears and act accordingly by avoiding travel to Egypt, the country's tourism industry would be badly hit, and the economy and by extension, the people of Egypt, would suffer—this scenario illustrates the neocolonial power structures that prevail today (see section 4.2). Both Marjatta and Lisbeth's quotes show that they exercise the *privilege of unconstrained mobility*.

In light of various incidences in recent decades involving terrorism targeting tourist areas (again, see section 4.2) as well as natural disasters such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami which cost many tourists their lives, interviewees were specifically asked whether they can expect assistance from their government if undesirable or dangerous situations arise while they are abroad. These are situations where the *privilege of immediate exit* applies; there is a range of institutions and practices that reinforces/builds on the idea that Western tourists have the right and possibility to, with immediate effect, leave a place when they no longer wish to be there (Syssner & Khayati 2010, pp. 47-51). The desire to leave can be caused by a diverse array of reasons, from transformative political/social events (e.g. ethnic conflicts, terror attacks), to natural disasters, to personal ones (e.g. illness, mishaps) (Ibid).

Naturally, I expect to receive some form of help from Sweden... to be given medical attention if one becomes injured, or... that I can get out of there or be accommodated somewhere if needed... that I would receive guidance... especially if there is major disaster when one is not as quick-thinking (as one normally would be)...

(Interview - Helene, 7 November 2014 [my own translation])

I'm assuming that as a Swedish citizen, if I'm in Egypt and if something really big happens I do assume that the Swedish embassy would help, as coming from an.. organised kind of country.

(Interview - Lisbeth, 29 October 2014)

[...] somebody in your government is worried if you are left alone in this kind of disaster.

(Interview - Marjatta, 26 October 2014)

Implicit in the interviewees' discourses is the belief that they have *the right to be tourists abroad*; that there are structures in place that make it possible for them to enjoy the tourism experience (Syssner & Khayati 2010, p. 51). And there is the belief and expectation that in the event of a disaster—natural or man-made, a multifaceted rescue apparatus would be set in motion to address their needs—this can

include political mobilisation, embassy services, information-dissemination structures, medical intervention and so on (Ibid, pp. 49-50). These beliefs and expectations are further reinforced by the mass media: the fates and suffering of tourists tend to receive the most attention during catastrophic situations even if their losses are trifling compared to those of the locals (Ibid, pp. 50-51). All this illustrates the power asymmetry between the Western tourist and the native inhabitants of the tourism destinations—an inequality that originated in the colonial era (Jonsson & Syssner 2011, p. 232).

5.2 The Discourse of the belly dance festival

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, belly dance festivals—which cater to foreign, mainly Western, dancers—constitute a niche in Egypt's tourism industry. This section will focus on demonstrating how the business of belly dance in Egypt (which, as outlined in section 4.5 encompasses dance classes, costuming and shows) is influenced by the demands of foreign dancers; this influence stems from the belly dance industry's reliance on income from these foreigners (McDonald 2010, p. 68). This reliance is part of a bigger context i.e. the dependence of Egypt on income from tourism, and is problematic from a postcolonial perspective, as it perpetuates past colonial structural relationships and reproduces global inequalities.

5.2.1 The festival as enclave tourism

This subsection shows how the typical Egyptian belly dance festival experience—with focus on the Nile Group Festival in Cairo—can be considered what political theorist Tim Mitchell describes as *enclave tourism*. According to Mitchell, "enclave tourism is required by the increasing disparity between the wealth of tourists and the poverty of the countries they visit"; the locals are excluded from these enclaves by the high prices and sometimes even physical fences and guards (Mitchell 1995, p. 10; see similarities in sections 5.1.4 and 5.1.6 on tourist enclaves and *selective vision*; and section 4.2 on tourism as neocolonialism). In an article about tourism and its effects on rural Egypt, Mitchell describes the enclave tourism arrangement now typical in Third World countries: the existence of a plethora of luxury hotels and resorts that offer not just accommodation and dining, but also amenities such as spas and fitness clubs, shopping arcades, bars and discotheques as well as excursions—concentrating tourist expenditure within the enclave (Mitchell 1995, p. 10). The following quote corroborates my assertion that belly dance festivals such as Nile Group are a kind of enclave tourism:

> *In Nile Group you can stay in the hotel the whole week. There is restaurants, there is... small bazaar... and then a pharmacy and... you don't have to go outside... if you don't want to. But then you're not in Egypt, really... if you're in a hotel.*
>
> (Interview - Anneli, 26 October 2014)

Another interviewee, Lisbeth, likens the festival to a ‘charter vacation’, which implies that festivals and festival sites are tailored to the presumed expectations and requirements of dancers visiting Egypt. This follows that the ‘charter vacations’ Lisbeth refers to are thus also a kind of enclave tourism:

> *I would go to Egypt preferably not only for a festival but actually more of the other things [...] I'm not sure if this is true, but to me it's like the difference between going on a charter vacation to a place or actually going there and living there for a while. And I feel that if you go to Egypt on a dance festival and make some excursions to the pyramids or go camel riding and go to one of the bazaars, of course you will have an experience of Egypt but it will be a bit more... selected... and more touristy... you know?*
>
> (Interview - Lisbeth, 29 October 2014)

By comparing dance festivals to charter vacations, and using the words ‘selected’ and ‘touristy’, Lisbeth (despite the fact that she had never before travelled to Egypt) indicates an awareness of the existence of tangible and intangible screens and fences that serve to shape, and indeed limit, the tourist's—and therefore also the visiting dancer's—experience of Egypt. She also demonstrates some resistance in partaking of this screened, limited, ‘touristy’ experience by saying that her purpose for going to Egypt would be for “more of the other things”, and “not only for a festival”.

In Lisbeth's discourse, it is implied that ‘selected’ and ‘touristy’ are the opposite of ‘genuine’ and ‘authentic’. By saying “but then you're not in Egypt, really... if you're in a hotel”, Anneli also demonstrates her awareness of the festival's limitations when it comes to providing dancers with a “real experience” of Egypt. A ‘real’, ‘genuine’ and ‘authentic’ experience appears to be what many dancers like Lisbeth and Anneli—who have been practitioners of belly dance for a longer time i.e. ten to twenty years—are searching for (see also section 5.1.2). Whereas those in the earlier stages of their exploration of the dance may focus mainly on learning how to dance, as the following excerpt from Lisbeth's interview demonstrates:

> *I can sometimes realise that I am being a bit... you know... have this Western... imperialistic... appropriative... sort of approach as well... especially like the early years, I had no clue about Egypt, I wasn't interested in Egypt, I just wanted to dance this dance, it was totally disconnected from the Middle East for me, except for the music... but I think I'm sort of realising more and more... the kind of patterns involved with that kind of view, and I don't want to be that, I don't want to appropriate the dance...*
>
> (Interview - Lisbeth, 29 October 2014)

Here, Lisbeth professes that she does not want to ‘appropriate’ belly dance by treating it as separate from the culture(s) from which it comes, expressing her awareness that doing so means that one is approaching the dance from an ‘imperialistic’, ‘Western’ perspective. Now that she has been a dance practitioner for a relatively long time, and having through the years obtained a greater appreciation for

Egyptian and Arabic culture, she aims to avoid ‘imperialistic’ and ‘appropriative’ discourses and practices by seeking ‘real’ and ‘genuine’ representations of these cultures.

Thus, on one hand, the interviewees are less keen on the fact that festivals offer a screened, limited, ‘touristy’ experience of Egypt. But on the other hand, they think that the same screens that keep them from experiencing the ‘real’ Egypt also offer them a measure of safety and protection, as is shown in this excerpt (part of which has also appeared earlier in section 5.1.5):

> *I wouldn't worry so much about going alone if I went for a festival [...] in a certain place with other people like you, it feels more... safe... or just more... protected rather.*
>
> (Interview - Lisbeth, 29 October 2014)

Like Helene's excerpt in 5.1.4, Lisbeth says that she would feel safer in a place where there are other people like her, i.e. tourists and/or foreign/Western belly dancers, in the festival enclave, which is screened off from undesirable elements. When asked why she chose to attend the Nile Group festival over the other festivals in Egypt, Helene replied:

> *[…] I felt comfortable with Mohamed and Suzanne... I knew who they were. And because it was the first time that one was going to travel abroad for a festival, one wanted to feel a little safer. And we had also heard that it was a good festival.*
>
> (Interview - Helene, 7 November 2014 [my translation])

Helene sees being personally acquainted with the Nile Group festival organisers before her trip as an advantage, as having contacts in the unfamiliar place to which she was travelling gave her an additional feeling of safety. This raises the question however as to whether Lisbeth or Helene would feel this apprehension about their personal safety if they were going to travel to one of the many belly dance festivals in Europe instead. Their ambivalence about Egypt, this place they feel simultaneously fascinated by and uneasy about, could be viewed as the characteristic Orientalist tension between desire and fear (Maira 2008, p. 335).

5.2.2 A dancer's pilgrimage, and to ‘be’ an Egyptian

As stated earlier in this paper, the belly dancer's travels to Egypt can be likened to pilgrimage; they are conducted with the aim of obtaining ‘an experience’, a kind of spiritual fulfilment (see section 5.1.2 för Anneli's ‘spiritual things’). For many belly dancers, like the ones interviewed for this thesis, the Egyptian style of belly dance is privileged over other styles—such as Lebanese or Turkish—because it is considered by them as the original or coming from ‘the source’. Thus, Egypt is also privileged over other Middle Eastern countries when it comes to being the most favoured destination for belly

dance festivals. When asked if she thinks that a trip to Egypt is a 'must' for every dancer, Helene replied:

> *Yes... if it is possible. If one is dancing that style... the Egyptian style.. it is the actual feeling that one has been there, where the roots are, so to speak […] I don't think that one learns anything new in the dance itself, but one can perhaps have this actual feeling if one can see the different places that one has heard about... yes... it is a bit of the same thing when it comes to tango... even if one goes to Buenos Aires it is no guarantee that there is better tango there than there is here in Sweden but... that one has been there, where it originated... so it is the same with belly dance in fact... yes... the actual feeling.*
>
> (Interview - Helene, 7 November 2014 [my translation])

"Actual feeling" is my own translation of the phrase *själva känslan* that Helene used several times in the above excerpt in an attempt to describe the precise, yet elusive and multifaceted feeling or experience, obtained by physically being in Egypt. This 'feeling' seems to be associated with some kind of progress or achievement (a *social good*) in one's dance journey. Lisbeth's answer as to why she wants to go to Egypt for a dance festival reveals the desire for a related experience:

> *[...] in the Egyptian festivals, I'm pretty sure they like, once in a while take you out to nightclubs... to actually see some of the big stars dancing in Egypt in an Egyptian context... more Egyptian context at least. That would definitely be a reason.*
>
> (Interview - Lisbeth, 29 October 2014)

For Lisbeth, seeing the "big stars"—presumably Egyptian, but also possibly foreign dancers who have became successful in Egypt—perform in an Egyptian nightclub context would be considered a valuable experience worth travelling for. In recent decades, these same Egyptian and foreign stars, who are based in Egypt, have also been travelling to festivals in other countries—including Sweden and Finland—to perform and teach; this raises the question as to why the Egyptian context is important. A likely answer is the quest for authenticity. As MacCannell suggests, "the tourist is a kind of contemporary pilgrim, seeking authenticity in […] 'other' places away from that person's everyday life" (MacCannell, cited in Urry 2010, p. 10; see also section 5.1.2 on how the search for 'authenticity' in an 'Other' land and culture reproduces postcolonial relationships). One could suggest the same about Helene's "actual feeling" of being in Egypt, that it is a quest for authenticity. Anneli's and Marjatta's discourses reflect this as well; when asked which aspect of attending a dance festival interests them most, they replied:

> *Anneli: To learn more... I usually take... Egyptian teachers... to learn the... Egyptian way. I want to... be an Egyptian* [all of us laugh]. *But.. just like... but... as close as possible.*
> *Marjatta: We try what we think is original... that we consider... the one we want to learn.*
> *[Me: So you consider Egyptian style the original?]*

> *Anneli: It's like when you are learning.. like, English... you learn English from your... Finnish teachers, but it's different, than if you go to England and America, you learn the original language. The same with dance and.. expressions.*
>
> (Interview - Marjatta & Anneli, 26 October 2014)

In the above excerpt, Anneli and Marjatta both state outright that they think the dance originates in Egypt, thus privileging the Egyptian style (or as Anneli says, the "Egyptian way" or expressions) over other styles. In their discourse, learning English from native English speakers is privileged over learning English from Finnish teachers, and therefore learning belly dance from Egyptian teachers is privileged over learning from non-Egyptians. With these comparisons, plus their statement on the origins of belly dance, Marjatta and Anneli reproduce and reinforce the Discourse that positions Egypt as the source and centre of belly dance, and the Egyptian style as the most authentic. In addition, their admiration for the Egyptian style is so profound, that Anneli's statement, "I want to be an Egyptian"—albeit done half-jokingly—demonstrates a longing to *be* the Other, which is a manifestation of Orientalism (compare Bredström 2011, p. 109 and Said 2003, p. 51).

5.2.3 The festival as a cultural product

In line with Cohen's ideas on 'commoditization' (cited in Tucker & Akama 2009, p. 514) and Tucker & Akama's reasoning of tourism as critical postcolonialism (Ibid), I would suggest that belly dance has evolved—from being once a 'cultural display' and 'cultural text' of *living traditions* and *lived authenticity*—to become also a 'cultural product' for external consumption, and to meet the demands of commercial tourism. Belly dance festivals in particular are such cultural products; it can be hypothesized that they were created for the consumption of foreign belly dance practitioners, as the attendance from Egyptians and other Middle Easterners is, and has always been, low (see 4.3.4). This subsection serves to verify this hypothesis. The following are the interviewees' replies when asked what components they think a dance festival should have:

> *It is after all the selection... the different types of dance styles that you get to try or see more of... meeting others who dance, of course... shopping* [laughs] *also an important part ...* [me: What do you think a dance festival should have?] *It's probably those three parts... there should be people... of course... there should be various dance styles and different teachers to choose from. Of course, I think it is great fun to go and watch the show afterwards as well. So the selection of teachers is very important. There should be some well-known Egyptian teachers, for example, or... from America they have had someone like that, super famous... it plays a major role. But it is always fun to get to know some teachers one has never danced with before too... it can be great fun, they are experiences after all...*
>
> (Interview - Helene, 7 November 2014)

Anneli: Good teachers, good shows.
Marjatta: [...] *it's high quality Egyptian teachers who are actively performing still or... somehow our favourite... at the moment who we think we learn most. Actively performing is very important. There are many good teachers who don't perform, but we don't get the same out of them.*
Anneli: And it's a plus if the venue is OK. Good floor for the workshops.
(Interview - Marjatta & Anneli, 26 October 2014)

Generally I expect a good festival to have a lot of good workshops and shows in the evening, with or without dinner depending on how fancy they are... or where they are... and usually there's something bazaar-like, um... yes. That's what I've experienced. If you're actually in Egypt I would perhaps expect them to help you arrange some excursions of different kinds.
(Interview - Lisbeth, 29 October 2014)

And the hotel has to be... It's nice if the workshops are close to the hotel, if they are very far. Sometimes they can be... Because dancers can't walk, they only can dance, you know [laughs]
(Interview - Marjatta, 26 October 2014)

A glance through the interviewees' responses confirms what is described in section 4.5; belly dance festivals are expected to offer three basic components: dance workshops, shows and shopping (bazaars). There should be workshops on various different dance styles—presumably by this, Helene means not just *raqs sharqi*, but also other styles such as *baladi*, *saidi*, *khaleeji* and so on; this may signify both a quest for novelty as well as to expand one's knowledge in dances from the Middle East. The word 'good' is used by almost all respondents, presumably to mean 'of a high quality', an attribute which is expected of the teachers, the shows, the workshops, the workshop venues, and the festival as a whole. 'Well-known' and 'super famous' teachers are also sought after, as Helene points out; and these teachers should also be 'actively performing', Marjatta opines, otherwise the students "don't get the same out of them".

In Helene's excerpt, she twice mentions other people as an expected component in a festival: "there should be people... of course" seems to imply that the event should be a well-attended; and "meeting others who dance" brings to mind what was written in section 4.5.1 about pilgrimage, ritual and the state of *communitas*. Supporting elements such as conveniently located/comfortable accommodation, dinners served during a 'fancy' show, and the possibility of excursions/sightseeing is also mentioned by Marjatta and Lisbeth. In short, dancers expect a pleasurable, comfortable and enriching experience at belly dance festivals, with some novelty thrown in for good measure. It is evident upon surveying the belly dance festivals in Cairo and elsewhere that festival organisers constantly strive to meet these demands.

While this interplay of supply and demand is nothing strange or unexpected—belly dance festivals are businesses after all—the discourse of the belly dance festival, if seen within the wider sociopolitical and economic contexts, is exclusionary to the local population, who may find the associated costs prohibitive, and who may shy away due to the stigma related to publicly practising a dance which is supposed to originate from their homeland (see 4.3.2 & 4.3.3). The fact that foreigners have the capital and the freedom to learn and practise this 'Egyptian' dance in Egypt—mainly for pleasure and self-actualization—while the great majority of the locals can't, tinges the whole situation with a certain dissonance.

5.2.4 Western-style pedagogy for an Oriental dance

As the belly dance festival is structured with non-Arab—particularly Western—dancers in mind, this accordingly includes the pedagogy used in workshops. When Arab dancers started to teach non-Arabs to belly dance, both at festivals and in private classes, they employed the "I dance, you follow" or "follow me" method of teaching (El Mouzayen 2001; Farid 2006). This method is how Middle Easterners traditionally learn the dance—by imitating a more experienced dancer, usually a relative, during social events, imitating dancers from movies and music videos, and improvising to music as opposed to learning a choreographed dance (see section 4.3.4).

But Western and other foreign dancers tend to prefer the structure which is common in Western-style pedagogy, for example, having the teacher break down each movement and explain the different components, learning technique, choreography, and so on (Farid 2006), as these excerpts illustrate:

> *[…] usually I wish they talked more about both the technique, and the cultural context a bit more... that would be really nice. […] 'cause a lot of the classes are just like the teachers doing a move, and you're supposed to follow, and just understand what it is... and how to do it. And they quite often don't even break it down, from a technique point of view they quite often don't break down a move very much. And I sometimes feel that it might be helpful if they did that a bit more... Sometimes there's actually like a language problem. Some of them do speak English well, and some really don't, like, not at all.*
>
> (Interview - Lisbeth, 29 October 2014)

> *I expect the teacher to go through the movements [...] when one is going for a choreography workshop... it is better that one learns the movements properly and maybe not learn the whole choreography... than go too fast through it and later not know what those movements are.[...] As it stands now, I would rather learn technique than a whole choreography. I think it alternates a bit when it comes to what one wants to learn... when I was at Nile Group, I certainly wanted to learn more choreographies... now it is more technique I'm after.*
>
> (Interview - Helene, 7 November 2014 [my translation])

The above are Lisbeth's and Helene's answers when asked what they expect to learn during a workshop; their answers confirm that technique and choreography are already being taught, but that there is still room for improvement, according to them. Many Egyptian dance teachers try—with varying degrees of success, evidently—to adopt these aspects of Western teaching methods to meet the demands and requirements of Western and other non-Arab dance practitioners who pay to study with them; this can be observed in belly dance festivals and courses around the world. The pedagogical style taught in belly dance festivals is definitely aimed towards Westerners, as there is a tendency among dance students of Middle Eastern origin to reject that pedagogical style (Högström 2010, p. 120).

Lisbeth proposes that there is the possibility that language barriers hinder the transfer of knowledge of the dance, and in her discourse she privileges the English language over the teachers' native language. However, I suggest that language differences might not be as much of an issue if the traditional "follow me" teaching style is used, in which case the dance student's own skills in observation and imitation would be key in the learning and mastery of the dance.

Advocates of the "follow me" teaching method cite that it imparts to students elements such as stage presence, musical interpretation, style and timing—as well as the subtle nuances that allow a dancer to embody that elusive and sought-after Oriental/Egyptian flavour or 'feeling' (Farid 2006; Luna of Cairo 2012). I would relate this Egyptian 'feeling' to what McDonald describes as "the ephemeral qualities of expression that transform a series of movements into a dance, and specifically into an Egyptian dance" (McDonald 2010, p. 109). Leila Farid, an American dancer who is married to an Egyptian musician, suggests that Western dancers who are not open to Eastern teaching methods may not be able to grasp the fine points and critical aspects of *raqs sharqi* (Farid 2006). This elusive Egyptian 'feeling' can be linked to what was discussed in section 5.2.2: the Egyptian way/expression/style, the quest for authenticity and the desire to "be" Egyptian—this means that ironically, the very quality that many Western dancers aspire to embody, eludes them partly because of the teaching method they favour and demand.

5.2.5 A DANCE FOR FEMALE LIBERATION AND EMPOWERMENT?

As outlined in sections 4.4 and 4.4.1, this dance is often experienced by Western and other non-Middle Eastern belly dancers as 'liberating' and 'empowering' for women. In the following excerpt, Lisbeth elaborates on the reasons why:

> *As a dance I feel it is liberating and empowering for women, especially when you go to the festivals. And like, there's like 99% women... and all doing their thing on stage, being really*

> *like, appreciated and you know, applauded and celebrated by the entire female audience... and just very very strong vibe of female strength, [...] from raw sexuality to sensuality, to just... ah... dignity, to strength, to like being cheeky, having fun, it's just like all in a huge mix... [...]. To me it's actually about liberty. About being allowed to express yourself in a way that is not dictated so much... not necessarily only by male taste... but also a lot about the female taste, I know the clothes are very sexy and you could say that that is dictated by male taste, but at the same time I feel a lot of women appreciate seeing women showing off their bodies and with all this bling [...] You're definitely allowed to be sexy but you're not sexy for the male gaze, at least not in this... uh... [me: Not in this context.] Yeah, exactly... you're really just really expressing yourself without that... stress or constraint or shame or whatever it is... that the male gaze would actually bring to the table. I love that.*
>
> (Interview - Lisbeth, 29 October 2014)

Here, Lisbeth highlights the state of *communitas* and sisterhood that dancers feel during festivals, in particular during the shows, where women appreciate, applaud and celebrate each other. There is usually a handful of male participants at every festival, but overwhelming majority are women. Lisbeth sees the festival as a safe and supportive environment to express 'female strength' and a range of emotions and expressions. She places particular emphasis on what she experiences as women feeling at liberty to express their sexuality and sensuality through dance and through wearing sexy dance costumes, without the "stress or constraint or shame" that "the male gaze would actually bring to the table". This indicates that Lisbeth—and thus also implying women in general—feel constrained and suppressed by the *male gaze* in everyday life, in situations outside the dance class and the dance festival. As McDonald asserts in her dissertation, "...dance is a place outside ordinary life for women to explore alternative constructions of femininity that may include expressions of sexualised femininity that are inexpressible in daily life" (2010, p. 203).

In the following excerpts, Helene and Marjatta also describe how dance allows them to explore alternative constructions of femininity:

> *It is a dance that makes one feel good in the body... it is very feminine... so it's a bit to affirm that side of one's own ego... another way to express oneself than in normal everyday life.*
>
> (Interview - Helene, 7 November 2014 [my own translation])

> *All the women they looked so beautiful to my eyes, because they were strong and content in themselves and... there's so much joy in that class, so that I see that OK... Yeah, I want to try... [...] I wanted to be one of them, of course.*
>
> (Interview - Marjatta, 26 October 2014)

These excerpts demonstrate how Helene and Marjatta utilise belly dance as a way to express their femininity. Marjatta's and Lisbeth's texts in this section indicate an admiration for feminine strength and confidence (Lisbeth's "dignity", Marjatta's "content in themselves"). For many dancers, belly

dance is both an outlet for and a source of femininity, sensuality, self-actualisation, self-respect and self-confidence—hence it being attributed with being a tool for female liberation and empowerment.

In the interviewees' discourse, the experience of liberation and empowerment in relation to the practice of belly dance is enjoyed mainly by the Western/non-Middle Eastern female, and not the Egyptian/Arab female. While it is not in itself wrong for Western dancers to perform and utilise belly dance in this manner, the fact that Westerners are vastly overrepresented in the field of an Oriental dance, while Middle Easterners are under-represented, makes it problematic. The Egyptian belly dance teachers, who receive respect and accolades within the festival enclave and the figured world of the belly dancer, still face stigmatization in their own society and the Arab world (see 4.3.2 & 4.3.3). And while Middle Eastern women do dance during social occasions, making dance a career and/or performing in public spaces is frowned upon or completely prohibited, depending on the prevailing norms in specific cultures during specific periods.

6. Discussion & Conclusion

The research questions I put forth in the introduction chapter concerned how colonial power structures and relationships continue to shape Egypt's tourism and cultural products; whether dancers from Sweden and Finland (countries which did not directly participate in the colonisation process, according to Eriksson et al 1999, p. 17) have colonialist/Orientalist perceptions of Egypt; and how Western dancers/tourists exercise the privileges they possess (Syssner & Khayati 2010, pp. 37-49), as visitors or potential visitors to Egypt.

In order to answer these questions, I have analysed the text using James Paul Gee's discourse analytical framework, by deconstructing it into different components or *building tasks*, complemented by *theoretical tools*. To make this a critical discourse analysis, I combined textual analysis with the sociopolitical theory of postcolonialism, complemented with an intersectional approach, with the aim to reveal "the role of discursive practices in the maintenance of the social world" (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 63); these practices include the creation and reproduction of unequal power relations between different groups.

I have drawn parallels between tourism discourse and that of the belly dance festival. The demand for belly dance lessons and belly dance festivals as well as tours to the pyramids, camel rides, and so on comes largely from Westerners and other non-Arab foreigners. Belly dance festivals are likened to

tourist enclaves. Organisers of dance festivals, Egyptian dance teachers, costume ateliers and so on are reliant on the patronage of foreign dancers, and are therefore influenced by their demands and requirements. As mentioned in section 5.2, this reliance is part of the bigger tourism context, and is problematic from a postcolonial perspective, as it perpetuates past colonial structural relationships and reproduces global inequalities. I wish to emphasize, however, that it is not as simple as this, as the world is characterised by many different power relations, and that the postcolonial dimension of the international tourism industry is merely one of them, albeit an important one.

Consideration must be given to the Egyptian people's own agency, their enterprise and their way of preserving their own culture. While their cultural phenomenon or product—dance—is being influenced by foreign dancers who want to learn it, and who wish to embody the elusive Egyptian touch, the Egyptians also have the opportunity or a degree of power to influence in which direction the dance goes, in terms of costumes, dance style, which music is deemed popular and so on. Being aware of the different aspects and analysing the interplay of influences and power relations can contribute to the negotiation of more balanced and mutually beneficial relationships.

The second research question concerns the way that Western belly dancers view and talk about Egypt and belly dance—i.e. their social and discursive practises—and how this contributes to constructing Western imaginations of Egypt. The analysis reveals that their perceptions and discourses are to some degree embedded with *Orientalist* tendencies. Here I must emphasize that these are only the discourses of a few dancers who may have more empathy for and interest in the Middle East than the average Swede and Finn. My purpose for writing this thesis is not to place blame on any individual for the inequalities that characterise both the belly dance and tourism businesses, but rather to reveal how deeply ingrained attitudes and prejudices shape and influence society. It has been a challenging task, as I have not only examined the Discourses produced by my fellow dancers, but have also had to study those that I produce myself, as the researcher is part of the discourses she examines (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 22).

I have also shown that the Western belly dancer's reality is shaped by certain discursive practices which have afforded her the agency or power to perform a range of social actions that the majority of Egyptian dancers cannot. These discursive practices and social actions manifest in the forms of the privileges of *voluntary/unconstrained mobility*, *selective vision* and *immediate exit* (per Syssner & Khayati's 2010 text). It is important however to remember that—as stated in the section on limitations, 2.6—the stories and discourses of the Egyptian dancers are excluded from this thesis.

At the end of the day, Western and other foreign dancers retain the privilege of choosing to indulge their imaginations and fantasies of Egypt and its culture, appropriating the elements they desire; they can use belly dance as a tool for empowerment and to openly practise it; and they can choose simply to end their practise of the dance. For the majority of Egyptian dancers however, belly dance is their livelihood, and the dance's associated discourses and social practices—namely the stigma it carries—within the Egyptian societal context are their reality. Where does the awareness of these inequalities lead us to? Awareness is a step towards change, as according to Jørgensen & Phillips, "changes in discourse are a means by which the social world is changed" (2002, p. 9).

In an ideal world, a person who practises dance from a culture other than their own should continually educate themselves on the art form, its discourses and social contexts. It is of course not realistic to expect this of every dancer, but with continued research, combined with respect for the cultures from which it comes, belly dance can be a tool by which cultural understandings can be negotiated (Swidler, cited by McDonald 2010, p. 215). Greater empathy, deeper reflection and contemplation, and a determination to understand other cultures would go a very long way to a more just and peaceful global society.

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7.3 Interviews

- Mohamed, conducted by the author, 26 October 2014
- Marjatta & Anneli, conducted by the author, 26 October 2014
- Lisbeth, conducted by the author, 29 October 2014
- Helene, conducted by the author, 7 November 2014

7.4 Other sources

- Dancers - Mirayat el-Masrah (2007), [film] El Ayn Production
- The Bellydancers of Cairo (2006), [DVD] Studio: Ark 21

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix A: Interview guide for dancers

Background & involvement in oriental dance

- What is your age?
- Where do you live?
- What do you work with?
- How long have you danced/when did you start dancing oriental dance?
- What is your involvement in oriental dance? *(teacher, performer, student? full time, part time?)*
- What drew you to oriental dance?
- How do you feel about oriental dance?
- Why do you continue to dance?
- Has your involvement in oriental dance led to other new interests? (eg. Arabic, sewing, etc)
- What are your experiences/contacts with fellow dancers from Western countries?

The Egyptian Experience

- How many times have you been to Egypt? How long was the (usual) duration of your trip(s)?
- What was your impression of Egypt before your trip?
- Does the political/social situation in Egypt interest you? Do you keep updated about it?
- Have you had contact/experiences with native Egyptians in and outside the festival?
- What do you think of the Egyptian people?
- How do you think oriental dance is regarded in Egypt?
- How did you plan your trip to Egypt? Did you consult with other dancers or check online forums? - What were your expectations? *(hotel, journey, experience?)*
- What did you see or would you like to see/experience in Egypt?
- What did you hope to gain from your visit to Egypt?
- What aspects of the trip were you happy/satisfied with?
- What aspects of the trip were you **not** happy/satisfied with? Did you experience difficulties?
- Would you go to Egypt again? Why?
- Have you visited any Middle Eastern/North African country other than Egypt? Which one? Was it in relation to oriental dance?
- Do you know/read up on safety procedures for travel? What kind of help do you expect if an undesirable event *(eg. war, natural disaster)* occurs while you are on holiday?

The Nile Group Experience

- Which aspect of attending a dance festival interests you most?
- What components would you expect a dance festival to have?
- Why did/do you want to go to Egypt for a dance festival? Which aspect interests you most?
- Do you/have you attended oriental dance festivals in your country/countries other than Egypt?
- How do the dance festivals in Egypt differ from those in your own country/other countries?
- How did you hear about the Nile Group festival?
- Why the Nile Group festival (vs others)?
- How did you choose your workshops?
- What do you expect to learn during a workshop? *(technique, background info, lyrics translation, cultural info, styling)*
- What do you expect from the teacher during a workshop?
- Did you engage in any activities other than dance during your trip? If so, please describe.
- Did you go out of the festival area or out of the tour context to see the "real" Cairo/Egypt? Did you have any desire to? Why?
- Do you think going to Egypt is a "must" for every belly dancer?
- Is there anything else you would like to add or ask me?

8.2 Appendix B: A note on the term 'belly dance'

The term ʻbelly danceʼ as used in this thesis refers primarily to *raqs sharqi*—which translates to ʻOriental danceʼ or ʻEastern danceʼ in Arabic—unless indicated otherwise. I use the term ʻbelly dancersʼ to describe people who practise belly dance; this includes different levels of involvement and engagement—students as well as teachers and performers who are hobbyists, semi-professionals or professionals, practising part-time or full-time. From here on in this subsection, I will use the words placed within inverted commas—like so: ʻbelly danceʼ—to refer to the term.

Although ʻbelly danceʼ (or sometimes ʻbellydanceʼ) is arguably the most common and popular term to describe this dance in America, Europe and the rest of the English-speaking world, it is laden with controversy and its use is debated among dancers and academics alike (McDonald 2011, p. 95). Its usage in Cairo began at the turn of the twentieth century (Nieuwkerk 1995, p. 39), which is fairly recent for what's purported to be the world's oldest dance. One of the reasons for the debate surrounding ʻbelly danceʼ is due to it being a misnomer; as with all dances, belly dance involves the whole body, although there is perhaps a relatively greater focus on the hips and abdomen in belly dance as compared to other dances.

Wynn claims that many belly dance practitioners from Europe, Australia and the United States find the use of ʻbelly danceʼoffensive (2007, p. 217). Among these dancers is the renowned Morocco (the stage name of Carolina Varga Dinicu[11]), who in an interview described ʻbelly danceʼ as "an insulting misnomer" coined and exploited by Sol Bloom, entertainment director of the Chicago World's Fair in 1893 to promote his shows (Rakha 2006; McDonald 2010, p. 95). The following quote, attributed to the Egyptian-born dancer Nadia Gamal, is posted on the popular website, Shira.net (*Quotations About Dance*, 2014) and has been quoted by other dancers on their websites; it can be seen as an attempt to distance belly dance from its unsavoury ʻhoochy koochyʼ, Orientalist past:

> "*I am NOT a belly dancer. I have never been one, and never will be. What I do is not what Hollywood vulgarly calls 'belly dance', but it's art. I have traveled the world to prove that my dance is not a dance of the belly but a refined, artistic dance full of tradition, of dreaming and beauty. Oriental dance is primarily an expressive dance; in that resides the beauty."*
>
> - attributed to Nadia Gamal in an interview in Scoop magazine, Lebanon (year unknown)

In a lecture titled "Lauren of Arabia", Egyptian dancer Karim Nagi[12] criticises the widespread use of the term, arguing that using ʻbelly danceʼ instead of *raqs sharqi*, the Arab term for the dance, is a form of de-ethnicization which disassociates or divorces the dance style from its origins (Nagi 2011 – see video on page).

In the United States and the United Kingdom, dancers who wish to avoid the term ʻbelly danceʼ have taken to calling what they do 'Middle Eastern dance' or less commonly 'Arab Dance' or 'Arabic Dance' (from personal observations of websites, online forums and social media groups). Those who choose to use these terms over 'Oriental dance' possibly possess a desire to avoid Orientalist connotations, especially after the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (McDonald 2011, p. 96). Here again, Karim Nagi objects to the use of the term 'Middle Eastern dance' because, he contends, "it comes from Egypt, why should the whole Middle East get the credit?" (Nagi 2011 – see video). Interestingly, while the term 'Oriental dance' is less popular among English speakers, I have observed that many Swedish dancers who are well-educated in the dance—meaning that their dance involvement has led to a deeper interest in the culture from which it originates—seem to prefer *orientalisk dans* over *magdans* (literal translation of 'Oriental dance' and ʻbelly danceʼ from Swedish). In spite of the debates about, and attempts to quell, its usage, ʻbelly danceʼ remains the most common or popular phrase to refer to this dance among the general public and even academics.

[11] Dinicu is considered an authority—by herself, but also by many Western dancers—in Oriental dance in North America and in many other places (Rakha 2006; Bio, Morocco & The Casbah Dance Experience 2015)

[12] Nagi is a native Egyptian drummer, DJ, composer and folk dancer who promotes and fosters the study of Arab dance in the USA as the director of the Arab Dance Seminar.