

British Travelers and Egyptian ‘Dancing Girls:’ Locating  
Imperialism, Gender, and Sexuality in the Politics of  
Representation, 1834-1870

by  
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## Abstract

This project examines representations of two categories of Egyptian female entertainers, the *'awâlim* and *ghawâzî*. By situating Egypt's 'dancing girls' in relation to the socio-cultural context of nineteenth-century Britain, it seeks to determine how gendered dynamics of power were culturally constructed and negotiated around these women. Such an approach breaks from previous historiographical contributions to the topic of Egyptian female entertainers by considering the wider implications of imperial power, gender, and sexuality within the politics of their representation. Chapter Two analyzes the cultural significance of the 1834 banishment of the *'awâlim* and *ghawâzî* from Cairo, and proposes alternative historical perspectives. Chapter Three explores parallels drawn by British travelogue authors between Egypt's female entertainers and bourgeois archetypes of masculinity and prostitution. Finally, Chapter Four contemplates the impact of Egyptian 'dancing girls' upon British society and interprets the typecasting of the *'awâlim* and *ghawâzî* as indicative of underlying insecurities relating to imperialism and desire.

**Keywords:** *'awâlim*; *ghawâzî*; Egypt; Britain; imperialism; politics of representation

*I dedicate this thesis to the bright memory of Ryan Catt.*

*(August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1992 – September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2015)*

*You probably would have found this thesis super boring, but I still wish with all my heart that we had the chance to share a laugh about it. I miss you Ry-guy, thanks for being such an amazing friend.*

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Jean-Léon Gérôme, *The Dance of the Almeh*, 1863

## Chapter One: Introduction

Prior to the turn of the nineteenth-century in Ottoman Egypt, there existed two distinct and long-established categories of female entertainers, the *‘awâlim* (singular: *‘alma*) and the *ghawâzî* (singular: *ghazîya*), respectively delineated by socioeconomic class and training. The *‘awâlim* (meaning “learned women” in Arabic) initially held reputations as accomplished and cultivated vocal performers and formally trained reciters of poetry in the households of the Ottoman-Egyptian elite, while the *ghawâzî* (translating literally as “conqueresses”) were widely acclaimed for their public dancing on city streets, in coffee houses, or at festivals and religious *mûlids*.<sup>1</sup> While the *ghawâzî*, also known as “the *‘awâlim* of the poor,” danced unreservedly without veils in front of crowds of men and women, the *‘awâlim* would perform exclusively for and among upper class women within the confines of a private home or harem.<sup>2</sup> Eighteenth-century travelers such as Carsten Niebuhr, Claude Étienne Savary, and Richard Pococke were among the first Europeans to describe witnessing the *‘awâlim* and *ghawâzî*; however, these two categories of female entertainers did not become a considerable point of curiosity and anthropological interest among European observers until they were encountered by the scientific and cultural experts who participated in the Napoleonic Expedition to Egypt between 1798 and 1801. These scholarly participants in the French campaign quickly established the *Institut d’Égypte* in Cairo, through which, in the view of the scholars who participated in this venture, a more academically sophisticated, and consequently more authoritative approach to the study of the East was developed; one that was intent on defining, confining, and gaining a monopoly over the cultural representation of Egypt.<sup>3</sup> The publications emerging from the *Institut d’Égypte*, particularly those included in the monumental collaborative work *Description de L’Égypte*, played a critical role in exposing a romanticized rendition of Egypt to inquisitive European and North American

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<sup>1</sup> Karin Van Nieuwkerk, “*A Trade Like Any Other*”: *Female Singers and Dancers in Egypt*; (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), p. 26. *‘Mûlids*’ are religious holidays in celebration of Islamic holy figures.

<sup>2</sup> Judith E. Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 150.

<sup>3</sup> Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa*; (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.) p. 17.



audiences, ultimately inspiring an enduring foreign interest in all things Egyptian and arguably helping prompt the novel phenomenon of tourism to this part of the Ottoman Empire. It was within this early nineteenth-century context of nascent ‘Egyptomania’ and an Anglo-French imperial rivalry that British travelers began to contribute substantially alongside their French predecessors and counterparts to the representation of Egyptian ‘dancing girls.’

Historian Martin Anderson locates the development of British tourism in Egypt at the culmination of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, out of which Britain emerged as a dominant global power, its middle and upper class citizens financially and geopolitically poised to venture abroad.<sup>4</sup> In the years immediately following Britain’s military victory over France, innovations in modes of transportation, the development of travel infrastructure such as lodgings and historic sites, and, most notably, the explicit encouragement of foreign travel by Mehmed Ali Paşa the Ottoman governor-general, or *vāli* of Egypt, made this province newly accessible and safe for tourists.<sup>5</sup> By the time an overland route to India was established in the 1830s, British tourism in Egypt had begun to flourish, and continued to grow exponentially throughout the century with the advent of steam travel in the mid-1840s and with the inauguration of Thomas Cook’s highly successful tours in 1869.<sup>6</sup> As historian Lisa Pollard notes, this post-1815 intensification of travel coincided with the materialization of “a new obsession with Egypt, and ... new categories through which the country could be analyzed.”<sup>7</sup> By means of these new categories of knowledge, an eroticized imagery of the Egyptian ‘dancing girl’ was rapidly cultivated by foreigners and widely circulated, supplementing the burgeoning genre of Orientalist fantasy and sparking a lustful infatuation among male audiences throughout the Euro-Atlantic world, who sought to realize their desire through the sexual conquest of the *‘awālim* and the *ghawāzī*. In Britain, this eroticized ‘dancing girl’ imagery was predominantly transmitted through the emergent travel literature industry, which was

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<sup>4</sup> Martin Anderson, “The Development of British Tourism in Egypt, 1815 to 1850,” *Journal of Tourism History*, Vol. 4, No. 3, (14 September 2012) p. 261.

<sup>5</sup> Anderson, “The Development of British Tourism in Egypt,” pp. 261, 262.

<sup>6</sup> Anderson, “The Development of British Tourism in Egypt,” pp. 260, 264.

<sup>7</sup> Lisa Pollard, *Nurturing the Nation: The Family Politics of Modernizing, Colonizing, and Liberating Egypt, 1805 – 1923*; (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 50.

consolidated as a body of works primarily intended for middle and upper class consumption between 1815 and 1840, by which point, steam printing had made the publication and dissemination of books far cheaper.<sup>8</sup> The resulting travelogues and guidebooks had a profound discursive impact, to the point that many journeys were subsequently made with the deliberate intention of witnessing and representing the performances of the infamously sexualized ‘dancing girls.’<sup>9</sup>

Partly as a result of the proliferation of representations that excessively sexualized these women, the once celebrated professional reputations of Egyptian female performers were steadily undermined until, by mid-century, the terms *‘awâlim* and *ghawâzî* had become highly derogatory and synonymous with prostitution among Europeans, while the once-evident distinction between the two categories of female entertainers was almost entirely eroded. Increasing British and Egyptian perceptions of these women as problematic resulted in the imposition of various dimensions of direct and indirect control over the bodies of female entertainers in Egypt, most notably in their systematic marginalization in 1834 when Mehmed Ali Paşa banished all public dancers from Cairo.<sup>10</sup> Following their exile to the poorer *fellahin* villages of Upper Egypt, the *‘awâlim* and the *ghawâzî* were prevented from access to their former metropolitan clientele, and became largely dependent upon the financial contributions of foreigners for their basic survival, therefore often tailoring their performances to popular colonial narratives of sexual conquest and erotic adventure.<sup>11</sup> Although the exile of ‘dancing girls’ was later

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<sup>8</sup> Anderson, “The Development of British Tourism in Egypt,” p. 264.; Susie L. Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed; (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. xix.

<sup>9</sup> Many British travelers to Egypt, such as Isabella Frances Romer, Bayle St. John, William Henry Bartlett, Richard S. Ferguson, and Charles Tilt, Sir William Henry Gregory, and Catharina Fouche actively sought out the female entertainers of Egypt, and the reality witnessed was frequently recounted as a great source of disappointment to their previously held expectations. Sophia Lane Poole definitively addresses her audience’s previous knowledge of, and interest in, Egypt’s female performers, stating: “you have heard and read of the Arab dancing, which is far from delicate.” Sophia Lane Poole, *The Englishwoman in Egypt: Letters From Cairo*, Vol. II; (London: Charles Knight and Co., 1844) p. 22.

<sup>10</sup> Van Nieuwkerk, “*A Trade Like Any Other*,” p. 32.

<sup>11</sup> Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, p. 152.; Van Nieuwkerk, “*A Trade Like Any Other*,” p. 34. An example of this can be found in the development of a dance known as the ‘wasp dance’ or ‘bee dance’ which, as will later be described in more detail, entailed the removal of all the dancer’s clothing at the impetus of a fictitious stinging insect trapped within.

rescinded by Mehmed Ali's grandson 'Abbas Paşa in the mid-1850s and Egyptian female entertainers were no longer restricted from performing in Cairo, the reputational damage had been done.<sup>12</sup> Once a vibrant part of urban Cairene culture, the expectations surrounding Egypt's 'dancing girls' were irreversibly altered, their audiences became increasingly composed of foreigners, and in response the professional repertoire of these women evolved between the mid-1830s and late-1870s to increasingly include the possibility of sexual acts in exchange for money during or after a dance.

This project studies the interaction between middle and upper class British travelers and Egyptian 'dancing girls' in relation to imperial power, gender, and sexuality. In contrast to other historiographical contributions to the *'awâlim* and the *ghawâzî*, it considers the politics of their representation throughout the nineteenth-century, exploring how and why these women came to symbolize a threatening embodiment of moral and cultural decay within this particular iteration of British imperialist discourse. In line with such a focus upon the relationship between British travelers and the *'awâlim* and *ghawâzî*, this thesis is premised upon several interrelated questions that ultimately seek to identify how gendered dynamics of power were culturally constructed and negotiated around the bodies of Egyptian female entertainers throughout the nineteenth-century. Firstly, drawing upon the case study of Mehmed Ali Paşa's 1834 banishment of female public dancers and prostitutes from Cairo, Chapter Two: *Contextualization and Historiographical Reappraisal* examines the cultural significance of this historical moment and questions the extent to which existing historiographical approaches to the exile of 'dancing girls' offer a sufficient explanation. Chapter Three: *Parallels with Masculinity and Prostitution in Travelogue Representations of 'Dancing Girls'* focuses on British travelogue authors' incessant condemnation of Egyptian 'dancing girls' as transgressive and questions the significance of parallels drawn between these women and conventionally understood bourgeois archetypes of masculinity and prostitution. Finally, building upon this British imperialist politicization of gender and sexuality, Chapter Four: *Impacting the British Metropole and*

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<sup>12</sup> Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, p. 153.; Van Nieuwkerk, "A Trade Like Any Other," p. 36.

*the Typecasting of 'Dancing Girls'* outlines the impact of Egyptian female entertainers upon British society itself, and interrogates contributions to the typecasting of the 'awâlim and ghawâzî as indicative of underlying insecurities relating to imperialism and desire.

## Historiography

Unfortunately, due to the nonexistence of sources authored by Egyptian female entertainers themselves, 'dancing girls' have been long presented as passive and voiceless in historical narratives.<sup>13</sup> The cultural marginality of these women and the lack of available written records produced by the 'awâlim and ghawâzî has therefore made it difficult to locate elements of Egyptian female entertainers' awareness of and interaction with systems of oppression. As a result, scholarly contributions to the topic of the Egyptian 'dancing girl' have been sparse. Two isolated chapters from Judith E. Tucker's *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, and Karin van Nieuwkerk's '*A Trade Like Any Other*': *Female Singers and Dancers in Egypt*, constitute the most comprehensive studies on this subject to date.<sup>14</sup> Yet, both Tucker and van Nieuwkerk primarily provide a social history and seek to render Egyptian female entertainers historically *visible* without considering the wider implications of imperialism, gender, and sexuality within the politics of their representation. I believe that in focusing specifically upon representations of 'dancing girls' as politicized, this project can illuminate a rich but understudied aspect of British imperial history.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Neither the 'awâlim nor the ghawâzî produced any written records, which is likely due to literacy rates in the Ottoman Empire, which remained very low throughout the nineteenth-century, with only 0.2 percent of Egyptian women literate by as late as 1897; Beth Baron, *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender, and Politics*; (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth Century Egypt*; Van Nieuwkerk, "*A Trade Like any Other.*"

<sup>15</sup> The type of British imperial history here under study is distinct from the political, military and financial control undertaken by the British following their occupation of the Ottoman province of Egypt during the 'Veiled Protectorate' period between 1882 and 1914. Instead, this project focuses upon the cultural dimension of imperialism, as relates to representation and discourse.

As a means of generating a more comprehensive understanding of how female entertainers were situated in relation to the socio-cultural and political context of nineteenth-century Britain, and in order to address these broader representational issues of power, gender and sexuality, the third and fourth chapters of this project will emphasize the centrality of these women to British imperial history in Egypt. I argue that the degree of popular attention garnered by the *'awâlim* and *ghawâzî* in Britain, the various documented attempts by both British commentators and Egyptian administrators to repress, silence, and condemn these women, and the frequency of British artistic and literary portrayals of 'dancing girls,' evinces their symbolic significance and necessitates a renewed historiographical approach to Egypt's female entertainers. By focusing primarily upon the interactions between middle class British travelers and Egyptian 'dancing girls,' with an emphasis upon the politics of representation, I hope to present an alternative approach to the history of the *'awâlim* and *ghawâzî*, and to reaffirm the iconographic significance of these women in nineteenth-century contestations of gender, sexuality, and imperialism.

In Chapter Two, my project builds upon the work of historians of the Ottoman Empire such as Madeline C. Zilfi, Heather Sharkey, Eve M. Troutt Powell, Alain Mikhail, Ali Çaksu, Liat Kozma, and especially Dror Ze'evi in order to contextualize the historical position of female entertainers with the eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century Egyptian socio cultural milieu.<sup>16</sup> In this chapter I engage most comprehensively with the historiographical approaches of Karin van Nieuwkerk, Judith Tucker, and Khaled Fahmy, to the topic of Mehmed Ali's 1834 exile of public dancing women in order to elaborate

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<sup>16</sup> Madeline C. Zilfi, *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire: The Design of Difference*; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).; Heather Sharkey, *Living with Colonialism: Nationalism and Culture in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*; (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Eve M. Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan*; (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Alain Mikhail, "The Heart's Desire: Gender, Urban Space and the Ottoman Coffee House," in ed. Dana Sajdi, *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee*; (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014); Ali Çaksu, "Janissary Coffee Houses in Late Eighteenth-Century Istanbul," in ed. Dana Sajdi, *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee*; (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014); Liat Kozma, *Policing Egyptian Women: Sex, Law, and Medicine in Khedival Egypt*; (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011); Dror Ze'evi, *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourses in the Ottoman Middle East 1500 – 1900*; (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.)

my own analysis of this event.<sup>17</sup> By contrast, Chapters Three and Four are primarily concerned with historiography pertaining to the interaction between British imperialism and the *'awâlim* and *ghawâzî*. The vast majority of the secondary literature discussed in these two latter chapters is derived from historians of nineteenth-century Britain. Scholars such as Nina Attwood, Ben Griffin, Catherine Lee, Anne McClintock, and Susie L. Steinbach provided valuable insights into the historicization of middle class Victorian attitudes towards prostitution and conceptions of normative masculinity.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, the theoretical frameworks outlined in Mary Poovey's *Urban Developments*, Joanna de Groot's "Sex and Race," and Malgorzata Luczyńska-Holdys' *Soft Shed Kisses* were especially helpful in the development of my own analytical focus.<sup>19</sup>

## Methodology

For the purposes of this thesis, I have chosen to focus specifically upon Britain's imperial relationship to Egypt's 'dancing girls' for several reasons. Foremost in this rationale is the limited scope of this project, the length of which does not lend itself to a comparative study of French perspectives on Egyptian 'dancing girls.' Towards including this French perspective, one could draw on a vast corpus of secondary scholarship been conducted on France in relation to nineteenth-century Egypt and Orientalism, including Jan Cole's *Napoleon's Egypt: Invading the Middle East*, Samir Saul's *La France et*

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<sup>17</sup> Van Nieuwkerk, "A Trade Like Any Other;" Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth Century Egypt*; Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army, and the Making of Modern Egypt*; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>18</sup> Nina Attwood, *The Prostitute's Body: Rewriting Prostitution in Victorian Britain*; (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011); Ben Griffin, *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain: Masculinity, Political Culture and the Struggle for Women's Rights*; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Catherine Lee, *Policing Prostitution, 1856-1886: Deviance, Surveillance, and Morality*; (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*; (New York, Routledge, 1995); Susie L. Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*.

<sup>19</sup> Mary Poovey, *Urban Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in mid-Victorian England*; (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Joanna de Groot, "Sex and Race: The Construction of Language and Image in the Nineteenth Century," in ed., Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall, *Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century*; (London: Routledge, 1989); Malgorzata Luczyńska-Holdys, *Soft Shed Kisses: Re-visioning the Femme Fatale in English Poetry of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*; (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013).

*l'Égypte de 1882 à 1914*, Ahmed Youssef's *Bonaparte et Mahomet: Le Conquérant Conquis*.<sup>20</sup> Secondly, my inability to read in European languages other than French prohibits a more comprehensive inclusion of German, Italian, and Greek representations of the *'awâlim* and *ghawâzî*, although the corresponding body of sources is also quite substantial. Although I had initially hoped to employ my ability to read classical Arabic, the current unpredictability of the political climate in Egypt and the resulting inaccessibility of the Egyptian National Archives have necessitated the prioritization of a British perspective on 'dancing girls' within this thesis. Despite such linguistic and archival limitations, this particular focus on the nineteenth-century relationship between British travelers and the *'awâlim* and *ghawâzî* allows me to examine the implications of imperialism in this specific historical context, and to analyze the politics of representation surrounding Egyptian 'dancing girls' in considerable depth. Finally, I acknowledge that in examining a historical topic that spans over half a century, the tendency to generalize presents a significant challenge. To the best of my ability, I have endeavoured to demonstrate that perspectives throughout the period were contested and changing, and concepts such as the cult of domesticity were far from firmly established throughout much of the nineteenth-century.

While conducting research at the Middle East Centre Archives at St. Antony's College, Oxford and the National Archives in Kew, I was able to access an abundance of nineteenth-century British textual sources on 'dancing girls,' including periodicals, private letters, and travelogues, as well as a multitude of visual sources such as paintings, photographs, and postcards. However, despite my success in British archives, I remained confronted by the distinct absence of records written by female performers in Egypt. In conjunction with the illiteracy of the *'awâlim* and *ghawâzî*, the persisting obscurity of these women's lives is a result of "the stigma attached to such activities, [which] militated against official recognition of these women in the court records or elsewhere."<sup>21</sup> In other words, the licentious reputation that quickly became associated with Egypt's

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<sup>20</sup> Juan Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt: Invading the Middle East*; (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Samir Saul, *La France et l'Égypte de 1882 à 1914: Intérêts économiques et implications politiques*; (Paris: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 1997); Ahmed Youssef, *Bonaparte et Mahomet: Le Conquérant Conquis*; (Monaco: Rocher, 2003).

<sup>21</sup>Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, p. 150.

female dancers and singers rendered them silent and passive within the archives, although they were almost certainly neither. The lack of sources produced by Egyptian female entertainers necessarily places certain limitations on my project from its conception. In particular, this means that the vast majority of my primary sources on Egyptian female entertainers will be mediated through the distorting prism of bourgeois British male privilege and power. This clear asymmetry of power will inform how I read these texts. As this project will primarily be concerned with the politics of representation, I approach my sources from a position of scepticism that necessitates a critical analysis of the silences and distortions inherent within many of these visual and textual sources, and reading these omissions for intended meaning and possible impact. I endeavour to understand representation as an adaptable process, not fixed or rooted in any particular form, and not always deliberate. Yet I also understand representation as contributing to a collective body of images and stereotypes that enduringly retain their shape and inform prejudice. In a similar vein, Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall argue that textual and visual representations are the keys to understanding how boundaries of gender and sexuality are defined.<sup>22</sup> They emphasize the importance of “reading the meanings” of the political implications that inform representations of women, in particular, as critical to understanding how “challenges to and reassertions of masculine power” operate.<sup>23</sup> I follow Mendus and Rendall in recognizing the politics of gender and sexuality that underlies representations of women, and I further argue that in relation to Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ an imperial politics was also at play.

This thesis is primarily organized according to theme, yet also follows a loose chronology. Chapter Two begins by considering the historical relationship between the *‘awâlim* and *ghawâzî* and performance culture within an Ottoman-Egyptian context, situating Egyptian female entertainment in relation to discourses on sexuality and morality that prevailed in the Ottoman Empire during the centuries leading up to, and including, the period under study. It then moves on to examine the significance of

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<sup>22</sup> Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall, “Introduction” in ed., Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall, *Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century*; (London: Routledge, 1989) p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 7.



Mehmed Ali's 1834 decision to banish all female public dancers and prostitutes from Cairo, as this event arguably laid the epistemological groundwork for a later British politics of representation enacted around the bodies of the *'awâlim* and *ghawâzî*. In doing so, I evaluate a series of possible reasons why female performers may have been included in the *vâli*'s decree, with a discussion of Mehmed Ali's state-building efforts, his agenda of military conquest, and agitation among the religious *'ulamâ*'. Specifically, I propose that Egyptian female entertainers, particularly those who performed in public, represented a cultural threat to Mehmed Ali at a time of heightened diplomatic and military vulnerability for his rule. I also consider Mehmed Ali's banishment of public dancers from Cairo as related to his broader goal of Egyptian dynastic state building, in which his government assumed a far more interventionist role in re-conceptualizing the function of women's bodies as purely reproductive, and asserting control over the reproductive process.

The third chapter is primarily concerned with analyzing the parallels drawn between the *'awâlim* and *ghawâzî* and masculinity and prostitution in nineteenth-century British travelogues. Firstly, it examines travelers' perceptions of Egyptian female entertainers as financially independent, behaviourally unsubmitive, and with proclivities towards smoking tobacco and excessive drinking, all of which British commentators vociferously denounced as unfeminine. Secondly, it scrutinizes British authors' discomfort with Egyptian 'dancing girls'' ostentatious dress, conspicuous application of cosmetics, refusal to veil themselves, pronounced visibility in public spaces, and participation in performance culture, which predictably led to travelers to associate these women with stereotypical Victorian prostitution. I propose that British travelers' well-documented disparagement of Egyptian female entertainers as too masculine and too similar to prostitutes should be considered as a reflection of wider societal insecurities pertaining to the maintenance of patriarchal systems of power. In particular, 'dancing girls' were positioned in travelogues as antithetical to conventional nineteenth-century domestic ideology in their transgression of idealized British womanhood, which emphasized marriage and childbearing.

Finally, having examined the discursive function of travelogues, the fourth chapter will attempt to discern the cultural impact of representations of Egyptian female entertainers in mediums such as fine art, theatre, photography, pornographic texts and erotic images upon British society, with a specific focus upon imperialism, desire, and commodity culture. This chapter will engage with Joanna de Groot's argument regarding the complicated effects of desire upon imperialism, by suggesting that the popular sexualization of Egyptian 'dancing girls' in Britain had adverse and unintended reverberations, as it precipitated British travelers' recognition of the extent of their infatuation with these women and acknowledgement of the erotic power of the *'awâlim* and *ghawâzî*. I argue that travelers' desire for sexual intimacy with the transgressive figure of the 'dancing girls' exposed the instability of imperial dominance, and thereby compelled British commentators to attempt to contain such subversive female behaviours within familiar paradigms. In particular, this entailed associating Egyptian 'dancing girls' with ancient Egypt, classical antiquity, and archetypes of *femmes fatales* in order to render Oriental fantasies of these women less real, and therefore more palatable for British consumption. This chapter will also demonstrate that Egyptian female entertainers were likewise complicit in developing and perpetuating a story that similarly catered to the fantasies of travelers. Evidence suggests that 'dancing girls' were well aware that they could benefit financially from deliberately gratifying such Orientalist fantasies and affiliating themselves with a romanticized origin narrative rooted in the *Arabian Nights*.

## Chapter Two: Contextualization and Historiographical Reappraisal

In 1806, the British politician George Annesley, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Mountnorris, was sitting in his tent in the Egyptian town of Fuwa, writing an entry in his journal when “a little girl about nine years old, and two men to play on the usual instruments, came to the tent door.”<sup>24</sup> The girl danced before the Earl but, unfortunately, her performance attracted the attention of a “drunk” and “very riotous” Albanian soldier who “declared that Christians had no business to have a girl in their tents dancing, and that he would take her out by force.”<sup>25</sup> From these remarks there ensued a situation of escalating violence, with pistols drawn before the soldier was subdued and the local governor was sent for. One of the Albanian soldiers who had attempted to restrain his agitated comrade persuaded the Earl to allow him to take the ‘dancing girl’ away with him, for “he said her life would not be safe if the soldiers got her, as she would be punished for being the cause of the dispute.”<sup>26</sup> Shortly after the girl had been removed from the scene (her safety presumed by the Earl, but never established), the instigating soldier reappeared with a gang of men, who proceeded to “beat” the Earl’s attendant and “cut at him with their sabres.”<sup>27</sup> The Earl recounted that in their attempts to flee “a shot was fired after [his] servant... and another at the Captain’s servant.”<sup>28</sup> In an attempt to defuse the violence, the Earl’s companion explained that they were “friends of Mohammed Ali and Taher Pacha,” however one of the attacking party furiously replied that he “despise[d] the beards of both of them.”<sup>29</sup> Ultimately, the Earl and his men escaped to the home of the local governor who promised to bring the dispute over the ‘dancing girl’ to the attention of Mehmed Ali, the governor-general (*vali*).<sup>30</sup> This vignette is remarkable as it demonstrates that ‘dancing girls’ could be contentious and culturally polarizing figures, and neatly showcases the myriad tensions between Mehmed Ali, his subjects, and foreign voyeurs. As Edward

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<sup>24</sup> George Annesley, Earl of Mountnorris, *Voyages and Travels in India, Ceylon, the Red Sea, Abyssinia, and Egypt, in the years 1802, 1803, 1804, 1805, and 1806*, Vol. III; (London: W. Bulmer & Co., 1809), p. 444.

<sup>25</sup> Annesley, *Voyages and Travels*, p. 445.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 446.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 447.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 448.

Daniel Clarke, an English clergyman, observed in 1800, the “practice of the *Almehs* may be entitled to some notice... indeed, the part they sustain in the scale of society in Egypt is so considerable, and the partiality shown to them so inveterate, that it is impossible to give a faithful account of the country without some allusion to these women.”<sup>31</sup> Clarke’s remarks must be approached with some degree of scepticism given his exteriority to the Egyptian society he claims to be so intimately familiar with. However, in some degree of accord with Clarke’s perception of the cultural and social importance of the ‘dancing girl,’ this chapter will make the case that female entertainers in Egypt were not politically insignificant, particularly in the eyes of Mehmed Ali. I argue that the potential danger inherent in the cultural politics surrounding public female performance and the newly determined need for the implementation of heightened state control over women’s bodies reconstituted the role of female entertainers as antithetical to Mehmed Ali’s vision for Egypt.

Just before the Nile began its tri-annual flood in May of the year 1834, Mehmed Ali issued a decree to banish all prostitutes and public dancers from Cairo and relocate them to smaller Southern towns.<sup>32</sup> In 1835, famed British Orientalist Edward William Lane wrote that “public female dancing and prostitution have at length been prohibited by the government in the beginning of June, in the previous year.”<sup>33</sup> This was corroborated in the Egyptian iteration of the Popular Geographies book series published in 1839, which stated that the “*Ghazeyih*... have acquired, by the recent report of almost every traveler, a discreditable notoriety; but their performances have been lately prohibited by the Pacha.”<sup>34</sup> In 1837, Richard William Howard Vyse, a British soldier and Egyptologist, considered “the suppression of the dancing girls” to be “an extraordinary instance of the Pacha’s despotic authority, and of the promptness with which it is put in

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<sup>31</sup> Edward Daniel Clarke, *Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia, and Africa*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., Vol. V; (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1817), p. 168.

<sup>32</sup> Khaled Fahmy, “Prostitution in Egypt in the Nineteenth-Century,” in ed. Eugene Rogan, *Outside In: Marginality in the Modern Middle East*; (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), p. 78.

<sup>33</sup> Edward William Lane, *An Account of the Manner and Customs of the Modern Egyptians: Written in Egypt During the Years, 1833 – 1835*; (London: Alexander Gardner, 1895), p. 94.

<sup>34</sup> Popular Geographies, *Egypt: A Familiar Description of the Land, People, and Produce*; (London: William Smith, 1839), pp. 217, 218.

force.”<sup>35</sup> Vyse further informed his readers that “the duty which [the ‘dancing girls’] paid as a license in Cairo was levied upon the rest of the inhabitants; and no disturbance of any kind ensued, although their exhibitions formed a considerable part of the amusements of all classes.”<sup>36</sup> As Vyse did not visit Cairo until 1835, his claim that the Cairene people passively accepted the departure of public female dancers is unverifiable. However, Mehmed Ali’s Egyptian subjects would have come to fear his reprisals should they openly voice dissent. As historian Khaled Fahmy has argued, Mehmed Ali was a brutal ruler who openly reviled his own subjects, and who, despite facing violent opposition to his policies, was indifferent to the suffering that his ambitious state-building agenda caused the majority of Egypt’s population.<sup>37</sup> In reference to the Governor General’s “power so despotic,” Lane asserted that “women detected infringing this new law are to be punished with fifty stripes for the first offence; and for repeated offences, are to be also condemned to hard labour for one or more years.”<sup>38</sup> Like Vyse’s commentary, the specific details provided by Lane regarding the consequences for public dancers who chose to remain and perform in Cairo cannot be verified without consulting the National Archives of Egypt, which is beyond the scope of this study; however, given the governor’s record of violently punishing other forms of resistance to his agenda, it could be expected that any insubordination by the *‘awâlim* and *ghawâzî* would not have been easily tolerated by Mehmed Ali’s regime.

As discussed in the Introduction, beginning in the early nineteenth-century the once celebrated professional reputations of Egyptian female performers were steadily undermined until, by mid-century, the terms *‘awâlim* and *ghawâzî* had become highly derogatory and synonymous with prostitution among most European travelers. Historians are left to speculate as to the causes of this trend among Egypt’s female entertainers, or ‘dancing girls’ as they were frequently referred to by British travelers. Mehmed Ali’s 1834 edict stands as a pivotal moment in the historical trajectory of these women and,

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<sup>35</sup> Richard William Howard Vyse, *Operations Carried on at the Pyramids of Gizeh in 1837: with an Account of a Voyage into Upper Egypt*; (London: James Fraser, 1811), p. 251.

<sup>36</sup> Vyse, *Operations Carried on at the Pyramids*, p. 251.

<sup>37</sup> Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha’s Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army, and the Making of Modern Egypt*; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p 11.

<sup>38</sup> Vyse, *Operations Carried on at the Pyramids*, p. 251; Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 94.

indeed, one of the few times that they were ever directly addressed by the state (which is not to say that they were politically unimportant).<sup>39</sup> Throughout the nineteenth-century, rumours circulated among travelers as to the rationale behind Mehmed Ali's banishment of female entertainers from Cairo. Some believed that female entertainers were forced to leave because they had become too "numerous," while others blamed "the evil effects resulting from their licentious performances," "the effects produced upon the good people of Cairo by their dissolute habits" and "the indecency of their exhibitions, and the immorality of their lives."<sup>40</sup> Still others looked to the influence of the Cairene religious authorities, with Eliot Warburton speculating that "the Moolahs, or Moslem divines... objected to [the 'dancing girls']; not on account of their impropriety, but on the plea that the profane eyes of the 'Infidel' ought not to gaze upon women of the true faith."<sup>41</sup> Similarly, William Henry Bartlett suggested that "the Mussulman doctors [were] opposed to the scandal" and Sir John Gardner Wilkinson suggested that the exile of the "*Almehs*" occurred once "the doctors of Islam took alarm" to the state taxation of what Lady Duff Gordon refers to as "the wages of sin."<sup>42</sup> However, the above rumours, all of which were recorded at least a decade after the '*awâlim* and the '*ghawâzî* were banished from Cairo, do not provide a credible nor a sufficient explanation for the inclusion of public female entertainers alongside prostitutes in the 1834 edict as they tended to be based upon unsubstantiated gossip and misinformation.

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<sup>39</sup> I have looked into whether or not the radical kadızadeli reformers in early eighteenth-century Cairo pontificated against Egyptian female entertainers, and although the kadızadeli appear to have been concerned with music and dance in Sufi religious worship, I have found no record of a direct diatribe against the '*awâlim* and '*ghawâzî*; Madeline C. Zilfi, *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire: The Design of Difference*; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 39.

<sup>40</sup> Eliot Warburton, Esq., *The Crescent and the Cross; or, Romance and Realities of Eastern Travel*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., Vol. I; (London: Henry Colburn, 1846), p. 294; Charles Tilt, *The Boat and the Caravan: A Family Tour Through Egypt and Syria*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed; (London: David Bogue, 1849), p. 137; Adam Steinmetz Kennard, *Eastern Experiences Collected During a Winter's Tour in Egypt and the Holy Land*; (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longman, 1855), p. 124; Isabella Frances Romer, *A Pilgrimage to the Temples and Tombs of Egypt, Nubia, and Palestine, in 1845-6*, Vol. I; (London: Richard Bentley, 1846), p. 136.

<sup>41</sup> Warburton, *The Crescent and the Cross*, pp. 294, 295.

<sup>42</sup> William Henry Bartlett, *The Nile Boat; or, Glimpses of the Land of Egypt*; (London: Arthur Hall, 1849), p. 115; John Gardner Wilkinson, Sir, *Modern Egypt and Thebes: with a Description of Egypt; Including the Information Required for Travellers in that Country*, Vol. II; (London: John Murray, 1843), p. 268; Lucie Duff Gordon, Lady, *Letters from Egypt 1863-65*; (London, Macmillan & Co., 1865), p. 94.

Certainly, as is evidenced by the following vignette, travelers were not given any privileged access to the political machinations of Mehmed Ali. In 1837, Prince Hermann Ludwig Heinrich von Pückler-Muskau, a German nobleman, wrote about an encounter with Mehmed Ali in which the Prince directly critiqued the governor's recent banishment of female entertainers:

“Forgetful that it is quite against the rule to speak to Musulmans of the fair sex, I very thoughtlessly told the Viceroy that... I had found one thing which his Highness had done which did not please me, namely, that he had so strictly and suddenly forbidden the poor Almehs, who represented a peculiar feature of Egyptian nationality, from continuing their profession of dancing and singing. The deadly pale countenance of the interpreter, and the terrified looks of those among the company who understood French, instantly made me aware of my blunder, and I felt the blood rush to my face, but there was now no help for it; and the less so as Mehemet Ali, whom nothing escapes, immediately perceived that something extraordinary had occurred, and, turning to Artim Bey, he demanded to know what I had said. Artim Bey (who would otherwise perhaps have made some modification of my words, though it is dangerous for the interpreter to misrepresent the sense of a phrase addressed to the Viceroy), with an embarrassed look, stammered out my unfortunate speech, which I would have given a good deal of money to recall... Without the slightest change in his countenance, turning to me with his usual friendly smile, he said, ‘I do not understand this question; who and what are Almehs!’ There was a dead silence. ‘Ah! Ah!’ exclaimed he, suddenly, as if recollecting himself, ‘you doubtless mean the public musicians.\* Well, that is a matter which concerns my director of police, and if he has been harsh towards these people, they have probably given him sufficient cause. However, I will inquire into the matter; for I do not recollect that this affair has ever been brought before me.’<sup>43</sup>

Mehmed Ali is here shown to feign complete ignorance on the topic of the *‘awâlim* and the *ghawâzî*, and appears to deliberately divert the Prince's critique to the “public musicians” who often accompanied female entertainers.<sup>44</sup> Yet, the fearful response of everyone present indicates that references to the *‘awâlim* and the *ghawâzî* were unwelcome and possibly dangerous. As Mehmed Ali sought to create the impression among travelers that he was a leader whom “nothing escapes,” his professed lack of awareness appears all the more contrived when juxtaposed with the horrified reactions of

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<sup>43</sup> Hermann Ludwig Heinrich von Pückler-Muskau, Prince, *Egypt Under Mehemet Ali*, Translated by H. Evans Lloyd, Esq., Vol. I; (London: Henry Colburn, 1845), pp. 205, 206. [\* corresponds to the following footnote in Pückler-Muskau's text: ‘The Almehs are usually attended by male musicians, who are often summoned, without them, to amuse the company at Turkish entertainments.’]

<sup>44</sup> Pückler-Muskau, *Egypt Under Mehemet Ali*, p. 206.

those around him.<sup>45</sup> This carefully guarded response suggests that the governor general considered the 1834 exile of female entertainers as politically delicate and unsuited to foreign scrutiny. During Mehmed Ali's rule, travelers to Egypt were rarely, if ever, provided with insight into the inner workings of governance and were largely external to contemporary debates rendering their political assessments predominantly fragmentary and vague.

Early nineteenth-century European travelers' accounts were generally unable to distinguish between the performances of the *'awâlim* and the *ghawâzî*, indicating both a degree of cultural ignorance as well as the inaccessibility of most foreigners, especially those who were male, to the private interiors of elite Cairene households where the *'awâlim* would typically perform. This meant that, prior to 1834, the majority of travelers to Egypt would only have witnessed the public performances of the *ghawâzî*, although many continued to incorrectly refer to popular dancers as *'awâlim*. Lady Lucie Duff Gordon, a British aristocrat who lived in Egypt between 1863 and 1865 in an attempt to relieve the symptoms of her chronic tuberculosis, wrote the only account I have yet encountered that provides a clear example of a foreigner witnessing a true *almé* perform in a journal entry dated from November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1862.<sup>46</sup> Duff Gordon was greatly impressed by the vocal performance of a highly renowned *almé* in Cairo named Sakna, whose skills, according to Duff Gordon, were significantly more advanced than “the eight younger ‘Álimeh” who “screeched.”<sup>47</sup> Based upon Duff Gordon's account, Sakna was very popular among the wealthy Armenian ladies who were present during the performance and was remarkably financially self-sufficient, earning “at least fifty pounds for a night's singing.”<sup>48</sup> When Duff Gordon watched her sing in 1862, Sakna was fifty-five years of age, indicating that Sakna very likely received formal training in the traditional arts of improvised song and poetry recitation long before Mehmed Ali's 1834 edict, and was therefore representative of the last generation of authentic *'awâlim*.<sup>49</sup> It appears that Sakna was never forced to give up her trade and leave Cairo, although her ability to

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>46</sup> Duff Gordon, *Letters From Egypt*, pp. 13, 14.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., pp. 13, 14.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 14.



remain and continue to perform was exceptional as many other previously venerated ‘*awâlim*, such as Kuchuk Hanem, Hosna al-Tawila, and Safia, were exiled to Upper Egypt where they had to adjust their performances to meet the desires and expectations of foreigners in order to survive.<sup>50</sup> Duff Gordon’s rare account of an authentic *almé* thus stands alone amidst the vast majority of accounts of *ghawâzî*, and former-‘*awâlim*–turned-*ghawâzî* written by travelers. In contrast to Duff Gordon’s writing, these accounts tended to involve a parochial focus upon what was perceived as the erotic and debased nature of the performance, rather than on the actual talents cultivated by Ottoman-Egyptian female entertainers who were varyingly referred to as “women of loose description,” “uncurbed by ... restraint and moral discipline,” “lascivious” and “indecent.”<sup>51</sup>

Among the few scholars who have written on the topic of female entertainers in nineteenth-century Egypt, there is no consensus as to why the ‘dancing girls’ were suddenly viewed as problematic in the mid-1830s. Some, such as Karin Van Nieuwkerk, attribute this phenomenon to the aforementioned European travelers, whose Orientalizing sexualization and erotic conquest of the public *ghawâzî* undoubtedly played a role in tarnishing the reputations of Egypt’s female entertainers. However, as I will suggest, this emphasis upon the role of foreigners, while not insignificant, risks overstating the hegemonic effect of European cultural influence. To this end, other scholars such as Judith Tucker and Khaled Fahmy have pointed towards the objections of religious authorities, and the concerns of Mehmed Ali about the health and performance of his conscript army. Yet, this chapter proposes that further study is required to explain why

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<sup>50</sup> Each of these performers has been documented in travelogues as well-versed in improvised song and poetry recitation, which, as Judith Tucker discusses, indicates that they had once received formal training as ‘*awâlim*; Judith E. Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 152.

<sup>51</sup> Johann Ludwig Burkhardt, *Arabic Proverbs, or the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians: Illustrated from Their Proverbial Sayings Current at Cairo*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1875) p. 134; James Augustus St. John, *Egypt and Nubia, Their Scenery and Their People: Being Incidents of History and Travel, from the Best and Most Recent Authorities, Including J.L. Burkhardt and Lord Lindsay*; (London: Chapman and Hall, 1845) p. 272; Claude Étienne Savary, *Letters on Egypt: Containing, A Parallel Between the Manners of its Ancient and Modern Inhabitants, its Commerce, Agriculture, Government and Religion*, Vol. I; (London: G.G.J. and J. Robinson, 1781), p. 70; and Frederick Henniker, Sir., *Notes During a Visit to Egypt, Nubia, the Oasis Boeris, Mount Sinai and Jerusalem*; (London: John Murray, 1824), p. 73.

female public dancers, in particular, were lumped together with prostitutes and banished from Cairo in 1834. Firstly, it will situate Egyptian female entertainers in relation to discourses on sexuality and morality surrounding performance culture that prevailed in the Ottoman Middle East during the centuries leading up to, and including, the period here under study. In so doing, I will rely primarily upon the work of Dror Ze'evi to make the argument that parallels can be drawn between the *Karagöz* shadow theatre and the performances of the *ghawâzi*.<sup>52</sup> I will then engage with the limited historiography available on Mehmed Ali's 1834 edict, and develop a new argument around the significance of his inclusion of female public dancers in this decree. In particular, this chapter will attempt to demonstrate that a more thorough explanation can be found by looking to the politics of culture and to increasing state control over women's bodies, rather than by overemphasizing the belaboured category of Orientalism and its impact upon Egypt's female entertainers.

## Female Entertainers in the Early Nineteenth-Century Egyptian Cultural Milieu

In order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the world in which the *'awâlim* and the *ghawâzi* performed and existed prior to 1834, it is critical to contextualize these female entertainers in relation to prevailing notions of morality and sexuality surrounding performance culture in Ottoman Egypt in the period leading up to the early nineteenth-century. Several historians of the Ottoman Empire have written compelling accounts of this earlier period, but most helpful for my immediate purposes is Dror Ze'evi's study *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East 1500 – 1900*, which offers a fascinating look into Ottoman traditions of

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<sup>52</sup> Ze'evi's definition of *Karagöz* is as follows: "this popular form of entertainment, employing translucent puppets against a backlit screen, was always very bold, even rude, as European travelers frequently described it. The sexual world it depicted was uninhibited, its social space teeming with sexual activity, its women powerful, and its manner of discussing sex and sexual morality often shameless and unrelenting.;" Dror Ze'evi, *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourses in the Ottoman Middle East 1500 – 1900*; (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. 14.

performance in its fifth chapter on *Karagöz* shadow theatre.<sup>53</sup> Here, Ze'evi elaborates his own theory of sexual “scripts” originally proposed by John Gagnon, which conceives of scripts as metaphors “for the internal and external blueprints in our minds for sexual quest and sexual actions.”<sup>54</sup> This conceptualization of sexuality as performed and mediated in accordance with a multitude of scripted popular assumptions, is a profitable means by which to locate the place of female entertainers in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Egyptian society. In particular, themes of performance, audience, sexuality, and morality emerge from Ze'evi's analysis, providing valuable clues towards the historical re-creation of the early nineteenth-century Egyptian cultural milieu. With some careful conjecture and interpretation, these four themes can be productively analyzed in order to develop an analogous argument about the *'awâlim* and the *ghawâzî*.

Firstly, a closer examination of *Karagöz* shadow theatre will help to shed some light on how the performances of the *ghawâzî*, in particular, may have been culturally understood throughout the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries. Ze'evi's work demonstrates how the theatrical and carnivalesque elements of shadow plays enabled sexual motifs to be displayed publicly and explicitly, albeit decreasingly, throughout the Ottoman Middle East.<sup>55</sup> Although there is evidence that during the nineteenth-century *Karagöz* plays were subjected to increased state and authorial censorship, Ze'evi also found that representations of heterosexuality, considered indecent in prior centuries, became increasingly prevalent during this time.<sup>56</sup> It is therefore possible that in the centuries before the Napoleonic Expedition arrived in 1798, Egypt's public female entertainers inhabited a world in which their performances would have been expected by audiences to contain elements of sexual innuendo. Furthermore, as Donald Quataert discusses, *Karagöz* involved narratives that incorporated “impromptu plots reflecting current political conditions,” and allowed for discursive spaces of “social commentary, safe places from which to criticize contemporary events, the state, and its elites.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ze'evi, *Producing Desire*, p. 127.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>57</sup> Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700 – 1922*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 162.

Amidst this well-established precedent of political and social discourse within entertainment culture in the Ottoman Middle East, it is conceivable that the *ghawâzî*, and perhaps to a lesser extent the *‘awâlim*, similarly “represent[ed] the common voice,” and were likewise engaged with a process of societal critique, and perhaps even some degree of political contestation, during their performances.<sup>58</sup> Although public female entertainers were known to sing for their audiences, they did not rely on verbal cues alone to communicate a narrative. Nineteenth-century travelogue accounts refer to the dance of the *ghawâzî* as “a kind of lascivious pantomime,” “pantomimic evolutions,” “cynical pantomime,” “pantomimic action,” and “expressive pantomime.”<sup>59</sup> The recurring characterization of dance as pantomime suggests that female entertainers in Egypt were capable of expressing narrative through mimetic actions. Although for the benefit of paying European audiences it appears “love [was] generally the groundwork” of the performances, the possibility remains that the *ghawâzî* could convey complex forms of social and cultural meaning when performing for local Egyptian audiences who were familiarized with the hardships of life under the reign of Mehmed Ali.

Relating directly to expectations around performativity is the question of audience. In accordance with the two categories of female entertainers outlined above, class and gender would have determined whether or not one had immediate access to the *‘awâlim* or to the *ghawâzî*. In the early nineteenth-century, wealthy members of Ottoman Egyptian society tended to use singers and dancers as signifiers of wealth and status, hiring as many as they could afford to have them perform at celebratory events such as parties and weddings, whereas the lower classes would mostly have witnessed dancing in the streets, at coffeehouses, outside of markets, and at religious festivals.<sup>60</sup> While the performances of the *ghawâzî* were widely accessible to the paying public, the *awâlim* would typically not entertain outside private spaces such as bath houses and harems, and

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Wolfradine Menu Von Minutoli, Baroness, *Recollections of Egypt*; (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea, and Carey, 1827), p. 184; Michael Russell, Rev., *View of Ancient and Modern Egypt; with an Outline of its Natural History*; (New York: J & J Harper, 1831), p. 320; Romer, *A Pilgrimage*, p. 127; Tilt, *The Boat and the Caravan*, p. 138; Laurent Laporte, *Sailing on the Nile*, Translated by Virginia Vaughan; (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1872), p. 81.

<sup>60</sup> Karin Van Nieuwkerk, “*A Trade Like Any Other*”: *Female Singers and Dancers in Egypt*; (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), pp. 23, 24.

would only perform before the eyes of other women.<sup>61</sup> Ze'evi acknowledges that literacy was exceedingly rare in the Ottoman Empire, and proposes that the widespread inability to read and write contributed significantly to the popularity of visual and audial *Karagöz* performances.<sup>62</sup> Likely the *'awâlim* and the *ghawâzî* appealed to Ottoman Egypt's primarily non-literate crowds for a similar reason. Curiously, Ze'evi notes that *Karagöz* was not popular within Egypt except among elites, a fact that he attributes to the play's script being traditionally written in high Ottoman Turkish rather than colloquial Arabic.<sup>63</sup> This lack of popular support for the shadow plays in Egypt perhaps indicates that other forms of public entertainment, such as dancing and singing could have expanded to assume a more central cultural role. It is upon this assertion that I want to challenge Ze'evi's claim that "almost the only authoritative text-bound scripts available to the public, apart from sermons at the mosques were shadow theatre plays."<sup>64</sup> By overlooking the narrative possibilities of song and dance, Ze'evi neglects a culturally and politically rich dimension of late Ottoman society. Before the expanded presence of Europeans in Egypt presented a lucrative means of generating income by catering to Orientalist imaginings of the erotic *fantasia*, these public performances would primarily have expressed cultural messages that related both to folkloric traditions and contemporary themes from urban life in Cairo.<sup>65</sup>

Having examined performance culture in Egypt prior to and at the beginning of the nineteenth-century, and posed questions about audience, we should now turn to evaluate Egyptian female entertainers in relation to contemporaneous notions of morality and sexuality. Particularly helpful in this endeavour is Ze'evi's research on *Zenne*, which I argue could offer a clue towards how the *ghawâzî* may have been understood at the turn of the nineteenth century. *Zenne* was a central, recurring figure in the *Karagöz*, intended

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>62</sup> Ze'evi, *Producing Desire*, p. 127.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>65</sup> "*Fantasia*" was a term used frequently by British travelers in Egypt to signify a stereotypically 'Oriental' evening of entertainment, typically involving a performance by *'awâlim* or *ghawâzî*, accompanied by musicians, in a style reminiscent of *The Arabian Nights*.

to stand as a metaphor for all women.<sup>66</sup> Through my research on the *ghawâzî* in Egypt, I have discovered that this less refined brand of popular female entertainment bore several identifiable characteristics in common with representations of *Zenne*. Firstly, Ze’evi mentions that the clothing worn by *Zenne* became increasingly daring throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, “exposing some of her cleavage in French style.”<sup>67</sup> European accounts indicate that a similarly provocative style of dress was adopted by the *ghawâzî*. W.H. Davenport Adams wrote that Egyptian public dancers “wear a scant vest, open at the bosom,” while Friedrich Wilhelm Hackländer recalled that “the upper part of their persons was clothed in a kind of vest of yellow silk, open very low in the front.”<sup>68</sup> Claude Étienne Savary further corroborated the provocative attire of the *ghawâzî* in 1781, recounting a ‘dancing girl’ of “exquisite form, which was not concealed by her light silk dress”<sup>69</sup> Similarly, in 1803 William Wittman wrote that “their attire, which is well calculated to display the form of the person and limbs, is thrown on with a most indecent negligence.”<sup>70</sup>

Secondly, the *ghawâzî* were renowned for dancing publicly without veils, a habit also exhibited in the *Karagöz* by *Zenne*. Ze’evi relates how *Zenne* was “usually unveiled” or else wore a veil “made of flimsy transparent tissue” in defiance of Ottoman customs of respectability that dictated female veiling while in public.<sup>71</sup> Several European travelers’ accounts have documented a similar resistance to veiling among the *ghawâzî*. Savary, for example, wrote that female entertainers “throw aside their modesty with their veils.”<sup>72</sup> The veil appears to have remained in place as a means of distinguishing the ‘*awâlim* from their public counterparts. Notably, Sakna, to whom we were introduced above within

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<sup>66</sup> Ze’evi, *Producing Desire*, p. 136.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>68</sup> W.H. Davenport Adams, *Egypt: Past and Present*; (London: T. Nelson and Sons, 1894), p. 162; Friedrich Wilhelm Hackländer, excerpt from *Journey to the Orient*, translated by James Augustus St. John, in: *Egypt and Nubia, Their Scenery and Their People: Being Incidents of History and Travel, from the Best and Most Recent Authorities, Including J.L. Burkhardt and Lord Lindsay*; (London: Chapman and Hall, 1845), p. 275.

<sup>69</sup> Savary, *Letters on Egypt*, p. 72.

<sup>70</sup> William Wittman, *Travels in Turkey, Asia-Minor, Syria, and Across the Desert into Egypt, During the Years 1799, 1800, and 1801, in Company with the Turkish Army, and the British Military Mission*; (Philadelphia: James Humphreys, 1804), p. 268.

<sup>71</sup> Ze’evi, *Producing Desire*, p. 137.

<sup>72</sup> Savary, *Letters on Egypt*, p. 70.

Duff Gordon's account, remained fully veiled during her performance despite entertaining both within a private home and in front of women.<sup>73</sup> Sakna's dedication to veiling perhaps indicates that she was conscious that the distinction between the 'awâlim and the increasingly disreputable 'dancing girls' had begun to slip, causing her to take extra precautions to preserve her own respectability. As the Egyptian scholar Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti commented in his 1798 chronicle, women who declined to cover themselves in a veil while moving through public space were widely considered to be immodest among Cairene locals.<sup>74</sup>

In addition to similarities in the appearance of *Zenne* and the *ghawâzî*, the sexually explicit or implicit nature of female performance represents a third commonality between the two. Ze'evi traces the emergence of *Karagöz* to the early Mamluk period in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Egypt, at which point in time and space homoeroticism was the predominant expression of sexuality in shadow theatre. However, by the early nineteenth-century, this once normative representation of homosexuality in performances of *Karagöz* had been largely replaced by themes of heterosexuality. According to Ze'evi, *Zenne* was generally associated with prostitution and "women with loose morals," in accordance with the notion that "there are rarely virtuous men or chaste women on stage."<sup>75</sup> This equation of performance with moral depravity in relation to *Zenne* could arguably have also been attributed to female entertainers such as the *ghawâzî*. As noted by Carl Benjamin Klunzinger about the *ghawâzî*, "their profession is never held in esteem, but is regarded as degrading like that of an actor in the Frankish middle ages."<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, as Ze'evi has discovered, *Zenne* was always portrayed as "an unabashed flirt" and a seductress, which parallels how the *ghawâzî* were represented by Europeans who frequently described them as "coquett[ish]."<sup>77</sup> However, in making the argument

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<sup>73</sup> Duff Gordon, *Letters From Egypt*, p. 14.

<sup>74</sup> 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, Jabartî, *Al-Jabarti's Chronicle of the First Seven Months of the French Occupation of Egypt: Muharram-rejab 1213 - 15 June-December 1798*, ed. S. Moreh, Translated by S. Moreh; (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), p. 45.

<sup>75</sup> Ze'evi, *Producing Desire*, p. 136.

<sup>76</sup> Carl Benjamin Klunzinger, *Upper Egypt: Its People and Its Products*; (New York: Scribner, Armstrong 1878), p. 190.

<sup>77</sup> Ze'evi, *Producing Desire*, p. 141; Klunzinger, *Upper Egypt*, p. 194; Hackländer, excerpt from *Journey to the Orient*, p. 270.

that Zenne and the *ghawâzî* were both associated with ‘loose’ morality, it does not preclude me from arguing that Egyptian female entertainers remained distinct from prostitutes prior to 1834. In the Ottoman Egyptian domain, female sexuality was presumed to be wild and untameable, representing “a constant danger to the morality of men and even to the moral order of the world” broadly embodied by the concept of *fitna*, which Ze’evi defines as chaos or anarchy.<sup>78</sup> Historian Madeline C. Zilfi further argues that in nineteenth-century Ottoman society there existed “a widespread view of women as quintessentially sexual beings” and that such beliefs in the uncontrollability of female sexuality could be particularly exacerbated by a woman’s “talent for music.”<sup>79</sup> It is important to bear in mind that these associations between the *ghawâzî* and sexuality meant something entirely different to Europeans, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

### Mehmed Ali Paşa and the 1834 Edict

The imperialism inherent in British representations of Egypt’s female entertainers undoubtedly influenced the pejorative cultural trend which came to associate the ‘*awâlim* and the *ghawâzî* with prostitution. However, this perspective risks attributing European imperialism with a disproportionate degree of power over the Egyptian cultural economy; especially if Europeans are viewed as the sole reason behind the 1834 banishment of female public dancers from Cairo.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, it should not be assumed that in 1834 the reputations of the ‘*awâlim* and the *ghawâzî* had yet been tarnished to the point that their performance was indistinct from prostitution. It remains worth exploring several domestic factors that arose in simultaneity with the increasing appearance of European travelers and the corresponding generation of Orientalizing discourses. These factors include Mehmed Ali Paşa’s state-building efforts, his agenda of military conquest, and agitation among the ‘*ulamâ*’. To demonstrate that Ottoman-Egyptian officials began

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<sup>78</sup> Ze’evi, *Producing Desire*, p. 141.

<sup>79</sup> Zilfi, *Women and Slavery in the Late Ottoman Empire*, p. 183.

<sup>80</sup> I here use the term ‘economy’ in relation to culture as a means of signifying the competing forces within the cultural marketplace in Egypt, in which the representation of the ‘dancing girl’ as a cultural product was varyingly commodified and contested by both imperial and domestic forces.



to equate these female entertainers with prostitutes not so much because they had adopted the opprobrious British Orientalist category of the ‘dancing girl’ but rather as a result of a more complex process of state-authorized control and suppression, I will engage with the work of Tucker, van Nieuwkerk, and Fahmy. In order to develop my own argument, I will return once again to the work of Ze’evi. Ze’evi paints an historical landscape in which the imposition of European sexual norms resulted in an atmosphere of profound shame throughout the Ottoman Middle East, thereby permanently altering discourses around sexuality and morality. And yet, Ze’evi’s own work, when situated in the conceptual world of Egyptian female entertainers, can be used to problematize his central assertion. By bringing the Egyptian example to light, I intend to complicate the cultural authority that Ze’evi grants to European discourses on sexuality, and to raise the possibility that Europeans were not as unilaterally efficacious as many of them liked to presume.

In June of 1834, Mehmed Ali Paşa issued an edict, which outlawed all forms of prostitution and female public dancing within Cairo, and ordered the deportation of any women who were known or suspected to engage in either of these activities.<sup>81</sup> For the vast majority of Egypt’s *ghawâzî*, this entailed their rapid and forced removal from the country’s metropolitan centre, and their dislocation to Upper Egypt where they congregated in towns. There is no consensus among scholars as to where these female entertainers most proliferated, although remote towns such as Asyut, Minuf, Qena, Esna, Luxor, and Aswan were all known to have a significant influx in public dancers and prostitutes following 1834.<sup>82</sup> Between the issuing of Mehmed Ali’s edict and its repeal during the reign of his grandson Abbas Paşa in the 1850s, foreign travelers were forced to travel far out of their way in order to witness these banished women, which many did quite deliberately. As mentioned above, even once-distinguished ‘*awâlim* such as Kuchuk Hanem, Hosna al-Tawila, and Safia had been swept up by authorities and exiled to Upper Egypt, where they were forced to forego the status once granted by their extensive training in poetry and improvised song, and instead prioritize an erotic form of dance in

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<sup>81</sup> Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, p. 151.

<sup>82</sup> Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, p. 152; Van Nieuwkerk, *A Trade Like Any Other*, p. 32.

order to survive.<sup>83</sup> I will return to the exile of the *'awalim* following a comparative discussion of the three notable historiographical contributions to the case study of the 1834 edict.

Tucker describes Mehmed Ali's edict as "unprecedented," yet she does not elaborate upon exactly *why* the banishment of prostitutes and female entertainers was unusual, a question which merits a closer discussion.<sup>84</sup> Tucker herself admits that during a plague epidemic in 1799, Napoleon's French army issued a similar injunction prohibiting all "women of ill repute (*al-nisa al-mashurat*)" from entering Cairo for 30 days, while those caught illicitly harbouring such women could face a penalty of death.<sup>85</sup> The possibility that the mass exile of prostitutes was not entirely unheard of in the Ottoman Middle East around this time is further confirmed by the research of Elyse Semerdjian, who notes that in the mid-eighteenth-century prostitutes in Damascus were frequently, yet ineffectually, banished from neighbourhoods throughout the city, generally for reasons pertaining to these women's perceived disorderliness or violence.<sup>86</sup> I argue this precedent indicates that Mehmed Ali's edict was not entirely innovative, but rather was based on a relatively commonplace practice in urban centres throughout the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, it can be deduced that what *was* unusual about this decree was the inclusion of public dancing women alongside prostitutes, and the extended rather than temporary nature of their exile. The question then remains: why were public dancers included, and what were the reasons behind the permanency and longevity of their banishment? Although the relentless sexualization of Egypt's female entertainers by Europeans undoubtedly played a role in the pejorative shift in Egyptian perceptions of the *'awalim* and the *ghawâzî* prior to 1834, we must be careful not to overstate the discursive influence of foreigners. Tucker, van Nieuwkerk, and Fahmy all provide slightly different explanations for Mehmed Ali's edict, which will now be explored.

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<sup>83</sup> Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, p. 152, Van Nieuwkerk, *A Trade Like Any Other*, p. 34.

<sup>84</sup> Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, p. 151.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>86</sup> Elyse Semerdjian *Off the Straight Path: Illicit Sex, Law, and Community in Ottoman Aleppo*, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2008) p. 109.

In her 1985 work *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, Tucker argues that the impetus for the 1834 act was related to public outcry sparked by the dissent of religious leaders who viewed the taxation of prostitution as problematic because it derived state revenue from what these leaders considered to be an act of sin. Tucker suggests that particularly vocal in this regard were the Cairene ‘*ulamâ*’, or religious authorities, who railed against this taxation policy in such an effective way that Mehmed Ali succumbed to their demands.<sup>87</sup> The banishment is thereby viewed by Tucker as a means for Mehmed Ali to “add... another feather to his cap of reform” by appeasing the ‘*ulamâ*’.<sup>88</sup>

Van Nieuwkerk, in her 1995 book “*A Trade Like Any Other: Female Singers and Dancers in Egypt*”, bases much of her own analysis upon Tucker’s work and does not raise any questions about Tucker’s interpretation. Instead, van Nieuwkerk expands Tucker’s argument to include a renewed discussion of the European role as instigators of the 1834 banishment. Van Nieuwkerk proposes that Mehmed Ali was largely concerned with the *image* of Egypt in the eyes of foreigners and therefore sought to marginalize female entertainers and prostitutes.<sup>89</sup> Van Nieuwkerk also follows Tucker’s lead in emphasizing the impact of the ‘*ulamâ*’, who, she argues, drew the line “when the dancers started performing for the ‘infidels,’” who “monopolized” their services, which generated enough public discontent that Mehmed Ali became convinced that the exiling of public dancers and prostitutes from the provincial capital was more important than the collection of such a lucrative tax.<sup>90</sup>

In Fahmy’s seminal 1997 monograph *All the Pasha’s Men: Mehmed Ali, his Army, and the Making of Modern Egypt*, he takes issue with Tucker’s assertion that religious opposition would have had any substantive leverage upon Mehmed Ali’s policy.<sup>91</sup> Fahmy cites several instances in which Mehmed Ali was faced with similar

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<sup>87</sup> Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, p. 152.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Van Nieuwkerk, *A Trade Like Any Other*, p. 32.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Fahmy, *All the Pasha’s Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army, and the Making of Modern Egypt*; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 228.

dissent from the *'ulamâ'*, which the governor general categorically ignored.<sup>92</sup> The argument made by Fahmy is, in my opinion, the most compelling of the three. He situates the 1834 edict within the rapid transformations resulting from Mehmed Ali's ambitious yet brutal state-building agenda. Fahmy points to the new sexual economy generated by the unprecedented mobility of Mehmed Ali's conscription military, whereby "numbers of young wives thus abandoned are compelled by starvation, or to prevent their children from perishing to join the *almé* [i.e., prostitutes]." <sup>93</sup> Fahmy attributes Mehmed Ali's sudden crackdown on the urban existence of female entertainers and prostitutes to his concerns for the health and discipline of his army, which were ostensibly threatened by the sexually transmitted diseases and liquor that were associated with prostitution.<sup>94</sup> While Mehmed Ali's commitment to a strong and efficient soldiery should not be disputed, I want to call into question Fahmy's lack of distinction between both prostitutes and female entertainers, as well as between the *'awalim* and the *ghawâzî*. With regards to my first point of contention, the fact that the edict specifically acknowledged both prostitutes and female public dancers suggests to me that the two groups remained distinct enough at this particular point in time to merit their separate mention. With regards to my second point, scholars do not dispute the existence of two (if not more) discernible categories of female entertainers in early nineteenth-century Egypt, and this nuance is deserving of a more thorough discussion than is provided by Fahmy.

Having examined relevant scholarly arguments on Mehmed Ali's rationale for issuing the 1834 edict within the existing literature, are we any closer to answering the question of why female public entertainers were specifically included in this act, or to determining the rationale behind its permanency? While the opposition by the *'ulamâ'* to the state profiting from vice, the public condemnation of European sexual conquest, and Mehmed Ali's concern for the health and efficiency of his army could all be factors contributing to the 1834 banishment, none of these arguments can offer an entirely comprehensive explanation for why female public dancers were subsumed within this edict. Tucker's interpretation, as Fahmy points out, fails to account for the extent to

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<sup>92</sup> Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*, p. 228.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

which Mehmed Ali deliberately chose to ignore the demands of the *'ulamâ'* on multiple occasions. If Mehmed Ali had a penchant for dismissing the religious authorities of Cairo, what circumstances would have caused him to suddenly accede to their requests in 1834? Van Nieuwkerk's argument cannot explain why - if the Egyptian public, the *'ulamâ'*, and Mehmed Ali were so opposed to the European erotic gaze and sexual conquest by 'infidels,' and galvanized by the opinion of foreigners - young boys known as *khawals*, who dressed in effeminate guise and mimicked the mannerisms of the *ghawâzî*, were still permitted to perform openly for the entertainment of foreigners in Cairo during the banishment of female public dancers.<sup>95</sup> These *khawals* were sexualized and sexually exploited by Europeans in a way that very closely resembled the sexualization of 'dancing girls.' Furthermore, if maintaining a favourable image of Egypt within European opinion was so critically at stake for Mehmed Ali, it follows that the continued (and increasingly popular) public existence of the *khawals* after the 1834 edict could not have benefitted this cause. Finally, while Fahmy's analysis is compelling and falls neatly in line with the very well-developed argumentative structure of his book, his work cannot explain why several prominent *'awalim* – known for carefully cultivating their image of respectability, knowledge, and sexual restraint, and who were demonstrably financially self-sufficient – could have wound up living in destitution in Upper Egypt. Tucker and van Nieuwkerk are in consensus on the point that the *'awalim* were generally not in any danger of being misconstrued as prostitutes, and yet there are several documented examples of once prominent *'awalim* living in poverty after 1834.<sup>96</sup>

I want to suggest an alternative interpretation that examines the atypical dimensions of the 1834 act in greater detail. To do so, I will draw once again upon Ze'evi's work. In *Producing Desire*, Ze'evi advances his argument that throughout the nineteenth-century in the Ottoman Middle East, Europeans had a "profound impact on conceptions of sexuality and gender in the region" which effectively instituted a "cultural silencing mechanism [that] was galvanized to cleanse the discourse of anything deemed

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<sup>95</sup> Van Nieuwkerk, *A Trade Like Any Other*, p. 33.

<sup>96</sup> Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, p. 152; Van Nieuwkerk, *A Trade Like Any Other*, p. 34.

sexually improper.”<sup>97</sup> Although I do not dispute that European expressions of abhorrence had an impact upon Middle Eastern Ottoman discourses of sexuality, I do want to challenge Ze’evi’s notion that newly deviant forms of sexuality in Egypt were entirely the result of European influence. I also disagree, at least regarding the example of Ottoman Egyptian female entertainers, that the emergence of a new conception of certain sexual behaviours as illicit was a primary political motivator in and of itself. I propose that when trying to explain the 1834 banishment of female entertainers, it is most productive to avoid looking solely to the perceived hyper-sexuality of these women – which Tucker, van Nieuwkerk, and Fahmy all do, and which is arguably the most obvious place to look – and, rather, turn to cultural politics and to the emergence of state control over women’s bodies.

The first model that I offer takes the politics of culture as its central premise, and does not presume that Europeans were entirely responsible for the fate of female entertainers in 1834. In Heather Sharkey’s definition of culture as “the complex of values, customs, beliefs, and practices which constitute the way of life of a specific group,” she asserts that “culture is also a possible battleground on which political causes can be fought.”<sup>98</sup> Eve M. Trout Powell takes a similar approach in her study of Egyptian nationalism in the early twentieth-century, suggesting that performance culture represented a communal space in which questions of national identity could be negotiated and articulated. In particular, Trout Powell demonstrates how performance artists attempted to provide “a mirror to their audiences... presenting a panorama of true Egyptian life,” and understands performance as an art form, arguing that its entertainment value doubled as a political agenda by which Egyptians (at this point under colonial rule) could “grasp with their own hands not only the reigns of power, but also the instruments of social reform.”<sup>99</sup> The political agency that both scholars attribute to cultural spaces figures importantly in my argument about the 1834 edict, especially in relation to Mehmed Ali’s style of rule.

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<sup>97</sup> Ze’evi, *Producing Desire*, p. 149.

<sup>98</sup> Heather Sharkey, *Living with Colonialism: Nationalism and Culture in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*; (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) p. 4.

<sup>99</sup> Eve M. Trout Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan*; (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 195.

Mehmed Ali was a ruler who was centrally concerned with state-building, as evidenced by his vast public works projects, his unprecedented use of military conscription, and his implementation of a provincial census, among other efforts. Himself an Ottoman Turkish-speaking Albanian by descent, he had no connection to Egyptian-specific cultural practices, and very little sympathy for the plight of its people.<sup>100</sup> Aside from Mehmed Ali's modernizing initiatives, his deliberate manipulation of Egypt's image, and his efforts to establish a dynastic foundation of power within this Ottoman province, perhaps what he should be most renowned for is the brutality with which he treated his subjects and accomplished his objectives. By the 1820s, as Fahmy details, "labour shortages were already in evidence, resistance to the corvée was acquiring alarming momentum, resentment to the Paşa's monopolies system had forced the government to amend its policies and, most significantly, the rural society was pushed to the limit of its ability to produce and pay taxes."<sup>101</sup> Throughout Egypt, the scale of resistance to Mehmed Ali's policy of rule was substantial, and *fellahin* resentment of taxation and conscription erupted into open rebellion in Upper Egypt in 1824, which the Paşa's new military ultimately put down.<sup>102</sup> Having learned from this experience, Mehmed Ali sought to create an army that was even greater and more disciplined than before. By the mid-1830s, 130,000 Egyptians had been conscripted into military service, a development that was paralleled by increasing resentment and unrest among the local people.<sup>103</sup>

Having briefly detailed the character and impact of Mehmed Ali's rule, we must still ask a question that scholars have not yet attempted to answer: why did the Paşa issue his edict in the year 1834? I propose that it could relate to the failure of his military campaign in Syria, culminating with the European-brokered 'Peace of Kütahya' in May of 1833. In 1831, Mehmed Ali had fully employed his modern conscript army for the first time in the invasion of Syria, under the ostensible goal of punishing 'Abdallah Paşa of

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<sup>100</sup> Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*, p. 25.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

Acre who had allegedly harboured around 6,000 Egyptian *fellahin* who had deserted their land and fled from Mehmed Ali's reign.<sup>104</sup> Scholars agree that a multitude of other reasons underlay Mehmed Ali's decision to invade, but what matters for the purposes of this chapter is that the Paşa was unsuccessful, and therefore placed in a highly sensitive diplomatic position vis-à-vis Britain, France, and the Ottoman central government in Istanbul. Facing this international defeat and heightened domestic resentment, I argue that Mehmed Ali would have been intent on curtailing the available platforms, particularly in urban settings, where Egyptians could gather and voice dissent through mediums of performance.

Given the political significance of culture, and given what we know about Mehmed Ali, it seems reasonable to suggest that alongside Mehmed Ali's potential placation of the '*ulamâ*', catering to European perceptions, and protection of his army from venereal disease and disorder, there could exist a fourth (and, as I will subsequently address, a fifth) reason for the 1834 edict, that might better explain the inclusion of female public dancers. I propose that Egyptian female entertainers, particularly those who performed in public, represented a cultural threat to Mehmed Ali at a time of heightened vulnerability for his rule. As dancers would have performed narratives relating to their immediate socio-cultural context, it follows that such ubiquitous themes of conscription and taxation, in addition to anti-Paşa sentiments, would likely have been incorporated. As Ali Çaksu demonstrates, coffee houses were particularly renowned for their combination of entertainment and political discussions throughout the Ottoman Empire.<sup>105</sup> Public female entertainers in Egypt were in a unique cultural position as they performed in the streets, outside of marketplaces, and in coffee houses, and were therefore able to captivate audiences of all ages, occupations, and literary abilities, and broadcast their narratives widely. Furthermore, certain female entertainers were capable of traversing the public and private spaces of Cairo, and could function as conduits of information. Alain Mikhail's discussion of Çengiz Kırılı's work on nineteenth-century *jurnals*, or Ottoman spy reports, acknowledges that Mehmed Ali's invasion of Syria was extensively

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>105</sup> Ali Çaksu, "Janissary Coffe Houses in Late Eighteenth-Century Istanbul," in ed. Dana Sajdi, *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee*; (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), p. 117.



documented as a point of conversation in coffeehouses, but as this was of particular political significance to Ottoman officials, Mikhail questions whether it really would have taken precedence over non-political gossiping and socializing.<sup>106</sup> For residents of Cairo, however, the actions of Mehmed Ali had the potential to impact their lives significantly, and therefore it seems likely that the *journals* were not over-representing the prevalence of Mehmed Ali as a topic of discussion, at least in Egyptian cities.<sup>107</sup> In an urban environment where dissent could spread far more rapidly, it would therefore be in Mehmed Ali's best interest to relocate these potentially unruly women to rural destitution in Upper Egypt.

A second possible reason for Mehmed Ali's banishment of public dancers from Cairo might also be related to his broader goal of state-building, through which his regime assumed a far more interventionist role in reconceptualizing the function of women's bodies as purely reproductive, and asserting control over the reproductive process.<sup>108</sup> As Mervat F. Hatem argues, increasing state control over the female body resulted in the institutionalization of "a domesticated femininity that glorified women's mothering functions at the same time that it denied them autonomy."<sup>109</sup> A declining birth rate, and a high infant mortality rate meant that without increased reproduction state-building would necessarily slow. The establishment of a series of medical and police apparatuses in Cairo institutionalized the exercise of state power upon female bodies in

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<sup>106</sup> Alain Mikhail, "The Heart's Desire: Gender, Urban Space and the Ottoman Coffee House," in ed. Dana Sajdi, *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee*; (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), p. 156.

<sup>107</sup> For example, while making reference to "dancing girls," a book on Popular Geographies mentioned that it was common in Cairo for "a rude farce" to be performed in public, "the dramatic persona of which is nearly always the same; consisting of a rapacious governor." Popular Geographies, *Egypt: A Familiar Description of the Land, People, and Produce*; (London: William Smith, 1839), p. 216.

<sup>108</sup> Khaled Fahmy, "Women, Medicine, and Power in Nineteenth-Century Egypt," in ed. Lila Abu-Lughod, *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*; (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 38.

<sup>109</sup> Mervat F. Hatem, "The Professionalization of Health and the Control of Women's Bodies as Modern Governmentalities in Nineteenth-Century Egypt," in ed. Madeline C. Zilfi, *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era*; (New York: Brill, 1997) p. 67.

Egypt, a process that has been very well documented by Liat Kozma and Fahmy.<sup>110</sup> In the vast majority of available primary sources relating to the *ghawâzî*, these female entertainers do not appear to have any direct familial ties to husbands or children, indicating that they lived and worked outside of this maternal ideal.<sup>111</sup> Similarly, at least before Mehmed Ali's reign, the *'awâlim* were capable of supporting themselves quite lucratively, largely by means of wealthy female patrons, without any evidence of their need to rely upon husbands or fathers for support.<sup>112</sup> The apparent transgression of their prescribed reproductive function by the *'awâlim* and the *ghawâzî* would have been made visible to both women in elite harems, and the myriad of Egyptian women who participated in the crowds to watch the spectacle of public dance. The implication that women could be permitted to exist in isolation from patriarchal structures and from their reproductive duties, therefore held the potential to permeate all ranks of female society and to disrupt Mehmed Ali's calculated agenda of European-inspired 'modernity.' Rather than demonstrating a concern solely with the sexualization and sexual practices of the *'awâlim* and the *ghawâzî*, I argue that Mehmed Ali was also interested in stifling environments where performance held the potential to be critical of his regime, and in asserting new modes of control over the bodies of women who challenged their role as mothers.

## Conclusion

In the early nineteenth-century, the *'awâlim* and the *ghawâzî* performed within an Ottoman Egyptian cultural milieu that privileged expressions of explicit sexuality and embraced innuendos. In particular, the *ghawâzî* appear to have shared several characteristics with *Zenne*, who symbolized the prototypical Woman in the *Karagöz*

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<sup>110</sup> Liat Kozma, *Policing Egyptian Women: Sex, Law, and Medicine in Khedival Egypt*; (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011).; Fahmy, "Women, Medicine, and Power in Nineteenth Century Egypt."

<sup>111</sup> With the exception of accounts that posit the *ghawâzî* as a distinct tribe of prostitutes by Edward Lane and J.L. Burkhardt detailed earlier, which scholars have largely discredited.

<sup>112</sup> Mary Ann Fay, "Women and Waqf: Property, Power, and the Domain of Gender in Eighteenth-Century Egypt," in Ed. Madeline C. Zilfi, *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era*; (New York: Brill, 1997) p. 31.

shadow theatre. Although both *Zenne* and the *ghawâzî* shared a similar disregard for veiling, dressed provocatively, and could be associated with ‘looseness,’ this did not necessarily implicate female entertainers as prostitutes in the European sense. Rather, I suggest that the *ghawâzî* were consciously part of a complex sexual landscape in which they could be distinguished from prostitutes according to the cultural and performative role that they played in Egyptian society at the time. My discussion of Mehmed Ali’s 1834 edict banishing female public entertainers and prostitutes from Cairo sought to posit two alternative perspectives on this relatively understudied event. By focusing upon cultural politics and state control over female bodies, and without underestimating the political significance of the ‘*awâlim* and the *ghawâzî*, I believe Mehmed Ali’s inclusion of female entertainers in this edict can be more comprehensively understood. Furthermore, as will be explored in the next chapter, the epistemological association of female performers with prostitutes that was cemented in 1834 ultimately had a self-reinforcing impact upon the lives and livelihoods of Egypt’s female entertainers, and enduringly informed subsequent British perceptions of these women. While the conclusions drawn here are largely speculative, this research opens up a new avenue of inquiry for those who one day again have access to Egyptian state archives, as it seeks to prioritize a renewed approach to the study of the ‘*awâlim* and the *ghawâzî* as politically significant.

### Chapter Three: Parallels with Masculinity and Prostitution in Travelogue Representations of ‘Dancing Girls’

Although Mehmed Ali’s 1834 edict caused considerable hardship to the *‘awâlim* and *ghawâzî*, and profoundly altered the circumstances by which they made a living, British travelers were, in several regards, predisposed to find Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ problematic.<sup>113</sup> As is the case in most cross-cultural encounters, British travelers in Egypt made sense of their new surroundings by drawing parallels to both emerging and established paradigms and juxtaposing their experiences against popular archetypes. British travelers’ interactions with the *‘awâlim* and *ghawâzî* were therefore inherently mediated by a system of ordering the world which prompted the association of Egyptian female entertainers with their archetypical British counterparts. As this chapter will demonstrate, the two most common parallels drawn by British travelers in relation to Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ involved, firstly, a shared bourgeois imagining of British masculinity and, secondly, popular conceptions of prostitution in Britain. In regard to the former association, the fact that the Egyptian female entertainers to whom British travelers had access were typically perceived as financially independent and unsubmitive, with tendencies towards smoking tobacco and consuming alcohol, gave the impression that these women were encroaching upon traditionally masculine domains and subverting a delicate patriarchal order in the process. Perhaps even more anxiety-producing than the perceived threat posed by ‘dancing girls’ to the intrinsic fragility of patriarchal authority, were the parallels drawn between Egyptian female entertainers and conventional representations of working class prostitutes in Britain.<sup>114</sup> From the early 1840s onwards, representations of British prostitutes found in newspapers, medical texts, novels, and evangelical sermons conventionalized a stereotypical image of the ‘fallen

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<sup>113</sup> As the vast majority of British travelers to Egypt were middle class, with the remaining few travelers hailing from upper class society, the third and fourth chapters will be principally concerned with the perspective of the British middle class, in terms of both authorship and audience.

<sup>114</sup> By ‘intrinsic fragility’ I mean to suggest that throughout the nineteenth-century patriarchal authority in Britain remained far from firmly established, and was frequently contested, disrupted, and subverted, causing its proponents to defend it all the more determinedly.

woman.’<sup>115</sup> The “showy” costumes of the *ghawâzi* and, after 1834, the former-*‘awâlim*, in conjunction with their conspicuous application of cosmetics, their lack of veils, their pronounced visibility in public spaces, their participation in performance culture, and their perceived lasciviousness, all reinforced prejudicial comparisons to prostitutes.<sup>116</sup> I argue that, ultimately, such perceptions of ‘dancing girls’ as simultaneously too masculine and too resemblant of prostitutes caused these women to be considered by British travelers as uniquely, if unintentionally, subversive to the patriarchal systems of power upon which middle and upper class society in Britain was predicated. The large body of references to the *ghawâzi* and former-*‘awâlim* in nineteenth-century travel literature, and the considerable level of detail with which British travelers elaborated on the transgressiveness of these women, serves as a testament to their central discursive function, by which ‘dancing girls’ were positioned as antithetical to the ideals of matrimony and motherhood that were becoming increasingly prominent in British political debates from the 1840s onward.

The idealized female role among the middle class in mid-nineteenth-century British society, most notoriously epitomized in Coventry Patmore’s narrative poem *The Angel in the House*, entailed the near-deification of the Home as a harmonious space within which women were enlisted as virtuous moral safeguards against the evils of public society.<sup>117</sup> The gendering of private and public spheres meant that marriage and motherhood became central pillars of idealized womanhood, whereby wives and mothers were physically bound to the Home by their domestic responsibilities and theoretically confined by societal expectations of their physical and mental inaptitude for public life. Ben Griffin convincingly argues that this “Victorian domestic ideology” was composed of a “cluster of connected assumptions and prescriptive norms,” which endeavoured, foremost, “to set Britain’s house in order and re-establish the nation’s virtue by enforcing

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<sup>115</sup> Nina Attwood, *The Prostitute’s Body: Rewriting Prostitution in Victorian Britain*; (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), pp. 2, 3.

<sup>116</sup> Eliot Warburton, Esq., Vol. I, *The Crescent and the Cross; or, Romance and Realities of Eastern Travel*; (London: Henry Colburn, 1846), p. 296.

<sup>117</sup> Coventry Kersey Dighton Patmore, *The Angel in the House: The Betrothal*; (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1854).; Julie Hackney, “Body Language, the Idea of the Actress, and Some Nineteenth-Century Actress-Heroines,” *New Theatre Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 31, (1992), p. 227.

stricter adherence to particular moral codes.”<sup>118</sup> This reactive ideology, or “gender panic” was principally informed by the British revival of evangelicalism and occurred in response to revolutionary impulses in late eighteenth-century France and America, which ultimately provided the justification for female subservience within a patriarchal system.<sup>119</sup> Griffin’s interpretation of nineteenth-century domestic ideology as a pursuit of national political stability, rather than simply an individual ordering of gendered spaces, is central to my own understanding of the British preoccupation with Egypt’s ‘dancing girls’ and the parallels with masculinity and prostitution that they represented. In a similar sense, I propose that it is imperative to view the bodies of Egyptian female entertainers as inherently - yet not necessarily intentionally - rebellious to British idealizations of womanhood, and therefore implicated in threatening disorder at both an imperial and national level. In nearly every British travel account that makes reference to Egyptian ‘dancing girls,’ these women are portrayed as both unmarried and childless; in other words, they were perceived by travelers as largely detached from, and thereby in opposition to, patriarchal structures of female oppression that centred around the Home. Therefore, this chapter’s primary historiographical intervention lies in the reconceptualization of Egyptian female entertainers as having a culturally politicized discursive role. By detailing the specific ways in which ‘dancing girls’ repudiated the assumptions inherent in British gender hierarchies and rejected British moral codes, it seeks to question why, exactly, travelers perceived these transgressions to be so threatening to patriarchal order.

### ‘Dancing Girls’ and their Problematic Performance of Gender

In historian Martin J. Wiener’s words, as the nineteenth-century progressed, “the maintenance of domestic harmony, order, and economy, was... thoroughly made the wife’s responsibility,” especially among the British middle class.<sup>120</sup> More specifically, to

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<sup>118</sup> Ben Griffin, *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain: Masculinity, Political Culture and the Struggle for Women’s Rights*; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 38- 39.

<sup>119</sup> Griffin, *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain*, p. 39.

<sup>120</sup> Martin J. Wiener, *Men of Blood: Violence, Manliness, and Criminal Justice in Victorian England*; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). p. 184.

return once more to Patmore's poem, it was imperative that "man must be pleased; but him to please is woman's pleasure."<sup>121</sup> As *The Angel in the House* obviates, above all else, any form of hedonism was considered highly inappropriate for women, who were expected to refrain from sensually self-indulgent, behaviours. Likewise, Griffin outlines how "the [female] pursuit of one's own desires was seen [by politicians and evangelicals alike] as unwomanly and selfish, especially in married women, whose thoughts ought to be devoted to their husband's happiness."<sup>122</sup> Part one of this chapter engages with the problematic concept of pleasure-seeking Egyptian 'dancing girls,' whose independent expenditure, assertiveness, excessive drinking, and smoking were viewed by British travelers as a dangerous upset of emergent and enduringly precarious conceptions of gender as fixed and hierarchical. As gender is necessarily socially constructed and performative, any ostensibly masculine performances by women endangered the already unstable and contested categories of femininity and masculinity and shook the rigidity of beliefs in the biological and intellectual inferiority of the female sex, both of which were integral to the maintenance of patriarchal authority upon which women's subordinate status was premised.<sup>123</sup> As Herbert Sussman acknowledges, nineteenth-century British masculinity was an instable and fragile concept, filled with "contradictions and anxieties" pertaining to race, class, and religion, which made the category axiomatically dependent upon its own continuous reinforcement.<sup>124</sup> Yet, despite the inherent instability of gender categories, which remained in constant flux and far from firmly established throughout the century, among the middle class there existed a popular British imagining of how normative male identity ought to be enacted, causing the perceived similarities between conventionally masculine performances of gender in Britain, and the smoking, drinking,

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<sup>121</sup> Patmore, *The Angel in the House*.

<sup>122</sup> Griffin, *The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain*, p. 47.

<sup>123</sup> Patriarchal authority was propagated and upheld by a wide variety of groups throughout nineteenth-century Britain, from public intellectuals, to poets and writers, to religious figures, and beyond; James Eli Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity*; (London: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 11.; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed.; (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 68.; Malgorzata Luczyńska-Holdys, *Soft Shed Kisses: Re-visioning the Femme Fatale in English Poetry of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*; (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), p. 11.

<sup>124</sup> Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art*; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 3.

behavioural emboldenment, and apparent financial independence of Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ to produce anxieties among travelogue authors and their domestic readership.

Those who sought to uphold the patriarchal nature of British society actively discouraged middle and upper class women from generating income independently, thereby reproducing their financial dependency upon fathers and husbands. While many lower class women worked in manufacturing or servile positions out of necessity, these wages would inevitably go towards the subsistence of the woman and her family, rather than towards enabling her own personal expenditure.<sup>125</sup> Amidst the working class in nineteenth-century British society, prostitutes were among the only women with a substantial source of independent income by which they could indulge in the procurement of finery. However, as historian Julie Hackney notes, “all women who received money and independence for displaying themselves for other people’s gratification” were met with extreme prejudice.<sup>126</sup> Wage-earning was considered to be a fundamentally masculine pursuit, causing British travelers to view with suspicion the unabashed profiting of Egypt’s female entertainers, who were said to “enjoy perfect liberty and support themselves by the public exhibition of their talents.”<sup>127</sup> George Annesley noted, for example, that “in the intervals of the performances, the dancing girls went round, demanding money from each person,” in what Sir Frederick Henniker described as “the ceremony of demanding becksheesh.”<sup>128</sup> Such audaciousness was frequently disparaged in British accounts of dancing “ladies... [who] accosted... with a demand for money.”<sup>129</sup> The *ghawâzî*, in particular, were known for openly displaying their earnings by stringing gold coins through their hair, wearing as much jewellery as possible, and encouraging audience members to adhere coins to dancers’ foreheads, cheeks, chins, and lips with

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<sup>125</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780 – 1850*; (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), p. 272.

<sup>126</sup> Hackney, “Body Language,” p. 227.

<sup>127</sup> Wolfradine Menu von Minutoli, Baroness, *Recollections of Egypt*; (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Carey, 1827), p. 182.

<sup>128</sup> George Annesley, Earl of Mountnorris, *Voyages and Travels in India, Ceylon, the Red Sea, Abyssinia, and Egypt, in the years 1802, 1803, 1804, 1805, and 1806*, Vol. III; (London: W. Miller, 1809), p. 367; Frederick Henniker, Sir., *Notes During a Visit to Egypt, Nubia, the Oasis, Mount Sinai, and Jerusalem*; (London: J. Murray, 1823), p. 74.

<sup>129</sup> Richard Robert Madden, Esq., *Travels in Turkey, Egypt, Nubia, and Palestine*; (London: Henry Colburn, 1829), p. 301.



saliva throughout the performance.<sup>130</sup> However, as Tucker notes, the income of the *ghawâzî* was insubstantial and their financial independence precarious, leading to circumstances which forced these women to perform while wearing all of their worldly possessions, as they had no secure place to store their property.<sup>131</sup> Nevertheless, such exhibitions of wealth were perceived by British travelers as ostentatious and immodest, leading James Augustus St. John to denounce the “strings of gold coins which... depended in barbaric profusion over the forehead[s]” of ‘dancing girls.’<sup>132</sup> The ‘*awâlim*’ appear to have been no less explicit about their earnings, and many travelers described their amazement at the vast salaries that these highly skilled women were believed to accrue in a single performance. Sir Henniker wrote that “the principal set of *almah* will not furnish an evening’s entertainment for less than two or three thousand piasters,” while Eliot Warburton speculated that “the singing women... frequently obtain fifty guineas from a party for their exhibitions on one evening.”<sup>133</sup> Isabella Romer reiterated such assessments, noting that “the *Alme*, or famous singing women... are paid by the contributions of guests at a rate which our most eminent Italian artists would be glad to receive.”<sup>134</sup> The perception that female entertainers were entitled to high salaries in exchange for the display of their bodies led to expressions of resentment and revilement among some travelers, including Romer’s acquaintance, who “lament[ed]... that such jewels should be thrown away upon such an ‘*animale Arabe*,” after witnessing a wealthy Cairene woman bestow a “*Ghawazee*” with rare stones.<sup>135</sup> Although Davenport Adams reported that “the *Almehs*” were deeply indebted to “usurious money-lenders,” his account stands alone as an exception among those that present the incomes of female

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<sup>130</sup> Edward William Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, Vol. II; (London: Charles Knight & Co., 1836), p. 271.

<sup>131</sup> Judith E. Tucker, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 152.

<sup>132</sup> James Augustus St. John, *Egypt and Mohammed Ali, or, Travels in the Valley of the Nile*; (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green, & Longman, 1834), p. 107.

<sup>133</sup> Henniker, *Notes During a Visit to Egypt*, p. 74; Warburton, *The Crescent and the Cross*, p. 294.

<sup>134</sup> Isabella Frances Romer, *A Pilgrimage to the Temples and Tombs of Egypt, Nubia, and Palestine, in 1845 -1846*, Vol. II; (London: Richard Bentley, 1846), p. 41.

<sup>135</sup> Romer, *A Pilgrimage*, p. 127

entertainers as un beholden to fathers, husbands, brothers, and children.<sup>136</sup> It was, in part, such portrayals of financial independence from the patriarchal structure of family that made Egyptian female entertainers appear, in the eyes of British travelers, to threaten the parameters of acceptable performances of femininity in relation to economics.

Adding to British discomfort with the financial independence of ‘dancing girls,’ were the stereotypically masculine behavioural traits exhibited by some of the female entertainers in Egypt. In several cases, the *ghawâzî* and former-‘*awâlim*’ appear to have remained emboldened and retained their assertiveness despite their precarious post-1834 circumstances. Such attitudes visibly contrasted with the normative behavioural model for middle and upper class British women that demanded submissiveness, passivity, and silence. Instead, Egyptian female entertainers adopted a means of interacting, which, to the British, appeared masculine in its strong-willed forcefulness and audacity. For example, Charles Tilt described his surprise at witnessing “Alme [who] made no attempt to conceal their faces, and had a bold and impudent look,” while William Cowper Prime, feeling sick from drinking too much beer, noticed “a dancing-girl, whose intense black eyes flashed her fun as she saw me posed by the earthen dish of a vile abomination.”<sup>137</sup> In what is arguably a universally understood display of assertiveness and perhaps even of defiance, Amelia Edwards encountered ‘dancing girls’ who “showed their teeth and laughed familiarly in our faces.”<sup>138</sup> Likewise, M.L.M. Carey wrote of the shock to her friend “honest Sarah’s sense of propriety... and her looks of undisguised horror” at witnessing the performance of ‘dancing girls,’ noting that Sarah’s prudery had the adverse affect of “increasing the impudent looks of the ‘alme’ which were towards the conclusion mostly aimed at her.”<sup>139</sup> William Henry Gregory encountered similar brazenness in a ‘dancing girl’ who “nothing loath... took share of my shawl, my arraki,

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<sup>136</sup> William Henry Davenport Adams, *The Land of the Nile; or, Egypt Past and Present*; (London: T. Nelson & Sons, 1871), p. 235.

<sup>137</sup> Charles Tilt, *The Boat and the Caravan: A Family Tour Through Egypt and Syria*, 2nd ed.; (London: David Bogue, 1849), p. 137; William Cowper Prime, *Boat Life in Egypt and Nubia*; (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1857), p. 144.

<sup>138</sup> Amelia B. Edwards, *A Thousand Miles Up the Nile*; (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1888), p. 146.

<sup>139</sup> M.L.M. Carey, *Four Months in a Dahabëéh; or, Narrative of a Winter’s Cruise on the Nile*; (London: L. Booth, 1863), p. 144.

and my pipe.”<sup>140</sup> The assertiveness of Egypt’s female entertainers is further attested to by Lane, who described a “Ghazeeyah” who “struggled hard with me to prevent my passing without giving them a present,” and by Prime who wrote of “two ghawaze... swindling the various parties out of successive cups of coffee or the money to buy them.”<sup>141</sup> One thematic commonality in the above anecdotes appears to involve a bold refusal on the part of Egypt’s female entertainers to demur from eye contact with British travelers. While this could potentially be interpreted as a small act of resistance against the injustice of catering their performances to European desires in order to earn a living, it can be determined with certainty that such typically masculine behaviour was at odds with normative British codes of middle and upper class femininity.

Similarly irreconcilable with respectable nineteenth-century femininity was the practice of smoking tobacco, and British travelers made no attempt to mask their incredulity at witnessing Egypt’s female entertainers smoke regularly in their presence. The indignation expressed in British accounts of ‘dancing girls’ smoking, however, was focused far less upon the act itself, and more upon the gendered nature of the attitudes assumed while smoking. For example, William Drew Stent was surprised that Egyptian female entertainers “enjoy[ed] smoking the long, slender Turkish pipe ornamented with its elegantly enamelled amber mouth-piece, and furnished with tobacco of a most mild, delicious aroma,” and remarked that the practice “appear[ed] to us a masculine habit.”<sup>142</sup> Stent went on to describe his brother’s “astonishment” at witnessing the wife of an Armenian banker in Constantinople who smoked a pipe, “enjoying it as much as an British belle would the making a conquest of the handsomest beau in a ball-room.”<sup>143</sup> This simple notion of women shamelessly taking pleasure in a habit reserved exclusively for men in Britain was unnerving to many travelers. In Britain, smoking was largely considered to be a characteristically masculine pursuit until the close of the nineteenth-century and, as literary historian David Grylls argues, “the Victorian disapproval of

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<sup>140</sup> William Henry Gregory, *Egypt in 1855 and 1856; Tunis in 1857 and 1858*; (London: J.R. Smith, 1859), p. 161.

<sup>141</sup> Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 168; Prime, *Boat Life in Egypt and Nubia*, p. 144.

<sup>142</sup> William Drew Stent, *Egypt and the Holy Land in 1842, with Sketches of Greece, Constantinople, and the Levant*; (London: Richard Bentley 1843), p. 229.

<sup>143</sup> Stent, *Egypt and the Holy Land*, p. 229.

women's smoking appears to have been part of a wider culture of patriarchy, reinforced by evangelicalism and the cult of respectability."<sup>144</sup> It was therefore disquieting for the British in Egypt to see these rigid patriarchal norms nonchalantly overturned by 'dancing girls' who confidently "pass[ed] their time in smoking tobacco," "smoked ... with all the gravity of a *Pacha*," and who were even, as mentioned earlier, audacious enough to expropriate and smoke the personal pipes of British travelers without first ascertaining consent to do so.<sup>145</sup>

Grylls further discusses how, following the establishment of the British Anti-Tobacco Society by a group of prohibitionists in 1853, the growing puritan opposition to tobacco led temperate Victorians to "regard smoking... as a potentially corrupt indulgence," as "smoking was pleasurable, and pleasure was sinful."<sup>146</sup> Although the participation of 'dancing girls' in this hedonistic, masculine pastime was unorthodox, it did not hinder British voyeurism. In 1855, Adam Steinmetz Kennard wrote of how he "leaned back ... [and] prepare[d] [him]self to watch the mystic motions of two Ghawazee, who [were] sitting on the ground before [him] smoking cigarettes and toying with each other's head-dresses."<sup>147</sup> Other British travelers, such as Richard S. Ferguson, viewed the smoking of 'dancing girls' in explicitly sexualized terms. Ferguson wrote of a "being (I cannot call her fair) [who] smoked a full-flavoured cigar with great avidity," and opined of his difficulty in "flirtation with a blackish woman who smokes."<sup>148</sup> The blatant objectification of this 'being' and the overt sexualization of this 'blackish woman' can, perhaps, be most productively interpreted as a reactionary response to the subversive act of female smoking. The reputations of female entertainers in Egypt, already damaged in the eyes of British travelers for a number of reasons, certainly did not benefit from

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<sup>144</sup> David Grylls, "Smoke Signals: The Sexual Semiotics of Smoking in Victorian Fiction," *English*, Vol. 55, No. 211, (2006), p. 17.

<sup>145</sup> Davenport Adams, *The Land of the Nile*, p. 235; Hermann Ludwig Heinrich von Pückler-Muskau, Prince, *Egypt Under Mehemet Ali*, Translated by H. Evans Lloyd, Esq., Vol. I; (London: Henry Colburn, 1845), p. 165; Gregory, *Egypt in 1855 and 1856*, p. 161.

<sup>146</sup> Grylls, "Smoke Signals," p. 21.

<sup>147</sup> Adam Steinmetz Kennard, *Eastern Experiences, Collected During a Winter's Tour in Egypt and the Holy Land*; (London: Longman, Brown, Green, & Longman, 1855), p. 119.

<sup>148</sup> Richard S. Ferguson, *Moss Gathered by a Rolling Stone, or, Reminiscences of Travel*; (Carlisle: C. Thurnam & Sons, 1873) p. 86.

their habit of smoking; yet, even more damaging than their enjoyment of tobacco was the association between ‘dancing girls’ and intoxication.

When European travelers were present, the performances of Egyptian female entertainers typically involved the smoking of tobacco in conjunction with the consumption of fortified wine and *arak* both by members of the audience as well as by the ‘dancing girls’ themselves.<sup>149</sup> In Britain, throughout most of the century, excessive drinking was strongly associated with lower class masculinity, causing many travelers to object to the consumption of alcohol by Egypt’s ‘dancing girls.’ In order to more comprehensively understand why British travelers found the drinking of Egypt’s female entertainers to be so problematic, we must turn to the early nineteenth-century emergence of the Victorian Temperance Movement. This campaign towards moderating and restricting liquor in Britain arose in response to middle class perceptions of an unruly and drunken working class, which seemingly threatened to undermine the idealized societal pillars of self-restraint, religious morality, domesticity and frugality, among others.<sup>150</sup> The social reformers participating in this movement billed the excessive consumption of alcohol as a pressing public health issue, and called attention to the drinking of spirits, in particular, as problematic. Up until the end of the century, the redemption of lower class men remained the focal point of the temperance movement, whereas lower class women and children underwent a discursive process of victimization, which sought to portray them as suffering from poverty and violence as a result of the drinking habits of husbands and fathers.<sup>151</sup> Within this British temperance paradigm which denounced alcohol as a corrupting influence, and bearing in mind what historian Brian Howard Harrison calls the “masculine republic” of drinking spaces such as pubs and music halls, we can better understand the antagonistic and often hostile British approach to intemperance among Egyptian ‘dancing girls.’<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> *Arak*, (also known as *raki*) is an anise-flavoured distillation of grape pomace obtained during the fermentation of wine. In the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth-century, it was often further fortified by the addition of spirits imported from Europe.

<sup>150</sup> Brian Howard Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England 1815-1872*; (Staffordshire : Keele University Press, 1994.) pp. 49, 173.

<sup>151</sup> Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, p. 47.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

As historian Christine Lynn Alfano argues, by the mid-nineteenth-century in Britain, female drinking was widely believed to “destabilize the notions of conventional femininity,” and to corrupt the “angel-in-the-house persona.”<sup>153</sup> Accordingly, ‘dancing girls’ were invariably described in British accounts as incapable of restraint, “seldom refus[ing] brandy,” “accosting [their audience] with a demand for money and a few glasses of brandy,” “swallow[ing] the brandy readily,” and drinking brandy “to excess” and “almost as freely as coffee.”<sup>154</sup> The image of overindulgence and desperation that emerges is compounded by the recurring notion that “under the excitement of drink, the performers are very objectionable.”<sup>155</sup> As Edward William Lane recalled, the abundant intake of “brandy or some other intoxicating liquor” among the ‘dancing girls’ “extinguish[ed] the least spark of modesty, which they may yet sometimes affect to retain.”<sup>156</sup> Similarly, Sir William Henry Gregory recounted how “the *arraki* was poured fourth like water... [and] its inspiration produced an amount of affection on the part of our dusky lady friends that we could have dispensed with.”<sup>157</sup> Isabella Romer’s experience likewise epitomizes prevailing prejudices against the disrespectability of female drinking in her eviscerating account of a “*Gazi*” who “asked for some wine, and tossed off a large glass of that forbidden beverage without shame,” which Romer characterizes as “a disgusting proof of how easily vice levels not only every principle but every scruple.”<sup>158</sup> The consumption of liquor was further portrayed as a necessary crutch for their performances, with Sir Frederick Henniker describing how “the *almah*, having overcome all imaginary scruples, and sufficiently stimulated their courage by songs and brandy, were prepared to dance.”<sup>159</sup> The performances of Egypt’s female entertainers

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<sup>153</sup> Christine Lynn Alfano, *Under the Influence: Drink, Discourse, and Narrative, in Victorian Britain*; (Stanford: Stanford University Dissertations Publishing, 1995), p. 201.

<sup>154</sup> Charles Rochfort Scott, *Rambles in Egypt and Candia: with details of the military power and resources of those countries and observations on the government, policy, and commercial system of Mohammed Ali*; (London: Henry Colburn, 1837), p. 82; Madden, *Travels in Turkey*, p. 302; Charles Dudley Warner, *Mummies and Moslems*, (Toronto: Belford Brothers, 1876), p. 357; Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 271; Sophia Lane Poole, *The Englishwoman in Egypt: Letters From Cairo*; (London: Charles Knight and Co., 1844), p. 56.

<sup>155</sup> James Judd, *Diary Dottings in Palestine and Egypt: October 28th, 1886 - January 8th, 1887*; (London: Imprinted at Doctors’ Commons, 1887), p. 86.

<sup>156</sup> Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 97.

<sup>157</sup> Gregory, *Egypt in 1855 and 1856*, p. 161.

<sup>158</sup> Romer, *A Pilgrimage*, pp. 137, 138.

<sup>159</sup> Henniker, *Notes During a Visit to Egypt*, p. 73.

became so associated with alcohol, that travelers grew to anticipate that the women's "composure [would be] changed to the ravings of a Bacchante" upon the intake of liquor.<sup>160</sup> For example, Bayle St. John, who traveled to Egypt with the expectation of liquor-fuelled performances, was shocked when the 'dancing girls' "refus[ed] even to drink the *arraki* that was offered," and as a result speculated that they therefore must have been compelled to perform against their will.<sup>161</sup>

Female intoxication was very strongly condemned by the vast majority of middle and upper class British society throughout the century, and, as Martin J. Wiener has argued, "persistent drinking undermined virtually all facets of a married woman's essential role as wife, mother, and housekeeper," indicating that Egyptian female entertainers were conceptually positioned in direct opposition to nineteenth-century British ideals of womanhood.<sup>162</sup> However, in addition to the connection between the consumption of alcohol and masculinity outlined above, drinking had a second incriminatory association with prostitution. As Judith R. Walkowitz explains, "like alcoholic consumption, prostitution was linked to male leisure patterns," which meant that the two activities often went hand-in-hand.<sup>163</sup> The sale of alcohol and prostitution were relatively interdependent industries, and represented integral components of the British underworld economy. Drink sellers directly profited from the patronage of prostitutes, and historian Brian Howard Harrison has compellingly shown that "the alliance between the publican and prostitute was natural" as public houses and pubs such as "the Cyder Cellars, the Shades, the Cole Hole, and Evan's Supper Rooms" were renowned to double as meeting places for prostitutes and their clients.<sup>164</sup> The belief that women who drank were also likely implicated in prostitution continued to dominate British social thought throughout the century. As historian Susie L. Steinbach details, in 1872, when William Whitley applied for a license to serve wine to female customers of

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<sup>160</sup> Pückler-Muskau, *Egypt under Mehemet Ali*, p. 165.

<sup>161</sup> Bayle St. John, *Village Life in Egypt: with Sketches of the Said*, Vol. II; (London: Chapman and Hall, 1852), p. 71.

<sup>162</sup> Wiener, *Men of Blood*, p. 184

<sup>163</sup> Judith R. Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class, and the State*; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 23.

<sup>164</sup> Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, p. 50.

his London department store, critics were outraged and called into question the respectability of his patrons, arguing that “making a place for women in public transformed them into public women.”<sup>165</sup> Steinbach further discusses how the parallels of commerce and pleasure, shared between ladies out shopping and prostitutes soliciting themselves, was already considered dangerous apart from the additional impairment of women’s judgement by alcoholic consumption.<sup>166</sup> Although there were established parallels between drinking and prostitution, as will be explored below, intoxication was not the only connection drawn by British travelers between Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ and prostitutes.

### Parallels Between ‘Dancing Girls’ and British Prostitution

While Egyptian female entertainers had several observable characteristics that were perceived as analogous with conceptions of normative British masculinity, the former- *awâlim* and the *ghawâzî* were also frequently conflated with stereotypes of prostitution by British travelers. Widely published English translations of travelogues by infamous earlier visitors to Egypt such as Swiss traveler Burkhardt and French traveler Savary had already introduced an unsubstantiated link between female entertainers and prostitution to British audiences. Burkhardt went so far as to allege that Egypt’s “female singers are mostly public women of a loose description,” while Savary wrote more incriminatingly of a group of “prostitutes” inhabiting a *khan* (or market) in Canopus who “intercept passengers, before whom they sing and dance,” remarking “nothing can be more licentious than their songs, or more lascivious than their looks and gestures.”<sup>167</sup> Similarly, in the nineteenth-century, Lane famously characterized ‘dancing girls’ as “the most abandoned of courtesans;” however, although performances were deliberately

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<sup>165</sup> Susie L. Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians: Politics, Culture, and Society in Nineteenth-Century Britain*; (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 116.

<sup>166</sup> Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, p. 116.

<sup>167</sup> Johann Ludwig Burkhardt, *Arabic Proverbs, or the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians: Illustrated from Their Proverbial Sayings Current at Cairo*. 2nd ed.; (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1875), p. 134.; Claude Étienne Savary, *Letters on Egypt: Containing, A Parallel Between the Manners of its Ancient and Modern Inhabitants, its Commerce, Agriculture, Government and Religion*, Vol. I; (London: G.G.J. and J. Robinson, 1781), p. 70.



sexualized to appeal to the expectations of a new post-1834 audience, and although some of these women certainly did engage in sexual activities with foreigners for payment at the conclusion of a performance, archival examples of the latter are surprisingly rare and it appears that the practice of prostitution among female entertainers was an exception rather than a rule.<sup>168</sup> I here propose that it was not simply the fact that some ‘dancing girls’ would occasionally participate in for-profit sex with travelers that caused the British to associate them so strongly with prostitution. Rather, the British primarily based such conclusions upon superficial factors such as the clothes, makeup, public visibility, perceived lasciviousness and connections to performance culture, of the former- *‘awâlim* and *ghawâzî*.

Newly industrialized and urbanized Victorian Britain was embroiled in a society-wide debate about prostitution, or ‘The Great Social Evil’ as it was commonly advertised. From both a moral and a public health perspective, the issue of prostitution was contentious and attracted a great deal of attention and consternation throughout British society, from social purity activists, to politicians, to feminists, and members of the medico-legal communities.<sup>169</sup> Judith R. Walkowitz perhaps puts it best, describing the prototypical female sex worker in nineteenth-century Britain as “an object of fascination and disgust... ingrained in public consciousness as a highly visible symbol of the social dislocation attendant upon the new industrial era.”<sup>170</sup> The ambiguity of ‘prostitution’ as a terminological category meant that it was exceedingly difficult for contemporaries to establish any consensus on precisely which circumstances might implicate an individual as a prostitute. Prostitution was therefore often utilized as an umbrella category that included any form of extramarital sex, whether it involved a financial transaction or not.<sup>171</sup> As Historian Catherine Lee points out, the existence of multiple euphemisms to describe prostitutes such as “‘unfortunate,’ ‘woman of the town,’ ‘lady of easy virtue,’ ‘women of ill repute’ and ‘nymph du pave,’ all... reflect the wide spectrum of ambivalent and contradictory attitudes towards the prostitute figure that characterized the wider

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<sup>168</sup> Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 97.

<sup>169</sup> Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, p. 28.

<sup>170</sup> Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, p. 32.

<sup>171</sup> Attwood, *The Prostitute’s Body*, p. 14.

discourse.”<sup>172</sup> Perhaps most importantly, it should be noted that women who fell into the category of ‘prostitute’ would rarely identify with the term, or use it in reference to themselves.<sup>173</sup> It can be reasonably assumed that Egyptian female entertainers would likewise have rejected their characterization as prostitutes, choosing instead to conceive of themselves primarily as dancers and singers, even though their paid performances for foreign audiences were increasingly expected to include sexual acts as the century wore on. Following the 1834 exile of all public dancers and prostitutes from Cairo, the distinction between the *ghawâzî* and prostitutes was irreversibly disrupted and, simultaneously, the professional differentiation between the *‘awâlim* and the *ghawâzî* was permanently obscured. However, although Mehmed Ali certainly altered the historical trajectory of Ottoman Egyptian female entertainers by forcing some of them to turn to for-profit sex with travelers to secure their own livelihood, as mentioned above, the British were predisposed to associate the *ghawâzî* and, increasingly after 1834, the former-*‘awâlim* with British prostitutes. Outside of the potential for actual prostitution to occur at the conclusion of a performance, there existed several parallels in appearance, public visibility, performance culture, and perceived licentiousness that informed the numerous British appraisals of these women as prostitutes.

In nineteenth-century Britain, a woman’s appearance was generally considered to provide an indication of her sexual respectability or impropriety, as well as her social background. The quality and degree of modesty in a woman’s dress and use of cosmetics were closely scrutinized when making such judgements of character and class. Yet, such attempts to discern women’s sexual morality and social pedigree from visual cues alone were hampered by the emergent industrial capitalist culture and the new modes of consumption it produced, which made perceptible the instability of categories of class and enabled the unwelcome potential for social mobility through the imitation of social superiors’ outward presentation.<sup>174</sup> In particular, the increased manufacturing of cheaper garments and accessories that closely mimicked the apparel of wealthier classes

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<sup>172</sup> Catherine Lee, *Policing Prostitution, 1856-1886: Deviance, Surveillance, and Morality*; (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), p. 65.

<sup>173</sup> Attwood, *The Prostitute’s Body*, p. 14.

<sup>174</sup> Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, p. 120.

facilitated the affordable consumption of such attire by prostitutes which led to the widespread belief in what criminologist Mariana Valverde refers to as the “fall to finery” narrative.<sup>175</sup> The concept of ‘finery,’ signifying inappropriately ostentatious, showy, or voguish apparel, was reimagined as the embodiment of prostitution and, as Lee argues, tended to involve associations with “vulgarity and with dissolute habits and indulgence in personal luxury, [which was further] viewed as a ‘relaxation in virtue.’”<sup>176</sup> Accordingly, in contrast to most other women of the lower labouring classes, by the mid-nineteenth-century public prostitutes’ garments were imagined hyperbolically in British society as stereotypically consisting of gaudy patterns, bright colours, expensive lace, and revealing neck and hem lines, and as too expensive for the woman wearing them.<sup>177</sup> Although common prostitutes often benefitted from subtle distinctions in their appearance such as neglecting to wear a bonnet or the noticeable application of cosmetics, which enabled them to publicly attract the attention of male customers and to indirectly solicit their bodies for profit, the stereotype of exaggerated displays of finery was highly misrepresented. Realistically, it was far more typical for a prostitute’s dress to attempt to be only slightly indistinct from the fashionable dress of respectable middle and upper class women. As Judith R. Walkowitz argues, the prostitute’s “costume was... a badge of membership in a special female peer group, one that bore a peculiar relationship to the values of the dominant culture” as “in their dress, prostitutes emulated the conspicuous display of middle and upper class ladies.”<sup>178</sup> Such attempts to appropriate the sartorial habits of well-to-do women thereby functioned as a means of signifying the affluence and economic independence that prostitution could afford to lower-class women who would otherwise face financial destitution and dependence in their occupations as factory workers or seamstresses.

No matter how closely women of lower moral and socio-economic status emulated the appearance of so-called respectable women, they were unable to

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<sup>175</sup> Mariana Valverde, “The Love of Finery: Fashion and the Fallen Woman in Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse,” *Victorian Studies* Vol. 32, No. 2, (Winter, 1989), p. 174.

<sup>176</sup> Lee, *Policing Prostitution*, p. 70.

<sup>177</sup> Marijana Stojkovic, "Redefining the Unrepentant Prostitute in Victorian Poetry" (2015) Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Paper 2532, p. 29. Stable URL: <http://dc.etsu.edu/etd/2532>

<sup>178</sup> Walkowirz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, p. 26.

meaningfully alter societal perceptions of their rank, and remained obstructed by entrenched class hierarchies. Valverde argues that the clothes worn by prostitutes would inevitably correspond with preconceptions of the ‘fall to finery’ narrative and be considered “too showy” and “in some unspecified way cheap, if only because the woman wearing them was herself a cheap imitation of upper-class womanhood.”<sup>179</sup> The discursive treatment of the appearance of female entertainers in Egypt is likewise implicated in this paradox, particularly in travelers’ descriptions of the garishness of their dress. John Carne remarked that “the Almék girls ... dress in a gaudy and fantastic manner,” Edward Lane described how “the dress... differs from that of respectable women in being a little more gay,” Charles Tilt called them “showily dressed,” and Richard S. Ferguson reported that they wore “dress[es] of crimson, cherry, red, magenta, light blue, or some such brilliant-coloured silk, embroidered most elaborately with gold and silver flowers.”<sup>180</sup> One traveler observed “a woman magnificently dressed in crimson satin, sitting cross-legged on a piece of ragged matting at the door of a mud hovel;” a small vignette which aptly summarizes the above paradox by which lower class women’s superficial finery could never entirely mask their social status.<sup>181</sup> This is reiterated by a second traveler’s description of “the dancing women whom travelers are so desirous of seeing,” stating that “in showy dresses of bright yellow and red, adorned with a profusion of silver-gilt necklaces, earrings, and bracelets, they sit at the doors of their hovels in idle expectation.”<sup>182</sup> References to the excessive ornamentation of Egyptian female entertainers involved the common theme of a “profusion” of jewellery exhibited by female entertainers including “tawdry necklaces,” “showy bracelets, and ... fingers loaded with rings.”<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Valverde, “The Love of Finery,” p. 168.

<sup>180</sup> John Carne, *Letters from the East*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Vol. I; (London: Henry Colburn, 1826), p. 133; Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 100; Tilt, *The Boat and the Caravan*, p. 137; Ferguson, *Moss Gathered*, p. 85;

<sup>181</sup> Laurent Laporte, *Sailing on the Nile*, translated by Virginia Vaughan; (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1872), p. 87.

<sup>182</sup> Warner, *Mummies and Moslems*, p. 149.

<sup>183</sup> Laporte, *Sailing on the Nile*, p. 78; J.A. St. John, *Egypt and Mohammed Ali*, p. 106; Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 100; Warburton, *The Crescent and the Cross*, p. 296; William Henry Bartlett, *The Nile Boat; or, Glimpses of the Land of Egypt*; (London: A. Hall & Virtue, 1849), p. 114; Warner, *Mummies and Moslems*, p. 149.

More explicitly, Edward William Lane wrote that the “Ghazeeyahs ... dress in the same manner as other low prostitutes,” while Sir William Henry Gregory found one *ghawâzî*’s “scarlet” robe to be reminiscent of “the costume of the wicked woman of Babylon,” a well-known biblical prostitute.<sup>184</sup> Several travelers remarked upon the “transparency” of the dresses, which “fitted closely to their shapes,” and wrote of “ghawazee... dressed in the voluptuous half-naked style of their profession,” and “banished dancing girls” who “flaunt about the bazaars with loose, immodest dresses.”<sup>185</sup> Thomas Wallace Knox even went so far as to quip that the “Ghawazee at Keneh... didn’t have enough clothes about them to fill a snuff box” and teased that one “could have sent their entire lot of garments by mail with a single postage stamp.”<sup>186</sup> Such “tantalising costumes,” as James Augustus (J.A.) St. John alleged, were “contrived with seeming negligence” to “exhibit every beauty and contour of the figure,” and were often “purposely discomposed ... so as to expose nearly the whole front of the person.” Lane echoes St. John’s estimation of the ‘dancing girls’ seductive sartorial intent in “alluringly dispos[ing]” their dresses “to display to advantage their fine forms,” which he argued was “calculated.”<sup>187</sup> Similarly, William Yates referenced ‘dancing girls’ “attired in a quantity of gaudy, glittering finery of various colours, thrown upon them without any regard to neatness or decorum, and so transparent as scarcely to conceal the skin.”<sup>188</sup> Alfred Joshua Butler suggested that the perceived lasciviousness of the “dancing girls... costume” provided justification for their objectification, and described a scene in which men watched the entertainment “with the air of men looking at performing monkeys, and made rude but deserved remarks on the extraordinary lowness of the ladies’ dresses.”<sup>189</sup> By the 1870s, expectations surrounding the exotic and salacious attire of Ottoman Egypt’s female entertainers had become so prevalent an imagining that authors began expressing their “disappointment” at how “European” the dress of the *ghawâzî* had

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<sup>184</sup> Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 100; Gregory, *Egypt in 1855 and 1856*, p. 160.

<sup>185</sup> J.A. St. John, *Egypt and Mohammed Ali*, pp. 108-109; Madden, *Travels in Turkey*, p. 300; Prime, *Boat Life in Egypt and Nubia*, p. 145; Bartlett, *The Nile Boat*, p. 198.

<sup>186</sup> Thomas Wallace Knox, *Bakcsheesh! Or, Life and Adventures in the Orient*; (Connecticut: A.D. Worthington & Co., 1875), p. 572.

<sup>187</sup> Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 168.

<sup>188</sup> William Yates, *The Modern History and Condition of Egypt, its Climate, Diseases, and Capabilities*, Vol. I; (London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1843), p. 215.

<sup>189</sup> Alfred Joshua Butler, *Court Life in Egypt*; (London: Chapman and Hall, 1887), p. 51.

become.<sup>190</sup> Another author similarly wrote that he “had been much disappointed in the magnificence of the dresses of the Ghawazee, - a realization had fallen short of the anticipation.”<sup>191</sup>

While clothing was generally an inaccurate means by which to identify prostitutes in nineteenth-century Britain, the heavy and conspicuous application of facial cosmetic products such as rouge, lipstick, and powder made prostitutes easily recognisable and distinguished them from the majority of women in society.<sup>192</sup> Aside from prostitutes, only actresses applied themselves with excessive make-up to ensure that their expressions would be visible to their audiences; yet, as will be subsequently discussed, female stage performers suffered from a similarly disreputable moral status.<sup>193</sup> In various mediums of popular culture the trope of salacious urban ‘painted ladies’ was frequently juxtaposed with the coveted ‘natural’ beauty of respectable women, who were ironically expected to subtly and secretly apply cosmetics such as skin-lighteners and powders, and to enhance their veins with blue ink in order to adhere to fashionable ideals of paleness.<sup>194</sup> As Paula Black argues, in addition to societal concerns about the correlation between prostitution and excessive makeup, “Victorians feared that cosmetics were a paint which could be used as a mask” and were “suspicious of the use of such ‘artifice,’ fearing that they could be trapped into marriage by the false appearance of an older woman.”<sup>195</sup> Moralistic objections to feminine vanity and beliefs in the inherent potential for deception within cosmetics induced the disparagement and castigation of women who perceptibly wore makeup. It was while bearing this prejudice in mind that British travelers encountered the use of kohl and rouge by Egypt’s female entertainers.

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<sup>190</sup> Thomas Gold Appleton, *A Nile Journal*; (London: Macmillan & Co., 1876), p. 26.

<sup>191</sup> Ferguson, *Moss Gathered*, p. 85.

<sup>192</sup> Helen Mathers, *Patron Saint of Prostitutes: Josephine Butler and a Victorian Scandal*; (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2014), p. 43.

<sup>193</sup> Paula Black, *The Beauty Industry: Gender, Culture, Pleasure*; (London: Routledge, 2004), p.23

<sup>194</sup> Michael Baker, *The Rise of the Victorian Actor*, (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978) p. 51; Black, *The Beauty Industry*, p. 23.

<sup>195</sup> Black, *The Beauty Industry*, p. 23.

Kohl is a cosmetic product, traditionally made from a powdered mixture of sulfide minerals, which has historically been used throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia to darken the appearance of eyes and eyebrows. Many travelers reported witnessing “eyebrows... painted to meet on the bridge of the nose” among female entertainers in Egypt, as well as “eyelids ... painted black” and eyes “rendered still longer and darker by the application of kohl that encircled them.”<sup>196</sup> The “large kohl tinted eyes” of ‘dancing girls’ were said by Eliot Warburton to “give them a very languishing expression,” whereas for travelers such as Charles Dudley Warner, the application of kohl took on a far more sinister dimension.<sup>197</sup> Warner wrote of “veiled daughters of sin [who] flash invitation from their kohl stained eyes,” and determined that the use of such a cosmetic “gives women such a wicked and dangerous aspect.”<sup>198</sup> Although many travelers felt disconcerted upon witnessing women wearing kohl, it was the use of rouge among Egypt’s female entertainers, which appears to have been far more troubling to the British. This uneasiness was often couched in language that insinuated a similarity with the ‘painted ladies’ of Britain, such as by Amelia Edwards who decried the “painting and plastering” of ‘dancing girls’, whose “cheeks were extravagantly rouged.”<sup>199</sup> William Henry Bartlett denounced the ‘dancing girls’ “dusky cheeks thickly covered with paint,” while Charles Tilt speculated that “the colour on their cheeks was probably artificial.”<sup>200</sup> In a similar tone, William Yates critiqued the use of rouge among the *ghawâzî*, writing that “the face was entirely exposed to view, and although a stranger to blush, familiar with paint, which was not of the most expensive quality, and daubed upon the sallow cheek without discretion.”<sup>201</sup>

As with the conspicuous use of cosmetics, associations between modesty and women’s adoption of bonnets while moving through public spaces informed how British travelers conceived of the unveiled *ghawâzî* they encountered. On the streets of British

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<sup>196</sup> Edwards, *A Thousand Miles up the Nile*, p. 146; Madden, *Travels in Turkey* p. 301; Romer, *A Pilgrimage*, Vol. I, p. 276.

<sup>197</sup> Kennard, *Eastern Experiences*, p. 121; Warburton, *The Crescent and the Cross*, p. 296

<sup>198</sup> Warner, *Mummies and Moslems*, p. 97, p. 197. Further discussion of the relationship between the ‘*awâlim* and the *ghawâzî* and *femmes fatales* can be found in the subsequent chapter.

<sup>199</sup> Edwards, *A Thousand Miles up the Nile*, p. 146.

<sup>200</sup> Bartlett, *The Nile Boat*, p. 198; Tilt, *The Boat and the Caravan*, p. 137.

<sup>201</sup> Yates, *The Modern History and Condition of Egypt*, p. 215.

cities, prostitutes were renowned for walking “bonnetless” as a means of advertising their trade.<sup>202</sup> In historian Catherine Lee’s discussion of this “close correlation of bare-headedness with immorality,” she argues that “going bare-headed was... interpreted as utter wantonness.”<sup>203</sup> The lack of veiling among the female entertainers to whom British travelers had access was therefore similarly viewed as indicative of moral corruption. Michael Russell wrote that the *ghawâzî* “now lay aside the veil and with it the modesty of their sex;” sentiments mirrored by William Yates who opined that public female entertainers “la[y] aside the modest veil, and with it, their reputation.”<sup>204</sup> Eliot Warburton detailed “unveiled bosoms,” Edward James S. Dicey recounted that the ‘dancing girls’ “faces [were] barely covered,” and Edward William Lane was astonished that “the Ghawazee perform, unveiled, in the public streets, even to amuse the rabble.”<sup>205</sup> Likewise, J.A. St. John wrote of “Alme who sought to tempt the eye by their naked faces and bosoms,” and George William Curtis described “the Ghawazee” as “not honourable because... they show to the sun, moon, stars, and all human eyes their unveiled faces.”<sup>206</sup> William Wittman went so far as to attest that “these dissolute and abandoned females have the face uncovered, which, in the countries of the east, is accounted in the women a certain indication of the most notorious profligacy.”<sup>207</sup> Wittman’s presumption that unveiled Egyptian women were perceived “in the east” with the same suspicion and recrimination as bonnetless women in Britain, is demonstrative of the prevalence of a perspective which correlated sexual immodesty with the exposure of a woman’s face in mid-nineteenth-century Britain. As Lee writes, British women who dared to venture without bonnets were regarded as deviant as they “offended against prevailing codes of

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<sup>202</sup> Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, p. 26.

<sup>203</sup> Lee, *Policing Prostitution*, p. 66.

<sup>204</sup> Michael Russell, Rev., *View of Ancient and Modern Egypt; with an Outline of its Natural History*; (New York: J. & J. Harper, 1831), p. 320; Yates, *The Modern History and Condition of Egypt*, p. 215.

<sup>205</sup> Warburton, *The Crescent and the Cross*, p. 296; Edward S. Dicey, *The Morning Land*, Vol. II, (London: Macmillan & Co., 1870), p. 81; Lane, *Mannes and Customs*, p. 95.

<sup>206</sup> J.A. St John, *Egypt and Mohammed Ali*, Vol. II, p. 183; George William Curtis, *Nile Notes of a Howadji*; (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1851), p. 122.

<sup>207</sup> William Wittman, *Travels in Turkey, Asia Minor, Syria, and Across the Desert into Egypt*; (Philadelphia: James Humphreys, 1804), p. 268.



socially acceptable feminine conduct;” such subversiveness was explicitly connected to “prevailing ideologies of purity and morality.”<sup>208</sup>

Parallels between the appearance of the *ghawâzî* in Egypt and popular imaginings of female prostitutes in Britain were further enhanced and reinforced by the public visibility of these women. In Victorian society, as historian Susie L. Steinbach writes, so-called ‘respectable’ women “did not enjoy men’s freedom to enjoy public space, a problem exemplified by the fact that ‘public woman’ was a euphemism for prostitute.”<sup>209</sup> Prostitutes therefore inhabited certain urban spaces that were inaccessible to most other women in society, frequenting shipyard docks, pubs, music halls, pleasure gardens, dance halls and casinos.<sup>210</sup> Accordingly, historian Judith Flanders argues that “more than anything, a woman’s lack of respectability was signalled by her presence in a place of public entertainment.”<sup>211</sup> Prostitutes who solicited themselves publicly garnered a great deal of attention and commentary from those they encountered, and this high visibility caused them to be seen as threatening to the patriarchal order of society, which sought to confine women to the domestic sphere. Likewise, when British travelers witnessed Egypt’s female entertainers habituating coffee houses and circulating within traditionally male spheres, they would similarly have viewed it as a patriarchal threat.

Prior to Mehmed Ali’s 1834 edict, the *ghawâzî* appear to have been frequent inhabitants of public spaces, both in Cairo and in other sizable towns throughout Upper Egypt. Female entertainers were said to “attract crowds of the populace in the squares, streets, and places of public resort,” and to captivate the masses in the “coffee and eating houses, and dancing rooms” of Egyptian bazaars.<sup>212</sup> The *ghawâzî* were known to perform “their voluptuous dance” at weddings, where Sir Robert Thomas Wilson claimed they represented “an unalienable part of the ceremony, and are admired in the degree that they are most indecent,” and were hired to sing during funerary processions and dance at

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<sup>208</sup> Lee, *Policing Prostitution*, p. 64.

<sup>209</sup> Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, p. 17.

<sup>210</sup> Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, p. 24.

<sup>211</sup> Judith Flanders, “Prostitution,” *The British Library*, (2012), p.1 <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/prostitution>

<sup>212</sup> Wittman, *Travels in Turkey*, p. 268; John Bramsen, *Travels in Egypt, Syria, Cyprus, the Morea, Greece, Italy, &c. &c.*; (London: Henry Colburn & Co., 1820), p. 201.

celebratory public festivals such as *mûlids*.<sup>213</sup> Conversely, the *‘awâlim*, prior to Mehmed Ali’s edict, would never entertain publicly, and would only sing and recite poetry in harems or at events hosted by influential Cairene elites while hidden from male view behind a *mashribiyya*, or latticed screen. After 1834, however, travelers’ accounts indicate that although the *ghawâzî* continued to exhibit themselves in front of crowds of people, and the *‘awâlim*, began to perform publicly, both categories of female entertainer were relegated to a specific quarter in most Upper Egyptian towns. Lane suggested that these quarters overlapped with areas “allotted to public women in general,” but other travelers such as Bayle St. John and Wallace Knox suggested that female entertainers occupied a space that was distinct, but possibly adjacent to prostitutes.<sup>214</sup> William Henry Davenport Adams wrote that “dancing girls” tended to live in “various squalid huts upon the shore, to which the voyager’s curiosity almost invariably attracts him,” which suggests that the living areas of female entertainers were deliberately situated in the most commercially advantageous position to solicit the interest of foreigners touring the Nile by boat.<sup>215</sup> As most European travelers remained determined to witness Egypt’s famous ‘dancing girls’ after their banishment in 1834, the entire town would have benefitted from an increase in remunerative opportunities once foreigners had been lured to shore. Perhaps this conceptualization of Egypt’s female entertainers as seductive songstresses luring the unwitting sailor to his moral destruction is why Sir William Henry Gregory described the *ghawâzî* as “sirens.”<sup>216</sup> Interestingly, as Steinbach points out, the spatial quartering of female entertainers corresponds with prostitutes’ experiences in mid-nineteenth-century Britain, as “most Victorian attempts to regulate prostitution (notably the 1860s Contagious Diseases Acts) aimed not to stop prostitution, but to contain it

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<sup>213</sup> Wittman, *Travels in Turkey*, p. 240; Thomas Legh, Esq., *Narrative of a Journey in Egypt and the Country Beyond the Cataracts*; (London: J. Murray, 1816), p. 126; Anne Katharine Curteis Elwood, *Narrative of a Journey Overland from England, by the Continent of Europe, Egypt, and the Red Sea to India*, Vol. I; (London: Henry Colburn, 1830), p. 210; Thomas Wilson, *Nozrani in Egypt and Syria*; (London: Longman, Brown, Green, & Longman, 1846), p. 72; Carne, *Letters from the East*, p. 85; Edward Daniel Clarke, 4th ed., Vol. V, *Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia, and Africa*; (London: T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1816), p. 170.

<sup>214</sup> Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 99; Bayle St. John, *Village Life in Egypt*, p. 69; Knox, *Bakcsheesh*, p. 606.

<sup>215</sup> Davenport Adams, *The Land of the Nile*, p. 234.

<sup>216</sup> Gregory, *Egypt in 1855 and 1856*, p. 255.

spatially, in specific urban areas.”<sup>217</sup> Correspondingly, historian Judith R. Walkowitz acknowledges that throughout the century, most British cities and towns had “at least one notorious district” where, like the *ghawâzî*, prostitutes would live and practice their trade without institutionalized regulation.<sup>218</sup>

In conjunction with the sexually immodest implications of their public visibility, the *ghawâzî* and former- *‘awâlim* were further affiliated with archetypal representations of British prostitutes as a result of their participation in performance culture. As historian Michael Baker states, female dancers and actresses in Victorian Britain paid a “price for public exposure,” which necessarily involved intense scrutiny and scathing criticism.<sup>219</sup> Julie Hackney argues that this prejudice against female performers stemmed from its occupational parallels with prostitution, as “both operated at night... both painted their faces, wore revealing costumes, simulated (or dissimulated), and employed the wiles by which (to use the then-current mythology) the first fair seducer brought about man’s downfall.”<sup>220</sup> Furthermore, as Sue Thomas discusses, both performer and prostitute “display[ed] themselves publicly for the gratification of others, and for money.”<sup>221</sup> Although these comparisons were largely counterfactual, perceptions of actresses and dancers as sexually promiscuous remained pervasive throughout the century.

The *Swell’s Night Guide* series, published in Britain in the 1830s and 1840s, advised pleasure-seeking men on how to approach actresses backstage and ask to hire them for “private theatricals,” rather than simply offering them money as was conventional in engaging the services of a prostitute.<sup>222</sup> Notably, British travelers who actively sought to witness a risqué performance by female entertainers in Egypt generally acted in correspondence with the advice provided in such night guides, and would invite the women onto their boats or request a private performance rather than offering ‘dancing

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<sup>217</sup> Steinbach, *Understanding the Victorians*, p. 28.

<sup>218</sup> Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, pp. 24, 25.

<sup>219</sup> Baker, *The Rise of the Victorian Actor*, p. 49.

<sup>220</sup> Hackney, “Body Language,” p. 227.

<sup>221</sup> Sue Thomas, *Victorian Traffic: Identity, Exchange, Performance*; (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), p. 240.

<sup>222</sup> Flanders, “Prostitution,” p. 1.

girls' money up front.<sup>223</sup> J.A. St. John, for example, “informed [the *almé*] that [he and his party] were desirous of witnessing their performances” privately, upon which the travelers were ushered into a coffee house where they sat back and watched the “paroxysm of passion” unfold.<sup>224</sup> A few decades after J.A. St. John traveled to Egypt, his son Bayle St. John sought out a similarly provocative experience with the famed ‘dancing girls,’ by engaging “a self-appointed guide [who] professed to know the dwelling of every one of the celebrities.”<sup>225</sup> A local intermediary was also employed by Davenport Adams, whose dragoman acted “as guide and interpreter, and introduce[d] [those intent on ‘paying the dancing-girls a visit’] into the interior of some particular hovel which he has selected as a suitable theatre for performances.”<sup>226</sup> Charles Tilt noted that the ‘dancing girls’ “indelicate exhibitions are reserved for a more private display,” indicating that in order to witness a more lascivious form of dancing or to have a sexual encounter with Egypt’s female entertainers, one had to make a special request such as those outlined above.<sup>227</sup> However, Duff Gordon’s account makes clear that such requests for an erotic performance were not always well-received, as her friend, Seyyid Ahmad, had experienced “great annoyance from two Englishmen, who behaved in such a manner to the girls that he was obliged to turn them out of his house after hospitably entertaining them.”<sup>228</sup>

The indeterminate characterization of Egyptian female entertainers as simultaneously performers and prostitutes parallels the ambiguity that plagued women of the stage in Britain. In both cases, it was the possibility of a sexual liaison following a performance that generated scandal and perverse interest among British travelers in Egypt and theatregoers in Britain. However, it should be noted that although many *ghawâzî* and former-*awâlim* did not engage in sexual activity with their British audiences, their reputations remained equally damaged by perceptions of their dance as

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<sup>223</sup> Romer, *A Pilgrimage*, Vol. 1, p. 136; Romer had her servant bring a “Ghawazee” onto her boat so “that we might inspect her more closely.”

<sup>224</sup> J.A. St John, *Egypt and Mohammed Ali*, pp. 107 - 112.

<sup>225</sup> Bayle St. John, *Village Life in Egypt*, p. 69.

<sup>226</sup> Davenport Adams, *The Land of the Nile*, p. 234.

<sup>227</sup> Tilt, *The Boat and the Caravan*, p. 149.

<sup>228</sup> Lucie Duff Gordon, Lady, *Letters from Egypt, 1863-1865*; (London: Macmillan & Co., 1865), p. 161.

lascivious. A final and essential connection between Egyptian female entertainers and popular British conceptions of prostitution therefore lies in this perceived lasciviousness. For nineteenth-century British audiences, the immodesty that was implicitly or explicitly expressed through female dancing and theatrics was considered emblematic of that performer's immorality off-stage, in real life.<sup>229</sup> In particular, the bee-dance did much to reinforce such prejudices. The bee-dance - also known as the 'wasp dance' - involved the pretence of a bee or a wasp trapped within the dancer's clothes, which forces her to remove each article one-by-one in an attempt to rid herself of the imaginary insect.

The bee dance didn't begin to appear in travelogues until the 1840s, a few years subsequent to the banishment of female public dancers from Cairo, which indicates that this dance was designed for the express purpose of appealing to the expectations of foreign travelers who intended to see an erotic style of performance in Egypt. Following 1834, the *ghawâzî* and former-*'awâlim* were struggling to earn a living in remote Upper Egyptian towns, and were induced to alter their performances to incorporate an erotic subtext. William Drew Stent, who visited Egypt in 1842, wrote that "the dancing girls called Alme... are of most debased character, their movements being quite voluptuous, especially in the bee dance, in which, from the supposition that the insect is stinging them, they become after a short period so violent as to tear off almost the entire garments."<sup>230</sup> Eliot Warburton had a similar experience one year later in 1843, when he witnessed an "actress... standing musing in a pensive posture, when a wasp is supposed to fly into her bosom – her girdle – all about her."<sup>231</sup> Warburton further remarked that in light of the salacious nature of such performances "these dances are certainly not adapted for public exhibition in England."<sup>232</sup> Although many British travelers witnessed the bee dance, the most infamous encounter occurred during French traveler Gustave Flaubert's 1849 journey to Egypt, where he engaged the services of Kuchuk Hanem in Esna. Remarkably, although Kuchuk Hanem allegedly performed sexual acts following an earlier performance, Flaubert recorded the former-*'awâlim*'s immense discomfort in

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<sup>229</sup> Baker, *The Rise of the Victorian Actor*, p. 50.

<sup>230</sup> Stent, *Egypt and the Holy Land*, pp. 238, 239.

<sup>231</sup> Warburton, *The Crescent and the Cross*, p. 296.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

performing the bee dance, and her request that all of the accompanying musicians remain blindfolded during the entertainment. Kuchuk Hanem's reluctance and self-consciousness around the bee-dance reinforces the notion that this dance must have been designed with foreign audiences in mind, especially as it seems that Kuchuk Hanem considered it disgraceful to perform it before the eyes of local Egyptian men, such as her musicians, because it required her to remove her clothes. This infamous type of dance appears to have been discontinued upon the British invasion of Alexandria in 1882, with its final mention – so far as I can tell – appearing in Henry Villiers-Stuart's 1883 publication *Egypt After the War*.<sup>233</sup> Villiers-Stuart details how the invading British forces were very curious, in particular, to see a performance in which “the *danseuse* pretends that a wasp has got into her clothes and tears them madly off one after the other.”<sup>234</sup> Under the pretence of extracting data about the country they now occupied, Villiers-Stuart suggested that “the English officers, thirsting for information and no doubt zealous to pick up facts for the Intelligence Department, threw out several hints to our host to remind the Almehs of this item in their *répertoire*.”<sup>235</sup> However, the female entertainers and the host refused to acquiesce, causing Villiers-Stuart to remark that “evidently they were on their good behaviour and meant to be strictly proper and correct” when in the presence of the occupying British forces.<sup>236</sup> Although Villiers-Stuart's account is a testament to the enduring renown of the bee-dance among British travelers throughout the century, it remains unclear as to how, exactly, witnessing the ‘wasp dance’ might have aided official investigations into pressing matters of British imperial intelligence and security.

## Conclusion:

Given those few Egyptian female entertainers who did engage in for-profit sex with foreigners, in addition to ‘dancing girls’ connections with public visibility, conspicuous application of cosmetics, ostentatious sartorial choices, participation in

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<sup>233</sup> Henry Villiers-Stuart, *Egypt After the War*; (London: John Murray, 1883).

<sup>234</sup> Villiers-Stuart, *Egypt After the War*, p. 304.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 305.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*

performance culture, and perceived licentiousness, it becomes clear how British travelers came to associate the *ghawâzî* and former-*‘awâlim* with prostitutes. Likewise, the financial independence and behavioural emboldenment, of ‘dancing girls,’ as well as their habits of smoking and drinking, were understandably interpreted by middle class British travelers as resembling stereotypical British masculinity. However, while there is ample evidence to indicate that British travelers viewed the *ghawâzî* and former-*‘awâlim* as too masculine and too similar to prostitutes, far more valuable to the purposes of this thesis is determining why, specifically, these women’s associations with masculinity and prostitution were so problematic for British travelers. After all, it should be noted that in the vast majority of travelogues I have examined, British observers are intensely critical of ‘dancing girls.’ Recording and publishing accounts detailing the transgressiveness of female entertainers was a central preoccupation for British travelers to Egypt in the nineteenth-century. The extensive and remarkably negative attention garnered by the *ghawâzî* and former-*‘awâlim* indicates that these women were perceived as threatening, in some unspecified respect, to many of the British travelers who witnessed them.

To begin with the likeness between Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ and popular middle class conceptions of British masculinity, it is necessary to return to the ideological convention that exhorted the naturalness of inequality between men and women. Such representations of gender subscribed to what cultural historian Mary Poovey refers to as “the mid-Victorian symbolic economy,” which served to reinforce notions of sexual difference that separated the social roles of “‘manly’ men and ‘womanly’ women.”<sup>237</sup> By positioning females as both physically and mentally inferior to males, prevailing beliefs in sexual difference prevented women from participating in the masculine public sphere, and were designed to restrict women’s engagement in hedonistic practices traditionally reserved for men. Therefore, when Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ proved adept at earning income self-sufficiently, were behaviourally assertive, and participated in smoking tobacco and drinking alcohol, the resulting imagery deviated from conventional notions

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<sup>237</sup> Mary Poovey, *Urban Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in mid-Victorian England*; (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 6.

of femininity and female capability. The disruptive iconography associated with the masculine characteristics displayed by ‘dancing girls’ had the potential to undermine the narrative of sexual difference and was therefore directly subversive to the otherwise presumed reverence for male authority that was absolutely central to the preservation of patriarchal social structures. To this end, Poovey asserts, “the construction and deployment of... [representation[s] of biological sexuality] performed critical ideological work at mid-century... [and] were intimately involved in the development of England’s characteristic social institutions, the organization of its most basic economic and legal relations, and in the rationalization of its imperial ambitions.”<sup>238</sup> This very real relationship between protecting the sanctity of masculinity as an exclusively male domain, and the corresponding prosperity of the British imperial project, rendered the masculine characteristics of Egypt’s ‘dancing girls’ inherently rebellious.

With regards to understanding why the relationship between Egyptian female entertainers and British prostitution was so disturbing to British travelers, it is imperative to consider the symbolism of prostitutes in Victorian society. Historian Michelle Allen conceives of the nineteenth-century British prostitute as “a figure of social transgression,” who “functioned as one of the most resonant symbols of pollution in the Victorian middle-class imagination.”<sup>239</sup> This concept of pollution implies the physical danger of venereal disease, but perhaps more importantly, it conveys moral corruption at both a societal and familial level.<sup>240</sup> Walkowitz demonstrates how, in response, evangelicals “concerned themselves with strengthening the patriarchal family because they sought to reimpose the moral and social authority of the father over extrafamilial relations at a time when the social and material bases of paternalism were widely perceived as eroding by the middle and upper classes.”<sup>241</sup> It is precisely within this context of the perceived decline of patriarchal authority within mid-Victorian society that British travelers’ hostility towards Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ associations with prostitution must be situated. Prostitutes represented the absolute antithesis to Victorian idealizations of womanhood,

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<sup>238</sup> Poovey, *Urban Developments*, p. 2.

<sup>239</sup> Michelle Allen, *Cleansing the City: Sanitary Geographies in Victorian London*; (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), p. 63.

<sup>240</sup> Allen, *Cleansing the City*, p. 63.

<sup>241</sup> Walkowitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, p. 33.



as they rejected their prescriptive roles as wives and mothers and refused to be contained within the literal and figurative domestic space allotted to them within patriarchal society. It was this same apparent refusal on the part of the *ghawâzî* and former-*‘awâlim* to participate in matrimony and motherhood which appears to have been most principally concerning to British travelers.

To once again consider the work of Poovey, many nineteenth-century British authors argued that unmarried women, epitomized in prostitution, “constitute[d] *‘the problem to be solved,’*” which “not only mobiliz[ed] assumptions about women... [but] also allude[d] to an entire social organization that depend[ed] upon naturalizing monogamous marriage, a sexual division of labour, and a specific economic relation between the sexes.”<sup>242</sup> ‘Dancing girls,’ whether recognized as unmarried or perceived as the dominant partner in a marriage, thus represented an unmistakable departure from popular imaginings of persecuted ‘Eastern women,’ making them uniquely transgressive in a way that other Egyptian women were not. European travel accounts suggest that most *ghawâzî* and former-*‘awâlim* did not have children, at least during their careers as public dancers. Female entertainers’ circumvention of their reproductive capacity resulted in its own set of problems in the minds of British travelers. As contended by historians Estelle B. Freedman and Erna Olafson Hellerstein, Victorian conventions of “motherhood [were] central to the identities of most nineteenth-century women,” and were “celebrated with unprecedented intensity” in Britain.<sup>243</sup> Similarly, Poovey underscores the significant emphasis placed on “the incommensurability of male and female bodies [which] entailed foregrounding the role of the [female] reproductive system” as a central pillar of idealized womanhood in Britain throughout the century.<sup>244</sup> In part, the significance placed upon the female duty of motherhood was borne from what Freedman and Olafson Hellerstein refer to as the popular concept of the “‘Republican Mother,’ breeder of citizens.”<sup>245</sup> Mothers were conceptualized as the progenitors of national strength, and the

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<sup>242</sup> Poovey, *Urban Developments*, p. 2.; Emphasis her own.

<sup>243</sup> Estelle B. Freedman and Erna Olafson Hellerstein. *Victorian Women: A Documentary Account of Women’s Lives in Nineteenth-Century England, France, and the United States*; (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1981), pp. 127, 129.

<sup>244</sup> Poovey, *Urban Developments*, p. 6.

<sup>245</sup> Freedman and Olafson Hellerstein. *Victorian Women*, p. 129.

derision of women who neglected their childbearing role was therefore an integral manipulative device by which Britain and its Empire could be sustained. The following passage by Kennard reiterates the ubiquity of the Victorian insistence upon ‘natural’ womanhood as necessarily feminine, matrimonially dependent, and maternal, with the author describing “the Ghawazee” as women who had “forsak[en] the ordinary course of life prescribed to her by nature, that of a wife and the mother of a family, careful of her lord’s affairs” by “entering the profession of a danseuse.”<sup>246</sup>

The parallels between the characteristics displayed by Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ and conventional British understandings of masculinity and prostitution may have been disconcerting to British travelers, but these connections were not inherently problematic so long as the *ghawâzi* and former-‘*awâlim* remained symbolically irrelevant and could be dismissed as culturally peripheral. However, Egyptian female entertainers came to pose a genuine threat to patriarchal order as published accounts increasingly romanticized and popularized the childless, husbandless, and behaviourally masculine ‘dancing girls.’ Specifically, the masculinity displayed by Egypt’s female entertainers directly contradicted accepted notions of female physical and mental ineptitude to participate in traditionally male pursuits, while their associations with prostitution normalized the otherwise unspoken relationship between female sexuality and mainstream culture. The jeopardous iconography of the Egyptian ‘dancing girl’ permeated various aspects of British society throughout the mid- and late-nineteenth-century, as audiences hungrily consumed any and all materials relating to the *ghawâzi* and former-‘*awâlim*; a highly marketable process which publishers were more than willing to accommodate. As I will next argue, the process behind their representation in Britain should be considered as deliberate and political. The final chapter will explore the various ways by which Egyptian female entertainers impacted British society, and how the potentially dangerous and disruptive iconography of the ‘dancing girl’ was neutralized, trivialized, and contained by a process of typecasting. While this chapter was concerned with illustrating why Egyptian female entertainers’ connections with masculinity and prostitution were considered to be so severely transgressive among British travelers, the subsequent chapter

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<sup>246</sup> Kennard, *Eastern Experiences*, p. 124.

will argue that the politics of gender and sexuality at play in representations of the *ghawâzî* and former-*'awâlim* signify a broader, underlying conflict within the relationship between British imperialism and desire.

## Chapter Four: Impacting the British Metropole and the Typecasting of ‘Dancing Girls’

The most exhaustively researched and, arguably, the most infamous genre of Orientalist writing is the category best-known as harem literature, which entailed evocative descriptions of polygamous intrigue, fantasy, and scandal, playing upon popular tropes of the mystical seraglio and its necessarily overbearing master who kept a close eye upon his collection of incarcerated beauties. Such works fictionalizing the harem were immensely well-received by audiences in Britain and other European countries, and this literary genre was very productively capitalized upon by authors, publishers, and book vendors, who ensured that books were enticingly entitled with words such as ‘harem’ or ‘seraglio’ to captivate the imaginations and compel the pocketbooks of their demographic clientele.<sup>247</sup> Similarly, Orientalist painters found harems to be a highly lucrative subject matter through which to sell artwork and garner professional recognition. Although travelogues written by aristocratic and upper-middle class British travelers and higher forms of Orientalist artwork were the inaugural points of entry for harem imagery in British culture, it was the reproduction of this iconography within accessible forms of mass media such as novels, newspapers, cartoons, and lithographic prints, which conventionalized a dominant impression of harems.<sup>248</sup> British audiences’ demand for these literary and illustrative representations of harems endured throughout most of the nineteenth-century, yet the once-ravenous pattern of production and consumption began to dwindle in the latter decades, with harem literature in particular faltering almost completely by the twentieth-century.<sup>249</sup> The literature and art describing Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ followed a similar trajectory to the nineteenth-century Orientalist fervour for harems, both with regards to the timeline of its popularity, and the processes of its publication. These similarities in patterns of consumption were likely a result of the widespread fascination initially ascribed to the enigmatic ‘Eastern Woman,’

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<sup>247</sup> Reina Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism: Women, Travel, and the Ottoman Harem*; (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), p. 12.

<sup>248</sup> Joanna de Groot, “‘Sex’ and ‘Race’: The Construction of Language and Image in the Nineteenth Century,” in ed. Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall, *Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century*; (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 92.

<sup>249</sup> Billie Melman. *Women’s Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918: Sexuality, Religion, and Work*; (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1995), p. 16.

and its decline near the end of the century when British audiences became fatigued by descriptions of these once-mysterious female figures.

Interestingly, however, when it came to representations of ‘dancing girls’ there was a marked inversion in gendered claims to Orientalist authority. Whereas female travelers held near-exclusive predominance over depictions of harem interiors, in encountering Egyptian ‘dancing girls,’ European men gained direct and relatively unfettered access to eastern women. The potentially scandalous nature of ‘dancing girls’ performances often actively served to discourage respectable British women from witnessing the entertainment, as detailed by traveler Kate Kraft who remarked that “in the evening the gentlemen, duly armed with a bottle of champagne... went to Kenneh to see the dancing-girls, which are here reported to be the finest in Egypt, while we ladies remained *at home*.”<sup>250</sup> Likewise, Mary Dawson-Damer wrote that “the gentlemen adjourned to a genuine Turkish party to which they were invited to see the Almeh dancing” whereas, uninvited, “Minney and [the author] went home on [their] donkeys.”<sup>251</sup> Jane Loftus, Marchioness of Ely decried the performances of Egyptian female entertainers as objectionable, and recalled two separate occasions where she “went away early, and rode home on my donkey [but] our gentlemen remained a little longer,” and “left early, but the gentlemen remained for some more dancing.”<sup>252</sup> Subsequently, when the men accompanying the Marchioness on her travels up the Nile “went off again to drink coffee and smoke with the English consul, and see some dancing-girls,” she simply refused to attend.<sup>253</sup> The environment of drinking, smoking, lascivious dancing, and possibly paid sexual favours, was essentially a perfect storm by which the respectability of a British woman’s character could be called into question, and therefore attending these entertainments could entail some reputational danger for female travelers. Even Duff Gordon, who was slowly dying of tuberculosis and whose

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<sup>250</sup> Kate Kraft, *The Nilometer and the Sacred Soil: A Diary of a Tour Through Egypt, Palestine, and Syria*; (London: S. Low, Son & Co., 1869), p. 166.; Emphasis her own.

<sup>251</sup> Mary Dawson-Damer, *Diary of a Tour in Greece, Turkey, Egypt, and the Holy Land*, Vol. II; (London: Henry Colburn, 1841), p. 171.

<sup>252</sup> Jane Loftus, Marchioness of Ely, *Mafeesh, or, Nothing New: the Journal of a Tour in Greece, Turkey, Egypt, the Sinai-desert, Petra, Palestine, Syria, and Russia*; (London: William Clower, 1870), pp. 105, 114.

<sup>253</sup> Loftus, *Mafeesh, or, Nothing New*, p. 128.

attachment to the maintenance of her virtuous reputation could already be described as tenuous at best, felt the need to defend her presence at a performance, remarking that “of course the girls do not commit any indecorums before European women, except the dance itself” and admitting that she “should like to give [her friends] a fantasia, but it is not proper for a woman to send for the dancing-girls.”<sup>254</sup>

As Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall argue, within the polarized climate of gender demarcation in nineteenth-century Britain, “propriety undoubtedly set the bounds of behavior specifically of women, whose responsibility lay in defining the territory of the home against the encroachments of disorder and the hazards of the external world.”<sup>255</sup> Because of the potentially explicit nature of the entertainment, attending the performances of ‘dancing girls’ in Egypt was an almost exclusively masculine pursuit, and representations of these women in Britain were likewise tailored to a heterosexual male gaze. It is certainly telling that outside of the travel literature genre, none of the painters, photographers, playwrights, or authors of materials relating to ‘dancing girls’ that I encountered were produced by women. As was illustrated in the previous chapter, travelogues contributed immensely to popularizing Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ within the British cultural imagination; however, the iconography of these female entertainers also impacted British society through other mediums, such as fine art, performance culture, photography, erotic images and pornographic texts. This chapter explores the cultural impact of such representations of ‘dancing girls’ in relation to commodity culture, imperialism, and desire. In doing so, I hope to demonstrate that Egyptian female entertainers openly contravened the values of respectable femininity outlined by the cult of domesticity, and therefore exposed the inherent instability of British imperial authority. This chapter will next build upon Joanna de Groot’s argument that “the conflicts, desires, and anxieties within the sexual or cultural involvements between western males and the subordinate Other could be expressed and perhaps contained,

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<sup>254</sup> Lucie Duff Gordon, Lady, *Letters from Egypt, 1863-1865*; (London: Macmillan & Co., 1865), pp. 161, 175.

<sup>255</sup> Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall, “Introduction” in ed., Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall, *Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century*; (London: Routledge, 1989) p. 3.

however precariously, within oriental images, stories, or travels.”<sup>256</sup> I argue, specifically, that through a process of typecasting, British travelers sought to contain their own desire and neutralize the transgressive iconography of Egypt’s ‘dancing girls’ by associating them with past empires and *femmes fatales*. I here conceive of ‘typecasting’ as a reductive mechanism of discourse invoked by British travelers, which endeavoured to render Egyptian female entertainers less real, and therefore less impactful, by aligning them with ancient Egyptians, fictional elements of classical antiquity, and legendary *femmes fatales*. I will also suggest that the ‘*awâlim* and the *ghawâzî* were complicit in typecasting themselves through the invention and transmission of a romanticized origin narrative in correspondence with the legendary *Arabian Nights*.

### The ‘Dancing Girl’s’ Impact on Britain

British imperialist experiences of female entertainers in Egypt can not be properly analyzed in isolation from their ramifications upon the Victorian metropole, as throughout the nineteenth-century the iconography of the Egyptian ‘dancing girl’ permeated the British cultural imagination to an unprecedented degree. Exotic and sexualized images of the ‘*awâlim* and the *ghawâzî* generated by British travelers were refracted back upon Victorian society itself in complex ways. The following section will explore patterns of consumption in relation to the discursive impact of depictions of ‘dancing girls’ in Orientalist artistic renderings within nineteenth-century Britain, and will examine reverberations of Egyptian female entertainers in British performance culture. Further, it will explore illicit representations of ‘dancing girls’ featured in Victorian erotic images and pornographic fiction, while engaging with de Groot’s argument that although Orientalist constructions of a sexualized and effeminate ‘Other’ did reinforce structures of European male privilege and dominance, these erotic representations of the East also had the adverse effect of forcing European men to “confront [their] desire, and even give voice to the ambiguities and anxieties involved in the erotic and the intimate, and in male need itself.”<sup>257</sup> In complicating these dynamics of

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<sup>256</sup> de Groot, “‘Sex’ and ‘Race,’” p.110.

<sup>257</sup> de Groot, “‘Sex’ and ‘Race,’” p. 106.

male power and desire, and emphasizing the contradictory nature of sexuality and subordination, I hope to follow recent postcolonial scholarship in reiterating that what Edward W. Said once dichotomized as the Occidental and Oriental worlds were, in fact, inseparably connected and in constant dialogue with one another. I will ultimately suggest that the desirability of Eastern ‘dancing girls’ in British culture was complicated by these women’s implicit transgression of Victorian ideals of respectable womanhood as outlined by the cult of domesticity value system.

In endeavouring to fully comprehend the ways by which Egyptian female entertainers impacted metropolitan Victorian society, it is imperative to conjointly analyze the nuanced nineteenth-century relationship between commodity culture, empire, and desire in Britain. Beginning in the eighteenth-century, there was a demonstrable and steady increase in the availability and function of consumer goods in British society, a circumstance that was inextricably tied to imperialism.<sup>258</sup> De Groot demonstrates how “‘the Empire’ itself became a consumer product,” as “depictions of glamorous, comic, or threatening figures of colonial people ([such as] ‘wily’ or sexy orientals... ) in plays, cartoons, pantomime, music hall, and other forms of entertainment brought a whole cast of imperial characters for purchase and consumption in the mainstream of British culture.”<sup>259</sup> Undoubtedly, among the most preeminent of these ‘characters’ was the Egyptian ‘dancing girl,’ whose exoticism and conspicuous sexuality were actively commercialized by profiteering British Orientalists for an ever-expanding domestic audience. As literary scholar Andrew C. Long convincingly argues, “the Oriental fantasy” was deliberately packaged and marketed for mass consumption in accordance with what Long refers to as “the desire structure;” a commercial mechanism that “served to make these fantasies integral to daily life in modern Britain” by perpetuating the seductive qualities of such a fantasy within popular discourse.<sup>260</sup> The popularity of

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<sup>258</sup> Joanna de Groot, “Metropolitan Desires and Colonial Connections: Reflections on Consumption and Empire,” in ed. Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose, *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 170.

<sup>259</sup> de Groot, “Metropolitan Desires and Colonial Connections,” p. 176.

<sup>260</sup> Andrew C. Long, *Reading Arabia: British Orientalism in the Age of Mass Publication, 1880-1930*; (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013), p. 2.



fantasies about Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ reinforced their aptitude for commodification in material form and consumption within the marketplace of British mass culture. Upper and middle class British audiences avidly consumed the ‘dancing girl’ fantasy in any literary or artistic texts available to them. However, as de Groot notes, the act of engaging in consumer culture imparts meaning far beyond the simple act of purchase, “express[ing] values, identities, and the contests around them;” a process which can best “be understood as [a] cultural practice or language.”<sup>261</sup> This dualistic conceptualization of patterns of consumption as simultaneously an innocuous fulfilling of material wants or needs, yet also as a powerful display of cultural values and contested identities, can partially explain why the fantasy of Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ might have been uniquely problematic when consumed by British audiences. Specifically within the context of empire, the relatively less offensive fantasy of the harem was considered to be an acceptable consumer product as, in many ways, it echoed the values of female compliance and confinement to private spaces endorsed by the Victorian cult of domesticity. Harems were both symbolically and physically implicated in the restriction of women’s freedom of movement and their exclusion from public spaces. As Farzaneh Milani argues, the societal villainization of women who exist publicly is best understood as a reflection of masculinity’s deep-rooted “fear of women’s unrestrained mobility” and a reaffirmation of institutionalized sex discrimination.<sup>262</sup> In accordance with Milani’s analysis, ‘dancing girls,’ who moved through the streets of Cairo with relative freedom before 1834, transgressed nineteenth-century British conventions of respectable womanhood, and defied stereotypes of spatially contained and behaviourally submissive Oriental women. If, as de Groot persuasively argues, the act of consumption is value-laden and conveyed British social and cultural meaning, then the popularity of the ‘dancing girl’ fantasy presented a significant problem in its implied affirmation of female transgression, particularly with regards to their largely unconstrained mobility.

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<sup>261</sup> de Groot, “Metropolitan Desires and Colonial Connections,” p. 169.

<sup>262</sup> Farzaneh Milani, *Words Not Swords: Iranian Women Writers and the Freedom of Movement*; (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011), pp. 4, 26.; Although Milani’s argument is specifically rooted in the Iranian context, her ideas on gender and spatiality can also be profitably applied in relation to nineteenth-century Egypt and Britain.

Throughout the nineteenth-century, Egypt's female entertainers became an increasingly popular visual subject for British Orientalists while abroad, inspiring many artistic renderings of 'dancing girls,' which were repatriated for display and publication in Britain. The earliest modern artistic depiction of an Egyptian 'dancing girl' that I have been able to locate was published in a travelogue written by anthropologist Richard Pococke, and published in London in 1743. The sketch is titled *Dancing Women of Egypt* and is part of an ethnographic collection of plates, featuring two modestly-dressed, yet unveiled, women, one of whom appears to be playing an instrument while the other dances.<sup>263</sup> The first nineteenth-century depiction I encountered is an aquatint engraving created in 1801 by German-Italian artist Luigi Mayer titled *Ceremony at Ned Sili*.<sup>264</sup> Mayer depicts an unveiled Egyptian female entertainer with long waist-length hair, only slightly less modestly dressed than the women in Pococke's earlier image as a result of her bare arms which extend above her head, hands clasping a pair of cymbals. The third and final early depiction I found, titled *Almée, Danseuse au Caire*, is a lithograph created in 1810 by an artist known as Brandin.<sup>265</sup> This work again features an unveiled dancer who, as in Mayer's portrait, holds cymbals and is well covered by her dress with the exception of her raised arms, which are exposed beneath a transparent fabric. When juxtaposed alongside Lane's 1836 illustration titled *Dancing Girls, (Ghawa'zee, or Gha'zee'yehs)*, these three earlier works provide unique historical insight into the sartorial changes that had taken place following Mehmed Ali's banishment. Most notably, in Lane's illustration, the cut of the performers' shirts has been noticeably altered so as to almost entirely expose the chest.<sup>266</sup> This reinforces my earlier argument that a change in clientele from local to foreign audiences after 1834 precipitated a change in the appearance of Egyptian female entertainers. The revealingly low-cut shirts, which became the costume of the Egyptian 'dancing girls' in exile, were depicted by several British artists over the following decades, such as in William Yates' 1843 *Egyptian Dancing Girls*, William Henry Bartlett's untitled 1849 illustration, and, famously, in

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<sup>263</sup> Appendix, Figure 1

<sup>264</sup> Appendix, Figure 2

<sup>265</sup> Appendix, Figure 3

<sup>266</sup> Appendix, Figure 4

David Roberts' 1855 *The Ghawazees, or Dancing-Girls of Cairo*.<sup>267</sup> In comparison to the more whimsical continental style of the times, these British artists were somewhat blunt in their depictions of the 'awâlim and ghawâzî, without the excessive ornamentation and visual hyperbole that would come to characterize the more elaborate 'Orientalist' painting style that emerged in earnest by the 1860s. The majority of British orientalist painting at the time typically depicted biblical scenes, archaeological ruins, and pastoral landscapes, and when depicting 'dancing girls,' British artists were far more concerned with austere and straightforward representations of Egyptian female entertainers that served foremost to provide their viewership with utilitarian depictions upon which audiences could elaborate their own romantic imaginings.

In accordance with the earlier discussion of gender and orientalist depictions of 'dancing girls,' it remains noteworthy that I have not encountered any female artists who portrayed the 'awâlim and ghawâzî, as their subject matter. Also, somewhat curiously, none of the most well-known British Orientalist painters such as John Frederick Lewis, William Holman Hunt, Edward Lear, David Wilkie, Richard Dadd, or Lord Frederick Leighton, chose not to paint 'dancing girls' although these women were a highly popular subject for other prominent European artists. In particular, French, German, and Italian painters contributed heavily to the inauguration of a stereotypical image of 'dancing girls' within the Orientalist genre of painting, with Jean-Léon Gérôme's 1863 *La Danse de L'Almée* being a perfect example.<sup>268</sup> Although European painters like Gérôme unreservedly featured nudity and explicit sexuality in their art, whereas British artists would rarely do so, cultural historian Rana Kabbani suggests that this apparent difference was more stylistic than substantive, arguing that British and continental artists were similarly compelled by a peculiar mix of desire and revulsion.<sup>269</sup> Regardless, the more obviously provocative images generated by continental Western European painters were circulated widely throughout Victorian Britain, and featured in prominent exhibitions, most notably at the Royal Academy in London, helping to curate among the British upper

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<sup>267</sup> Appendix, Figures 5, 6, 7.

<sup>268</sup> Appendix, Figure 8

<sup>269</sup> Rana Kabbani, "Regarding Orientalist Painting Today," in ed. Nicholas Tromans, *The Lure of the East: British Orientalist Painting*; (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 43.

and middle classes a romanticized and fantastical collective British imagining of Egyptian female entertainers as part of the wider ambiguous geographical space of the ‘Orient.’ These images cemented a popular iconography of Egyptian female entertainers, yet British audiences still yearned for greater immediacy to ‘dancing girls.’<sup>270</sup>

Popular imaginings of the dance of the ‘*awâlim* and *ghawâzî* that were developed in such vivid detail by orientalist painters and illustrators had a discernable impact upon performance culture in Britain throughout the nineteenth-century, and the resulting stereotypes of ‘oriental dance’ were repackaged for display in theatres, music halls, opera houses, and exhibition rooms.<sup>271</sup> By the 1830s and 1840s, plays, operas, and ballet performances were produced in conformance with the fashionable genre of romanticism, which privileged expressions of exoticism in costume, character, and script.<sup>272</sup> In particular, romanticism within the British entertainment industry entailed a preoccupation with popular orientalism by which the East was imaginatively represented as a spectacle for paying audiences. Harem scenes that involved ‘dancing girls’ were an especially well-received component of such performances, as featured in popular ballets such as *The Pascha’s Bridal*, *Sir Huon*, *Lalla Rookh*, and *L’Odalisque*, as well as in multiple dramatic iterations of Byron’s enduringly popular poem *Le Corsaire* beginning in 1837.<sup>273</sup> Notably, whether impersonating female entertainers in ancient Assyria, ancient Egypt, the Ottoman Empire, or even the *Arabian Nights*, British actresses cast in the role of ‘dancing girl’ were commended by spectators for their performance of a “characteristic” dance, incorrectly implying that there existed a singular and uniformly Eastern dance that could be recognizably imitated by the use of props such as scarves and knives, or by exaggerated hip movements.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> Edward Ziter, *The Orient on the Victorian Stage*; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 10.

<sup>271</sup> Ziter, *The Orient on the Victorian Stage*, p. 3.

<sup>272</sup> Decra Craine and Judith Mackrell, *The Oxford Dictionary of Dance*; (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 377.

<sup>273</sup> Ziter, *The Orient on the Victorian Stage*, p. 74.

<sup>274</sup> Ziter, *The Orient on the Victorian Stage*, p. 156.

The inability (or perhaps deliberate indifference) of British audiences, playwrights, directors, and choreographers to distinguish between different regional and historical modes of Eastern dance reconfirms the immense cultural ambiguity of popular orientalism. For the narrow commercial purposes of ingratiating the British collective imagination, a stereotypical and culturally monolithic dance was sufficient and, indeed, preferable in its contained and politically neutralized form. Cultural differences in performance culture appear to have been obfuscated because of their irrelevance to the orientalist objectives of the nineteenth-century British entertainment industry, which was centrally preoccupied with the display of Eastern female bodies, whether authentic or imitative. For example, plays such as *Sardanapalus*, also adapted from Byron's work, featured British actresses masquerading as homogeneously Oriental 'dancing girls,' performing in brown-face and scandalously close-fitting costumes, and moving with "gesticulating" sensuality.<sup>275</sup> The racialized and gendered dimensions inherent in such reductive and sexually evocative British imitations of ambiguously Eastern 'dancing girls' should be interpreted as exercises in imperial voyeurism. In his widely acclaimed *The Orient on the Victorian Stage*, historian Edward Ziter comprehensively establishes how theatrical depictions of Eastern sexuality in Britain were fundamentally informed by British imperialism, and convincingly argues that for British audience members the spectacle of the harem dance doubled as an expression of power relations between Orient and Occident, as well as between men and women. While Ziter's argument is perhaps largely self-evident, and although the theatrical display of sexual and imperial power within the British metropole undoubtedly held great socio-political significance, there is an added complexity when considering that the public endorsement of British theatrical imitations of sexually transgressive 'dancing girls' inherently entailed a popular acknowledgment of the desires that compelled such imitations. Whereas expressions of this desire were tacitly allowed within the controlled environment of British performance spaces, the desirability of 'dancing girls' was publicly denounced as illicit and controversial by civic and religious authorities in its more direct manifestations within mediums such as erotic photography and pornographic fiction which were produced with increasing frequency towards the end of the nineteenth-century.

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<sup>275</sup> Ziter, *The Orient on the Victorian Stage*, p. 156.

The popularity of Orientalist paintings endured among British audiences until the 1880s, at which point interest in such images began to wane. By this time, many artistic renderings had achieved near photo-realism, which coincided with Kodak's innovations in portable and simplified photographic technology and the increased accessibility and cost-efficiency of photography. This, in turn, led to the popular development and dissemination of photographic postcards at the very end of the nineteenth-century, featuring purportedly 'authentic' images of Egyptian 'dancing girls,' although such designations of authenticity were highly misleading as late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century photographs were generally carefully staged. The visual tropes and stereotypical motifs of the Oriental 'dancing girl,' which had been developed and conventionalized by European painters and illustrators, and in theatrical productions, were replicated in photos that were contrived to simulate quintessentially Eastern scenes. One exemplary image, with an unknown date and photographer, captures a pipe player serenading a woman lying on a carpet smoking a pipe, while a second woman keeps time with a pair of castanets and a third dances against a painted backdrop.<sup>276</sup> Many photographs were deliberately framed so as to imply motion, however the rapid movements of actualized dance would have been too difficult to capture, so the model would generally pose with her hands angled above her head.<sup>277</sup> Several of these travel photographs and postcards bridged the often indiscernible line between ethnography and erotica, featuring images of bare-chested women, such as in two staged 1897 Underwood & Underwood exposures labeled "Photograph of Type - Arab Dancing Girl after the Dance," and "Photograph of Type-Egyptian Dancing Girl."<sup>278</sup>

The emergence of these purportedly more 'authentic' ethnographical images of Egyptian 'dancing girls' was paralleled by the late-century rise of erotic photographs in which European women posed as 'Orientals.' As with imitations of 'dancing girls' in British performance culture, geographical and temporal specificities were similarly obfuscated in the genre of orientalist erotica, which often featured a clichéd combination

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<sup>276</sup> Appendix, Figure 9

<sup>277</sup> Appendix, Figures 10, 11

<sup>278</sup> Appendix, Figures 12, 13

of cushions, opium, carpets, and exotic costumes.<sup>279</sup> One such image involves a white woman in a turban dancing with a snake wrapped around her naked body, while another in the series depicts the same woman playing a pipe to charm the snake.<sup>280</sup> Another photograph depicts a naked woman with a proliferation of jewellery standing upon a harp designed to look as though it was an ancient Egyptian artefact.<sup>281</sup> Similarly, in a final image, a topless woman in wig, headdress, sandals, sparkly loincloth and cape alluding sartorially to ancient Egypt strikes a seductive pose.<sup>282</sup>

The iconography of the Oriental ‘dancing girl’ present within the erotic photography of the late nineteenth-century was mirrored in pornographic fiction. *The Pearl*, subtitled *A Journal of Facetiae and Voluptuous Reading* was an illicit monthly publication of erotica, which clandestinely distributed copies by mail between 1879 and 1880.<sup>283</sup> As the most famous of the pornographic magazines that prosperously circulated in London during this time period, *The Pearl’s* publisher William Lazenby particularly capitalized upon a recurring serialized piece by an anonymous author titled *La Rose D’amour, Or, the Adventures of a Gentleman in Search of Pleasure* which recounted the exploits of a wealthy French nobleman in his obsession with sexualizing the Orient.<sup>284</sup> Following his initiation to an orgiastic Parisian chateau party which “rival[ed] anything heard of in the *Arabian Night’s Entertainment*,” and featured women dressed “à la Turque” whose “licentiousness made them look like houris descended from the Moslem’s paradise,” the unnamed protagonist sat before “a beautiful little stage on which appeared four girls dancing some of the most licentious dances, throwing themselves into the most tempting postures, pirouetting till their gauze skirts stood entirely level with their navels,” after which “the women became perfect Bacchantes... dri[inking] freely of the most

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<sup>279</sup> Appendix, Figure 14

<sup>280</sup> Appendix, Figures 15, 16

<sup>281</sup> Appendix, Figure 17

<sup>282</sup> Appendix, Figure 18

<sup>283</sup> Daniela Francesca Viridis, “Eroticizing Female and Male Bodies: A Linguistic Investigation of a Pornographic Novel from the Victorian Magazine *The Pearl*,” *Porn Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 1, (2015), p. 19.

<sup>284</sup> Viridis, “Eroticizing Female and Male Bodies,” p. 19.

exciting and exhilarating wines.”<sup>285</sup> Henceforth, the story becomes overtly pornographic, but elements such as the licentiousness of the dance, the throwing about of bodies, the transparency of costume, and the excessive drinking, echo with near exactitude British travelers’ accounts of witnessing the performances of Egypt’s female entertainers. The fictional protagonist ultimately went so far as to entirely remodel a chateau in Brittany, furnishing it with “the richest carpets,” “all the perfumes of the East,” “cushions of rich satin and silk and musical instruments,” and constructing a “room of fountains intended... for smoking, singing, and dancing.”<sup>286</sup> The protagonist inserted himself into this Orientalist fantasy, meeting his mistresses while “reclining on a pile of cushions, dressed in a loose robe of rich cashmere, with a Turkish cap on my head.”<sup>287</sup> Particularly enamoured by dancing, the protagonist recounted several instances in which “the women I had brought from Turkey took their instruments and gave us a concert of Oriental music... [while] my lovely slaves who belonged to the Grecian Isles got up and danced the *romaika*,” or “Circassians, who were attired in the costumes of their native land, danced some of the native dances,” or “the Nubian... [whose] dance was wild and pleasing... throwing herself about all over the floor.”<sup>288</sup> This latter dance was subsequently imitated by two European women who wore “short petticoats and dress, the same as the Nubian, and performed some lascivious dances, showing every charm which nature had graced them.”<sup>289</sup>

Representations of ‘dancing girls’ in British travelogues, artwork, performance culture, and especially erotic photographs and pornographic fiction, were inherently mediated by the complicated, and often contradictory, nineteenth-century relationship between sexuality and imperialism. In the context of Britain and Egypt, this relationship entailed a complex cultural encounter in which heterosexual British men sought to derive and reinforce their imperial dominance by rendering Egyptian women as objects of sexual desire, yet were simultaneously constrained by their genuine infatuation with these

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<sup>285</sup> Anonymous, *The Pearl: A Journal of Facetiae and Voluptuous Reading*, Vol. 9; (London: William Lazenby, 1880); Anonymous, *The Pearl*, Vol. 10.

<sup>286</sup> Anonymous, *The Pearl*, Vol. 12.

<sup>287</sup> Anonymous, *The Pearl*, Vol. 12.

<sup>288</sup> Anonymous, *The Pearl*, Vol. 14.

<sup>289</sup> Anonymous, *The Pearl*, Vol. 14.



women. The coveted voyeuristic position that such aforementioned erotic representations afforded to British male audiences, in particular, reflects the considerable desirability of oriental fantasies pertaining to ‘dancing girls’ in Victorian society, whether specifically Egyptian or ambiguously ‘oriental’. As Joanna de Groot argues, the lucrative market for eroticized depictions of oriental female subjects in art, literature, and erotica, and the extensiveness of British male infatuation with eastern women is best understood as an expression of imperial power.<sup>290</sup> Yet, de Groot also shows how the complex intimacy of male desire and sexual need forced British men to confront their own lust for Eastern women and therefore to acknowledge the limitations of the sexual metaphors and realities that reinforced imperial dominance.<sup>291</sup> Specifically, British travelers’ recognition of this fundamental desire for sexual intimacy implicitly ascribed a certain degree of erotic power to Eastern female figures such as the Egyptian ‘dancing girl,’ thereby challenging the predominant narrative of empire which positioned imperialists as emotionally unaffiliated with their subordinates and in possession of unassailable power and authority.

When examining de Groot’s argument in relation to orientalist representations of female entertainers, it becomes clear that in addition to forcing British men to face the contradictions of their desire, the desirability of the ‘dancing girl’ was further complicated by the transgressive iconography associated with such women. As noted previously, Egyptian female entertainers subverted Victorian conventions of respectable womanhood, particularly in their defiance of matrimonial and reproductive norms and their refusal to confine themselves to private spaces. Whereas the more stereotypically desirable Eastern women were those associated with confinement in harems and an inability to move freely through public spaces, which neatly corresponded with the Victorian cult of domesticity, ‘dancing girls’ were symbolically represented as oppositional to British idealizations of respectable womanhood, particularly in their relatively unfettered mobility. Therefore, I argue that the sexual desirability of the transgressive ‘dancing girl’ impelled British orientalists to further contain the potentially

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<sup>290</sup> de Groot, “‘Sex’ and ‘Race,’” p. 100.

<sup>291</sup> de Groot, “‘Sex’ and ‘Race,’” p. 106.

disruptive iconography of these women within familiar paradigms in order to render eastern female entertainers more palatable for mass consumption within the metropole. As will be discussed in the following section, the containment and neutralization of imagery relating to ‘dancing girls’ was accomplished through a process of typecasting, which sought to trivialize, fictionalize, and tokenize Egyptian female entertainers by amalgamating them with certain archetypes. As arguably the most infamous female entertainers in the oriental world, the typecasting of Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ established the standard by which Eastern female entertainers would come to be collectively imagined for centuries to come. The following section examines how ‘dancing girls’ were implicated in popular narratives surrounding ancient Egypt, classical antiquity, and *femmes fatales* by British travelers, as well as how Egyptian female entertainers were themselves complicit in developing and perpetuating their own lineal connection to the *Arabian Nights*.

### The Typecasting of the ‘Dancing Girl’

As a consequence of increased archaeological discoveries and the resultant popularization of the material culture of classical antiquity that began in the late eighteenth-century, Victorian bourgeois society was preoccupied with a veritable obsession with ancient Hellenistic and Near Eastern empires.<sup>292</sup> The romantic revivalism of ancient civilizations in Greece, Rome, Assyria, Babylonia, and, of course, Egypt, was particularly fascinating to Victorians.<sup>293</sup> Resulting from the intellectual by-products of Napoleon’s 1798 invasion of Egypt, a phenomenon known as ‘Egyptomania’ captivated British audiences who, if unable to travel to Egypt themselves, would clamour to view recreations of the ancient civilization housed at the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly, the Egyptian Court in the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, and the Egyptian Room in the British Museum.<sup>294</sup> Famed Egyptologist Sir John Gardner Wilkinson’s highly influential 1836 *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*, was widely published in Britain, further

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<sup>292</sup> Jeffrey Richards, *The Ancient World on the Victorian Stage*; (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 16.

<sup>293</sup> Richards, *The Ancient World*, p. 16.

<sup>294</sup> Richards, *The Ancient World*, p. 17.

stoking the Egyptomania craze with over 500 illustrations that familiarized readers with the visual imagery of sarcophagi, temples, hieroglyphs, and, most relevant to the purposes of this thesis, tomb paintings depicting nude Ancient Egyptian dancing women.<sup>295</sup> These paintings - specifically those found “in the grottoes of Eilithyas and in the tombs of Thebes,” - were invoked by many British travelers as evidence of the ancient origins of Egypt’s modern ‘dancing girls.’<sup>296</sup> Michael Russell claimed that the women portrayed in the tomb paintings “danc[ed] in the style of those females known at Cairo under the name of Almeh,” J.A. St. John wrote that the paintings demonstrated “that the ancient Egyptians had likewise their almé,” the *Popular Geographies* series observed that “the exhibitions of this abandoned class [of *Ghazeyih*] were not confined to modern times, but are frequently represented on ancient tombs,” and Thomas Wilson remarked that the ancient predecessors of “the *ghawazee* or dancing girls,” were “not a whit more reserved, [yet] were evidently thought worthy to dance before the Pharaohs of old.”<sup>297</sup>

Literary historian Anne McClintock encapsulates the complexity of temporality in empire, demonstrating how, for nineteenth-century British orientalists, “imperial progress across the space of empire [was] figured as a journey backward in time to an anachronistic moment of prehistory.”<sup>298</sup> This imperial conceptualization of time certainly rang true for travelers such as Duff Gordon, who reflected “I never quite know whether it is now, or four thousand years ago, or even ten thousand, when I am in the dreamy

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<sup>295</sup> Donato Esposito, “From Ancient Egypt to Victorian London: the Impact of Ancient Egyptian Furniture on British Art and Design 1850-1990,” *The Journal of the Decorative Arts Society*, No. 27, (2003), p. 85.

<sup>296</sup> Michael Russell, Rev., *View of Ancient and Modern Egypt; with an Outline of its Natural History*; (New York: J & J Harper, 1831), p. 200; William Yates, *The Modern History and Condition of Egypt, its Climate, Diseases, and Capabilities*, Vol. I; (London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1843), p. 218; Eliot Warburton, Esq., *The Crescent and the Cross; or, Romance and Realities of Eastern Travel*, Vol. I; (London: Henry Colburn, 1846), p. 295.

<sup>297</sup> Russell, *View of Ancient and Modern Egypt*, pp. 200; James Augustus St. John, *Egypt and Mohammed Ali, or, Travels in the Valley of the Nile*; (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green, & Longman, 1834), p. 115; *Popular Geographies, Egypt: A Familiar Description of the Land, People, and Produce*; (London: William Smith, 1839), p. 218; Thomas Wilson, *Nozrani in Egypt and Syria*; (London: Longman, Brown, Green, & Longman, 1846), p. 164.

<sup>298</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*; (New York, Routledge, 1995), p. 40.

intoxication of a real Egyptian fantasia; nothing is so antique as the ghawazee –the *real* dancing girls.”<sup>299</sup> The idea that the passing of millennia in Egypt had been ineffectual, and that the contemporary dance of female entertainers existed in an unchanged form was further espoused by Edward Daniel Clarke, who wrote that “Egypt preserves its pristine attachment to a licentious dance as it was beheld above three thousand years ago, in the annual procession to Bubastus,” and by Edward Lane who claimed that the dance itself was “continued without interruption” into modernity.<sup>300</sup> Lane further makes a case for the biological ancestry of ‘dancing girls,’ arguing that “the modern Ghawazee are descended from the class of female dancers who amused the Egyptians in the times of the early Pharaohs.”<sup>301</sup> This conceptualization of ‘dancing girls’ ancient lineage was echoed by others, including Edward Lane’s nephew Reginald Stuart Poole, who believed that “dancing girls... are the true descendants of the old Egyptian dancers.”<sup>302</sup> By situating Egypt’s ‘dancing girls’ within an atavistic temporal locale, these women were rendered historically remote and distinctly incompatible with modernity. This discursive distancing served to contain ‘dancing girls’ within the archaic peripheries of empire and neutralize the potentially transgressive impact of Egypt’s female entertainers upon metropolitan society.<sup>303</sup> To this end, as cultural historian Jeffrey Richards notes, Egyptomania and its obsessive concern with the rise and fall of Egypt’s ancient empire is ideologically inseparable from nineteenth-century British imperialism, and concerns about Britain’s own position in “the age of empires.”<sup>304</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> Duff Gordon, *Letters from Egypt*, pp. 180, 181.

<sup>300</sup> Edward Daniel Clarke, *Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia, and Africa*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., Vol. V; (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1817), p. 167; Edward William Lane, *An Account of the Manner and Customs of the Modern Egyptians: Written in Egypt During the Years, 1833 – 1835*; (London: Alexander Gardner, 1895), p. 98.

<sup>301</sup> Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 98.

<sup>302</sup> Reginald Stuart Poole, *The Cities of Egypt*; (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1882), p. 162.

<sup>303</sup> Significantly, as Donald Malcolm Reid acknowledges, during this period Egyptians themselves were largely excluded from actively participating in the archaeological ‘rediscovery’ of Ancient Egypt and were generally prevented from contributing alongside Europeans to scholarly or popular constructions of the country’s modern identification with its pre-Islamic past. Donald Malcolm Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?: Archaeology, Museums, and Egyptian National Identity from Napoleon to World War I*; (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 32.

<sup>304</sup> Richards, *The Ancient World*, p. 17.

Similarly, the ancient empires of Greece and Rome figured predominantly in imperialist reconstructions of Egyptian female entertainers; yet, connections made between ‘dancing girls’ and the pre-modern Greco-Roman world, were very differently articulated than those resulting from the ‘Egyptomania’ phenomenon. The most common parallels drawn between ‘dancing girls’ and classical Greece and Rome, related to excessive hedonism, including orgiastic euphoria and intoxication. Such hedonistic characterizations were primarily manifested in allusions to Dionysus, the Greek god of wine and intoxication, whose domain also included ecstasy and theatre, and who was adopted into Roman theology as Bacchus.<sup>305</sup> Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ were commonly referred to as “bacchanalians,” meaning those who engage in Dionysian worship, or “maenads,” a term which refers more specifically to women who participated in ritualized ecstasy by literally letting down their hair and dancing barefoot in celebration of Dionysus.<sup>306</sup> However, for nineteenth-century British travelers, references to bacchanalia rituals were not intended to be complimentary. William Yates, for example, wrote of ‘dancing girls’ who “imposed upon themselves no sort of restraint,” and whose “general deportment was worthy of the most frantic Bacchanalian revels, and so far from exciting admiration, was only calculated to create disgust.”<sup>307</sup> Yates further decried that such behaviour on the part of “the Almeh” had induced “some of the Italian and French residents” of Cairo “to indulge in similar orgies: thus imitating the example of the Greeks and Romans, who... also took part in the same voluptuous exhibitions.”<sup>308</sup> Pückler-Muskau reported a similarly disparaging instance of a ‘dancing girl’ whose “assumed composure was changed to the ravings of a Bacchante” following the uninhibited consumption of liquor.<sup>309</sup> Most tellingly, J.A. St. John wrote that “like the maenads or bacchantes of old... [the almé were] uncurbed by that restraint and moral discipline and

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<sup>305</sup> Albert Henrichs, “Dionysus,” in ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* 3<sup>rd</sup> rev. ed.; (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.)

<sup>306</sup> Frederick Henniker, Sir., *Notes During a Visit to Egypt, Nubia, the Oasis Boeris, Mount Sinai and Jerusalem*; (London: John Murray, 1824), p. 74; J.A. St. John, *Egypt and Mohammed Ali*, p. 116; Jan N. Bremmer, “Maenads,” Ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* 3<sup>rd</sup> rev. ed.; (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.)

<sup>307</sup> Yates, *The Modern History and Condition of Egypt*, p. 215.

<sup>308</sup> Yates, *The Modern History and Condition of Egypt*, p. 219.

<sup>309</sup> Hermann Ludwig Heinrich von Pückler-Muskau, Prince, *Egypt Under Mehemet Ali*, Translated by H. Evans Lloyd, Esq., Vol. I; (London: Henry Colburn, 1845), p. 165.

religious principle which in Christian countries, more especially in England, subdue and purify the passions, and elevate woman into the most pure and perfect of created things.”<sup>310</sup> The values laden in St. John’s juxtaposition are unmistakable.

The ‘*awâlim* and the *ghawâzî* were also frequently associated with ancient Greek courtesans, or *hetairai*. For example, travelers such as Richard Ferguson wrote that “these girls... answer somewhat to the old Greek *heteirae*,” while J.A. St. John described Egyptian ‘dancing girls,’ as “dissolute courtesans” who had a “cynical intrepidity worthy of a Lais or a Phryne.”<sup>311</sup> Although there existed a semantic distinction between common prostitutes (*pornē*) and courtesans, it should be noted that both classes of women were financially compensated for sexual favours.<sup>312</sup> Conceptions of ‘dancing girls’ as analogous with courtesans were further entrenched by Edward Lane’s famous declaration that ‘dancing girls’ were “the most abandoned courtesans of Egypt” in 1836; a sentiment mimicked verbatim by multiple travelers in his wake.<sup>313</sup> The invocation of classical antiquity by British travelers in relation to Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ appears to be illustrative of a desire to present these women as morally corrupt and Epicurean. As Yates’ account makes clear, ‘dancing girls’ represented a temptation towards hedonism, which could lead to reputational ruin, yet apparently remained too enticing for Italian and French residents of Cairo to resist. In travelers’ commentary there appears to be a condemnation of unprincipled pleasure, underlined by an edifying plea for moral restraint. Although travelers cautioned against the debauchery of classical antiquity, the most explicit warnings against the supposed danger that Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ represented were most resolutely cemented in assertions of female entertainers’ commonalities with *femmes fatales*.

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<sup>310</sup> J.A. St. John, *Egypt and Mohammed Ali*, p. 116.

<sup>311</sup> Richard S. Ferguson, *Moss Gathered by a Rolling Stone, or, Reminiscences of Travel*; (Carlisle: C. Thurnam & Sons, 1873), pp. 85; J.A. St. John, *Egypt and Mohammed Ali*, p. 107, p. 183; Lais and Phryne were two famous rival *hetairai* in Ancient Greek mythology.

<sup>312</sup> Madeleine Mary Henry, “Hetairai,” Ed. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* 3<sup>rd</sup> rev. ed.; (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.)

<sup>313</sup> Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 97; Jesse Ames Spencer, Rev., *The East: Sketches of Travel in Egypt and the Holy Land*; (London: John Murray, 1850), p. 105; David Roberts, *The Holy Land, Syria, Idumea, Arabia, Egypt, & Nubia*, Volumes V and VI; (London: Day & Son, 1855); Charles Warner, *Mummies and Moslems*; (Toronto: Belford Brothers, 1876), p. 149.

Modern conceptualizations of the fatal woman, more popularly known today as the *femme fatale*, were constructed in the early Victorian period in Romantic poetry, fiction, and visual arts.<sup>314</sup> Linguistically crystallized around the turn of the twentieth-century, the term *femme fatale* is believed to have emerged from the realm of British theatre writing and reviews; however, as an abstract construct the fatal woman had long existed in poems such as John Keats' *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, and in biblical depictions of Eve as temptress or Lilith as succubus.<sup>315</sup> Such archetypal renderings of fatal women were designed in stark opposition to the idealized feminine, and deliberately played to the timeworn dichotomy of whore and virgin, a deeply ingrained trope for representing femininity in Western culture.<sup>316</sup> Many scholars have sought to define the *femme fatale* and have attempted to reduce the phrase to an exact and discernable type, by compiling an inventory of requisite characteristics such as "beautiful, erotic, seductive, destructive, [and] exotic."<sup>317</sup> However, I align my own approach to the *femme fatale* with the work of literary historian Malgorzata Luczyńska-Holdys, who defines the fatal woman as:

"not only an erotic icon or a predatory praying mantis. Her power goes far beyond sexual allure and apart from the authority and control over man's body, she also rules his soul and his imagination. She seems, first of all, indefinable – liminality and ambiguity are vital parts of her charm... Moreover, she is not only alluring and irresistible, but her appeal is conditioned by other features: independence, insubmissiveness, elusiveness, unattainability."<sup>318</sup>

Luczyńska-Holdys' suggestion that the *femme fatale*'s power extended beyond her sexuality, and assertion that the fatal woman's appeal was directly related to her

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<sup>314</sup> Malgorzata Luczyńska-Holdys, *Soft Shed Kisses: Re-visioning the Femme Fatale in English Poetry of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), p. 1.

<sup>315</sup> Luczyńska-Holdys, *Soft Shed Kisses*, pp. 4, 5; Stevie Simkin, *Cultural Constructions of the Femme Fatale: From Pandora's Box to Amanda Knox*; (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 5.

<sup>316</sup> Simkin, *Cultural Constructions of the Femme Fatale*, p. 6.

<sup>317</sup> Luczyńska-Holdys, *Soft Shed Kisses*, p. 4.

<sup>318</sup> Luczyńska-Holdys, *Soft Shed Kisses*, p. 6.

transgression of idealized Victorian womanhood, are central to understanding why British descriptions of the *‘awâlim* and the *ghawâzî* frequently paralleled language used in characterizations of fatal women. Much like the *femme fatale*, Egyptian female entertainers were represented as exotic, overtly sexual, insubmissive, occupiers of male space, and were therefore similarly imagined as dangerous. In particular, Luczyńska-Holdys’ theorization speaks to the array of gendered anxieties around female sexuality, broader societal effeminacy, and women’s empowerment that gained increasing momentum in the mid-Victorian period in Britain and predominated in the *fin-de-siècle*.<sup>319</sup> The preservation of an established gender hierarchy, and strict adherence to prescribed male and female roles were given renewed priority in the nineteenth-century, as fears were stoked by the publication of “uncountable texts” which admonished the destructive possibility of an inversion of the existing order.<sup>320</sup> Therefore, the *femme fatale* is, as Luczyńska-Holdys’ suggests, “a product of a masculine imagination,” and a construct intended to contain and warn against what scholar Stevie Simkin describes as the fatal woman’s “often predatory sexuality that intoxicates and threatens” men.<sup>321</sup> For British travelogue authors, it was likewise instinctive to contain and warn against the potential disruptiveness of Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ by associating them with recognizable characteristics of the *femme fatale*. Representations of Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ and *femmes fatales* dovetailed with regards to descriptions of their irresistibility and seductive intent, their ambiguous exoticism, myths of their relations with men, and their personification with archetypal examples of fatal women.

Two of the principal attributes of the nineteenth-century *femme fatale* archetype lay in her irresistibility and her intent to seduce and destroy. Travelogue authors frequently characterized the *‘awâlim* and *ghawâzî* in glowing terms as “remarkable specimen[s] of Nile beauty,” endowed with “Pharaonic beauty,” and wrote of ‘dancing

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<sup>319</sup> Helen Hanson and Catherine O’Rawe, “Introduction: ‘Cherchez la femme,’” in ed. Helen Hanson and Catherine O’Rawe *The Femme Fatale: Images, Histories, Context*; (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 3.

<sup>320</sup> Luczyńska-Holdys, *Soft Shed Kisses*, p. 11.

<sup>321</sup> Simkin, *Cultural Constructions of the Femme Fatale*, p. 5; Luczyńska-Holdys, *Soft Shed Kisses*, p. 7.



girls' who were "famed through all Egypt for [their] beauty and dancing."<sup>322</sup> British travelers' heightened expectations of the unrivalled attractiveness of Egyptian 'dancing girls' were often disappointed by the reality, with one traveler writing "I had formed such a picture of their beauty that I was rather disappointed in the reality."<sup>323</sup> This potential for disappointment was anticipated in *A Handbook for Travelers in Lower and Upper Egypt*, which vociferously disputed the claims of travelers who "raved about the beauty of those *ghawazee*" and contended "the real truth is that nine-tenths of them are ugly and repulsive."<sup>324</sup> Nevertheless, many travelers remained enchanted by the appearance of Egyptian 'dancing girls,' further inscribing the beauty of these women as legendary. J.A. St John varyingly described Egyptian female entertainers through the language of classical antiquity as resembling "Venus Kallingya," or with "forms modeled by the Graces," as did his son Bayle St John who described a 'dancing girl' as an "Egyptian Aphrodite," the fame of whose beauty "had fallen short of the truth."<sup>325</sup> The irresistibility of these "most beautiful women in the country," implicated Egyptian female entertainers as *femmes fatales* when compounded with travelers' allegations of these women's destructive intent.<sup>326</sup> Much like the Sirens, JA St. John wrote that the voices of the 'dancing girls' held "the power to cast a spell over the judgement, more particularly when impassioned gestures, melting looks, and a certain dithyrambic enthusiasm" were incorporated into the performance.<sup>327</sup> The bewitching allure of 'dancing girls' was also noted by Pückler-Muskau, who recounted that he "saw an Almeh, who was then the most celebrated beauty in the capital, notorious for the power of her charms, which so completely fascinated an Englishman that he went so far as to offer her his hand, which, however, she refused."<sup>328</sup> Pückler-Muskau's account implies that this 'awâlim was aware

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<sup>322</sup> William Henry Gregory, *Egypt in 1855 and 1856; Tunis in 1857 and 1858*; (London: J.R. Smith, 1859), p. 162; Warner, *Mummies and Moslems*, p. 355; Ferguson, *Moss Gathered*, p. 85

<sup>323</sup> Thomas Wallace Knox, *Backsheesh! Or, Life and Adventures in the Orient*; (Hartford: A.D. Worthington & Co., Publishers, 1875), p. 573.

<sup>324</sup> Anonymous, *A Handbook for Travellers in Lower and Upper Egypt*, Vol. II; (London: John Murray Publishing, 1880), p. 445.

<sup>325</sup> J.A. St. John, *Egypt and Mohammed Ali*, pp. 109, 183; Bayle St. John, *Village Life in Egypt: with Sketches of the Said*, Vol. II; (London: Chapman and Hall, 1852), p. 71.

<sup>326</sup> James Ewing Cooley, *The American in Egypt*; (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1842) p. 525.

<sup>327</sup> J.A. St. John, *Egypt and Mohammed Ali*, p. 116.

<sup>328</sup> Pückler-Muskau, *Egypt Under Mehemet Ali*, p. 164.

of her own power to entice in her rejection of the man she had captivated. The supposedly deliberate seductiveness of Egyptian female entertainers was detailed by JA St. John, who claimed that “many of the Alme... sought to tempt the eye by their naked faces and bosoms.”<sup>329</sup> In reference to “the Almeh... and the Gh’awazee,” William Yates explicitly warned “it must not be forgotten that the business of their lives has always been, rather to appeal to the senses than the understandings of men, inflame the imagination, and steal away the heart.”<sup>330</sup>

Egyptian female entertainers, much like *femmes fatales*, were positioned within Victorian texts as ambiguously exotic. In addition to the aforementioned generalizations of the ‘*awâlim* and the *ghawâzî* as ‘oriental dancing women,’ another iteration of this deliberately vague exoticism can be found in comparisons drawn between Egypt’s ‘dancing girls’ and Roma people, known in nineteenth-century Britain as Gypsies. The now-pejorative xenonym ‘Gypsy’ actually originated from the word ‘Egyptian,’ due to a mistaken European belief that the Romani initially migrated from Egypt.<sup>331</sup> As Richard Madden incorrectly wrote in 1829, “it is little known that the dancing girls of Egypt are of the same race as our gypsies who were first called Egyptians from their native country of Egypt.”<sup>332</sup> Madden’s belief was echoed by Lane, who stated that “many of their customs are similar to those of the people whom we call ‘gipsies,’ and who are supposed, by some, to be of Egyptian origin.”<sup>333</sup> Other travelers, such as David Roberts, remarked that ‘dancing girls’ “resemble[ed] in some points another mysterious people, the Gipsies,” while Thomas Gold Appleton noted “there is certainly something gipsyish in the three specimens I have seen,” and determined that one of the women “at an English fair would not look out of place.”<sup>334</sup> Gypsy women had long been associated with the *femme fatale* and, in nineteenth-century Britain, representations of Gypsies as “sirens,

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<sup>329</sup> J.A. St. John, *Egypt and Mohammed Ali*, p. 183.

<sup>330</sup> Yates, *The Modern History and Condition of Egypt*, p. 218.

<sup>331</sup> Becky Taylor, *Another Darkness, Another Dawn: A History of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers*; (London: Reaktion Books, 2014), p. 11.

<sup>332</sup> Richard Robert Madden, Esq., *Travels in Turkey, Egypt, Nubia, and Palestine*; (London: Henry Colburn, 1829), p. 299.

<sup>333</sup> Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 99.

<sup>334</sup> D. Roberts, *The Holy Land*; Thomas Gold Appleton, *A Nile Journal*; (London: Macmillan & Co., 1876), p. 52.

seductresses, and exotic female beauties” were further popularized by the import of French literary archetypes including Victor Hugo’s *Esmerelda* and Prosper Merimée’s *Carmen*.<sup>335</sup> Notably, as literary historian Deborah Nord observes, British commentators during this time were particularly interested in “the lasciviousness and abandon of Gypsy women dancing” and consciously “conjured Gypsy beauties as objects of desire” in their writing.<sup>336</sup> Such allusions to lascivious and abandoned dance in British male fantasies of Gypsy women precisely mirrors the language by which British travelers typified Egyptian ‘dancing girls,’ yet it is within the concept of desire that the principal commonality between representations of Roma women and Egyptian female entertainers arises. Nord argues that in nineteenth-century Britain, Gypsy women “operated as a field for the projection of what was both feared and desired in that part of the British cultural self that was denied, reviled, or prohibited,” and I propose that this same paradox of desire and fear mediated representations of the *awâlim* and *ghawâzî*, and premised their connection to *femmes fatales*.<sup>337</sup> Although the *femme fatale* was known to be dangerous, in its varied British cultural manifestations desire consistently and disastrously outweighed men’s concern for the consequences. This same tension is evident in British travelers’ relations with Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ whose myriad transgressions of Victorian standards of respectable femininity constituted an inherent warning, but whose seductive allure beguiled the attention of the British traveler every time.

While the fascination ascribed to both the idea of the Gypsy and the Egyptian ‘dancing girl’ in the British cultural imagination was undoubtedly orientalist in nature, the ambiguity of their exoticism was furthered when the style of their dance was lumped together with Southern and Eastern European dances. Edward Clarke compared the dancing of the *ghawâzî* to other regions where “the exercise has not been refined by civilization” such as “the *Tarantello* of Italy, the *Fandango* of Spain, [and] the *Barisa* of Russia.”<sup>338</sup> Lane also compares the dance of Egyptian female entertainers to “the

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<sup>335</sup> Deborah Epstein Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807-1930*; (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), pp. 12, 13.

<sup>336</sup> Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination*, p. 13

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>338</sup> Clarke, *Travels in Various Countries*, p. 167.

licentious mode” of “the Spanish fandango,” as does the *Popular Geographies* series which remarked that “their dances are not unlike the Spanish fandango, but are of the most improper kind,” as well as Appleton who likened the dance to “Spain’s chachucha.”<sup>339</sup> The ‘*awâlim*, meanwhile, were connected by Yates to “the Italian Improvvisatrice.”<sup>340</sup>

One of the most pervasive legends surrounding the *ghawâzî* was the notion that the ‘dancing girls’ belonged to “a distinct race” and were affiliated with a separate “tribe” governed by women, in which “all of them are brought up for the venal profession, but not all as dancers.”<sup>341</sup> Several travelers repeated the notion that these female entertainers “marry among themselves,” although the factual accuracy of such claims is tenuous, as it seems that most of the *ghawâzî* performed out of financial necessity, and that the disrespectability associated with women performing publicly would not have been acceptable within marriage.<sup>342</sup> However, the myth of intermarriage prevailed, and the plight of the cuckolded husband became central to British narratives on the private lives of ‘dancing girls.’ Richard Madden commented that the husbands “deem it no disgrace to see their wives in the arms of another paramour after the dance, but think as little of it as a man of fashion does in London, to see his wife waltzing with a stranger, whose hands are as familiar with her waist as the fondest husband could wish his own.”<sup>343</sup> The alleged torment of ‘dancing girls’ spouses was further elaborated by Lane, who claimed that among “the Ghazeeyahs... the husband is subject to the wife: he performs for her the offices of a servant and procurer.”<sup>344</sup> James Cooley reiterated Lane’s charge, writing “their husbands are looked upon in the like of servants; who, like the old Egyptians, are

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<sup>339</sup> Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 98; *Popular Geographies, Egypt: A Familiar Description of the Land, People, and Produce*; (London: William Smith, 1839), p. 218; Appleton, *A Nile Journal*, pp. 25.

<sup>340</sup> Yates, *The Modern History and Condition of Egypt*, p. 218.

<sup>341</sup> *Popular Geographies, Egypt: A Familiar Description*, p. 218; Lane, *Manners and Customs*, pp. 98, 99; Warburton, *The Crescent and the Cross*, p. 295; The *ghawâzî* were also called a “curious race” [Adam Steinmetz Kennard, *Eastern Experiences, Collected During a Winter’s Tour in Egypt and the Holy Land*, (London: Longman, Brown, Green, & Longman, 1855), p. 122], and a “peculiar race” [Yates, *The Modern History and Condition of Egypt*, p. 218].]

<sup>342</sup> Madden, *Travels in Turkey*, p. 300; Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 94; Cooley, *The American in Egypt*, p. 525; Kennard, *Eastern Experiences*, p. 122.

<sup>343</sup> Madden, *Travels in Turkey*, p. 300.

<sup>344</sup> Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 99.

governed by the whims and caprices of their ‘better halves.’”<sup>345</sup> The emasculation inherent in this inversion of dominant masculinity in marriage again demonstrates the parallel between Egyptian dancing women and *femmes fatales*. The female marriage partner is presented as an indifferent adulteress, who governs despotically over her submissive husband. Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ were additionally represented as calculating and conspiratorial by accounts that suggested that the *ghawâzî* had invented for themselves a secret language. Lane, for example, wrote that “the Ghawazee... sometimes make use of a number of words peculiar to themselves, in order to render their speech unintelligible to strangers,” which David Roberts parroted, writing “they have a peculiar language... which they use to conceal their communications from strangers.”<sup>346</sup>

British travelers also directly associated the ‘*awâlim* and *ghawâzî* with well-known archetypes of the *femme fatale*, including the faithless lover Cressida, the fatalistic Cleopatra and, as previously mentioned, the enchantingly dangerous Sirens, and the seductive goddesses Aphrodite and Venus.<sup>347</sup> Yet, the most frequent *femme fatale* referenced in connection with Egyptian female entertainers was Salome. In an infamous fable curated through “a fascinating blend of Roman gossip told in cautionary tales by Seneca, Livy, Cicero, and Plutarch, New Testament Gospel, medieval legend, and Oriental Romanticism,” Salome, at the behest of her mother Herodias, demanded the severed head of John the Baptist in exchange for performing the sensual *Dance of the Seven Veils* before Herod Antipas.<sup>348</sup> The relationship between Salome and Egyptian female entertainers in the nineteenth-century was both materially and discursively interwoven and self-reinforcing. Salome had long been a popular subject for painters, but in the latter half of the century, in contrast to the comparatively more chaste and sombre antecedent depictions, Salome was increasingly presented as a partially-nude, gypsy-like dancer by artists such as Pierre Bonnard, Henri Regnault, Gustave Moreau, and Georges

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<sup>345</sup> Cooley, *The American in Egypt*, p. 525.

<sup>346</sup> Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 99; D. Roberts, *The Holy Land*.

<sup>347</sup> J.A. St. John, *Egypt and Mohammed Ali*, pp. 108, 109; Appleton, *A Nile Journal*, p. 26. Gregory, *Egypt in 1855 and 1856*, p. 255; Bayle St. John, *Village Life in Egypt*, p. 71.

<sup>348</sup> Toni Bentley, *Sisters of Salome*; (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 19.

Roche-grosse.<sup>349</sup> Gêrome's aforementioned *La Danse de L'Almée* (1863) had a discernable impact on visual imaginings of Salome, informing both the highly influential costume of Canadian dancer Maud Allen who played the role of Salomé on stage in London in 1908, as well as Georges Roche-grosse's painting *Salomé dancing Before King Herod* (1887).<sup>350</sup> Gêrome's famous painting, modeled after an Egyptian female entertainer, thereby became the authoritative image of Salome. Similarly, one of the most enduring literary configurations of Salome was derived from Gustave Flaubert's 1877 short story "Herodias," in which the principal character's dance was explicitly modeled after Kuchuk Hanem's erotic 'bee dance,' as personally experienced by the author in 1850.<sup>351</sup> The iconography of Salome was also prominent throughout early-nineteenth-century Britain, and many travelers had made the connection between Egypt's 'dancing girls' and *femmes fatales* before Flaubert or Gêrome had cemented the origin of her imagery as Egyptian. For example, Clarke wrote of similarities between his enjoyment of the performance of "the *Almehs*" with "the gratification afforded to Herod, by the dance of Salome," and John Carne speculated "it was probably a dance of this voluptuous kind that Herodias performed to please Herod and his officers."<sup>352</sup> Lane believed that "from the effect which it produced, it is probable that the dance performed by the daughter of Herodias was of the kind here described" by the *ghawâzî*.<sup>353</sup>

Several travelers expressed discomfort in the conceptual proximity between Egyptian 'dancing girls' and *femmes fatales*, particularly when it was noticed that the lascivious performances were being unreservedly emulated by upper class women in Egypt. Madden voiced his concern that despite "the dissoluteness of their conduct" 'dancing girls' were brought into "the most respectable... harems to teach the young ladies the most voluptuous mazes of the dance... and to instruct them in the art of

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<sup>349</sup> Appendix, Figures 19, 20, 21, 22

<sup>350</sup> Jess Sully, "Challenging the Stereotype: The *Femme Fatale* in *Fin-de-Siècle* Art and Early Cinema," in ed. Helen Hanson and Catherin O'Rawe, *The Femme Fatale: Images, Histories, Context*; (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 51.

<sup>351</sup> Bentley, *Sisters of Salome*, p. 24.

<sup>352</sup> Clarke, *Travels in Various Countries*, p. 167; John Carne, *Letters from the East*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Vol. I; (London: Henry Colburn, 1826), p. 189.

<sup>353</sup> Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 97.

feigning raptures which they do not feel.”<sup>354</sup> Such a belief in women’s learned insincerity and affectation, and intent to deceive men, was similarly concerning to Yates, who reflected that while ‘dancing girls’ “may have sweet voices and fine forms; they may be graceful, alluring, and pathetic in their demeanour, still ... their sentimentality is... too characteristic of Mohammedan joys to be misunderstood,” and who was troubled that “the ladies of every harem, not only in Egypt... are in the constant habit of acting these libidinous charades” in what he viewed as a calculated attempt to “procure... the marked favour, if not the affection, of her lord and master.”<sup>355</sup> J.A. St. John perhaps struck a nerve closest to home in writing that “even the wives and daughters of Europeans... contract a partiality for this dance, and are no more ashamed to entertain their friends by the lascivious movements which it requires, than they are, in Europe, to waltz.”<sup>356</sup> In a period marked by increasing vigilance around the dangers of powerful femininity, the concept of the *femme fatale* inspired both fear and desire among Victorian audiences.<sup>357</sup> As Sully writes, “the exotic, sexually promiscuous ‘otherness’ of the *femme fatale* threaten[ed] to destabilize the established cultural order,” and, as Luczyńska-Holdys emphasizes, women “who transgressed the boundaries ascribed to them by social norms... were seen as destructive and dangerous.”<sup>358</sup> Despite the feminine power seemingly inherent in the ability of fatal women to paralyze mankind in literary and artistic renderings, as Simkin notes, “ideological constructions of women such as the *femme fatale*... [were] very often and very swiftly mobilized *against* women who seem to transgress cultural norms.”<sup>359</sup> The *femme fatale* was therefore invoked not so much as a manifestation and confirmation of the fears/desires paradox, but as a deliberate and reactionary method of neutralizing the impact of disruptive women by containing them within a recognizable and easily condemnable type.

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<sup>354</sup> Madden, *Travels in Turkey*, p. 300.

<sup>355</sup> Yates, *The Modern History and Condition of Egypt*, p. 218.

<sup>356</sup> J.A. St. John, *Egypt and Mohammed Ali*, p. 105.

<sup>357</sup> Luczyńska-Holdys, *Soft Shed Kisses*, p. 4.

<sup>358</sup> Jess Sully, “Challenging the Stereotype,” p. 47; Luczyńska-Holdys, *Soft Shed Kisses*, p. 13

<sup>359</sup> Simkin, *Cultural Constructions of the Femme Fatale*, pp. 7, 8; Emphasis on ‘against’ is my own.

Although Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ do not appear to have deliberately aligned themselves with the iconography of the *femme fatale*, there is some evidence to suggest that the ‘*awâlim* and *ghawâzî* were complicit in typecasting themselves, particularly in the development of a narrative concerning the genealogy of their so-called ‘race’ and their claims to ancestry in *Arabian Nights*. There was certainly a financial incentive to be gained from pandering to the folklore of romanticized orientalism. Indeed, anything that made “the scene... less Oriental,” or that even slightly disrupted the anachronistic fantasy of Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ served as an immense disappointment to travelers and a disincentive to payment, as illustrated by Appleton who left a performance feeling entirely disenchanted by the fashionable European dresses worn by the entertainers.<sup>360</sup> The ‘*awâlim* and *ghawâzî* were undoubtedly aware of the expectations inherent in popular British orientalism, and were shrewd when it came to embellishing the story of their heritage. Madden wrote that he “heard some of [the ‘dancing girls’] boast of their common origin from a Grand Vizier of one of the Caliphs,” and Roberts wrote that “many have slightly aquiline noses, the characteristic of a distinct race, which they assert themselves to be.”<sup>361</sup> Lane indicates that Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ “call themselves the *Baramikeh* or *Burmekees*... of whom we read in several of the tales of ‘The Thousand and One Nights,’” although Lane himself questions the authenticity of such claims.<sup>362</sup> An American traveler likewise wrote that “the Ghawazee pride themselves on being descended from the Barmakees, referred to in the *Arabian Nights*.”<sup>363</sup> As Roberts notes, Victorian audiences were extremely familiar with the *Arabian Nights*, and read Lane’s popular 1838-1841 translation as “a complex mix of fact and fantasy... interpreted as a record of the ‘manners and customs’ of the East as well as a fictitious account of magic and the supernatural.”<sup>364</sup> ‘Dancing girls’ could appeal to British travelers’ well-established preconceptions of the *Arabian Nights* fantasy by affiliating themselves with both fact and fantasy in their insinuation of an ethnographic ancestral link to the

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<sup>360</sup> Knox, *Backsheesh!*, p. 573; Appleton, *A Nile Journal*, p. 26.

<sup>361</sup> Madden, *Travels in Turkey*, p. 299; D. Roberts, *The Holy Land*.

<sup>362</sup> Lane, *Manners and Customs*, p. 97.

<sup>363</sup> Jerome Van Crowninshield Smith, *A Pilgrimage to Egypt: Embracing a Diary of the Explorations on the Nile*; (Boston: Gould and Loncoln, 1852), p. 810.

<sup>364</sup> Mary Roberts, “Contested Terrains: Women Orientalists and the Colonial Harem,” in ed. Jill Beaulieu and Mary Roberts, *Orientalism’s Interlocutors: Painting, Architecture, Photography*; (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 183.



Barmakid family.<sup>365</sup> In this way, as Rosalind Ballaster discusses, to the British the Orient represented “a place to be turned into story as well as a place where story originates and where story has political and material effect.”<sup>366</sup> Undoubtedly, Egypt’s female entertainers were cognisant of their European clients’ fascination with the *Arabian Nights*, and deliberately positioned themselves within this narrative fantasy. It also appears that even for women who were not singers or dancers by trade, it could be advantageous to claim *ghawâzi* heritage. As Lane remarked, “the gipsies in Egypt often pretend to be descended from a branch of the same family to whom the Ghawazee refer their origin,” also mentioning “other dancing girls and courtesans who call themselves Ghawazee, but who do not really belong to that tribe.”<sup>367</sup>

By my own analysis, the connection articulated by British travelers between Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ and popular narratives surrounding ancient Egypt, classical antiquity, and *femmes fatales*, should be viewed as a reaction against the influence of the ‘*awâlim* and *ghawâzi* upon Britain. As I hope was sufficiently established in the first section of this chapter, the considerable cultural impact of ‘dancing girls’ within British metropolitan society raised complex questions surrounding the desirability of these transgressive female figures. In response, I argue that a process of typecasting occurred, which sought to contain and neutralize the potentially disruptive iconography associated with Egyptian female entertainers, and to reaffirm the importance of the Victorian ideals of womanhood embedded within the so-called ‘cult of domesticity.’ As Anne McClintock acknowledges, the cult of domesticity was “a crucial, if concealed, dimension of male as well as female identities – shifting and unstable as these were – and an indispensable element... of the... imperial enterprise.”<sup>368</sup> McClintock’s argument for the cult of domesticity’s centrality to British imperial identity is critical for conceptualizing the inherent instability of both empiric power and the gender roles ascribed by Victorian principles of domesticity. Therefore, as Mendus and Rendall contend, the toleration of

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<sup>365</sup> Also transliterated as ‘Barmecide.’

<sup>366</sup> Rosalind Ballaster, *Fabulous Orient: Fictions of the East in England, 1662-1785*; (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 17.

<sup>367</sup> Lane, *Manners and Customs*, pp, 99, 100.

<sup>368</sup> McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p. 5.

female in adherence to institutionalized expectations around gender was “construed as socially dangerous – a threatening and morally damaging unleashing of animal instincts of the most base sort.”<sup>369</sup> When situating this argument within the context of Egypt’s ‘dancing girls,’ these women’s transgression of the cult of domesticity is repositioned as doubly threatening to Victorian social order as well as to the imperial order premised upon white male control over the women of empire. By affiliating the ‘*awâlim* and *ghawâzî* with ancient Egyptian ‘dancing girls,’ British travelers emphasized the historical remoteness of these women, whereby such temporal distancing made these women more acceptable for consumption by Victorian audiences. The parallels drawn between Egyptian female entertainers and the courtesans and bacchantes of classical antiquity served as a cautionary denunciation of hedonism and sexual lasciviousness, invoked to reiterate the moral corruption of the ‘dancing girls.’ Finally, Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ various associations with *femmes fatales* in travelogues are here interpreted as an attempt to exploit widespread fears of transgressive women, and to incite the condemnation of ‘dancing girls’ by portraying them as specifically dangerous to men and masculinity. Finally, that Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ attempted to develop and perpetuate their own hyperbolized origin narrative in accordance with the *Arabian Nights* is further illustrative of the power resultant from self-typecasting, and its lucrative potential.

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<sup>369</sup> Mendus and Rendall, “Introduction,” p. 9.

## Chapter Five: Conclusion

Before beginning my archival research in London and at Oxford, I had anticipated that the temporal focus of this thesis project would be quite firmly rooted within the ‘Veiled Protectorate’ period between 1882 and 1914, during which time the British invaded Alexandria and assumed tacit control over the governance of Egypt. This presumption was due to the fact that administrative record keeping was quite comprehensive and generally better-preserved during the ‘Veiled Protectorate,’ which, theoretically, meant that a quantitatively more substantial corpus of sources pertaining to Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ would derive from this later period. However, I quickly realized that this expectation was not to be met. Somewhat curiously, I found relatively few sources British from the period after 1882 that chronicled the *‘awâlim* and *ghawâzî*. Instead, the vast majority of relevant archival materials originated between the 1830s and 1870s, which impelled an earlier focus to my work. I attribute this absence of later-nineteenth-century commentary on ‘dancing girls’ to a cultural fatigue, on the part of bourgeois British audiences, who, by the 1870s, had been steeped in Orientalist renderings of Egyptian female entertainers for nearly half a century. However, in contemporaneity with the onset of British weariness towards this topic, American enthusiasm for Egypt’s ‘dancing girls’ was just beginning to flourish.

In 1893, the World’s Columbian Exhibition was held in Chicago, where visitors could visit an exhibit titled “Street in Cairo” featuring dancing girls “perform[ing] the *Dans du Ventre*,” whom the official brochure described as “the bright particular stars of the Egyptian firmament.”<sup>370</sup> The well-known contemporary term ‘belly dance’ is an English translation of the aforementioned French *dans du ventre*, which involved a gesticulating movement of the torso. This *dans du ventre* was popularized at the Cairo street exhibit by one dancer, in particular, who captivated audiences while performing under the stage name ‘Little Egypt.’ Her style of dance, more familiarly known in North America as the “hootchie-kootchie dance” was captured on three short film reels in 1897 by the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company, which, included alongside semi-

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<sup>370</sup> W.J.H., *Street in Cairo*, (Chicago: Chicago Exposition Co., 1893), p. 7.

erotic films such as “Parisienne Girls” and “Dressing Room Scene.”<sup>371</sup> Little Egypt achieved immense popularity among male audiences and, despite facing criticism by groups such as the Board of Lady Managers of the World’s Columbian Commission who protested the “indecent” of her dance, several different women emerged as Little Egypt impersonators in the following years and capitalized on the act’s success.<sup>372</sup>

British erotic representations of the ‘bee dance’ as a striptease and excessive descriptions of the perceived lasciviousness of the ‘*awâlim* and *ghawâzî* directly informed American appropriations of Little Egypt’s dance, which consistently depicted Egyptian female entertainers as strippers. Throughout the twentieth-century, this striptease stereotype persisted in a song called “Little Egypt (Ying Yang)” recorded by The Coasters in 1961, and most notably covered by Elvis Presley in 1964 and by Cher in the 1985 movie *Mask*.<sup>373</sup> Presley also sang the song in the film *Roustabout*, which featured a stereotypically sexualized Orientalist scene accompanying the lyrics “Little Egypt came out strotting wearing nothing but a button and a bow... she did the hoochie-koochie real slow.”<sup>374</sup> This dubious tradition of presenting Egyptian female entertainers as strippers was further continued in a line from an objectively terrible song called “Naked Women and Beer” by Hank Williams Jr. in which the artist describes getting intoxicated and watching the performance of strippers “from Little Egypt to the Vegas strip.”<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907*, Vol. 1; (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990,) pp. 176.

<sup>372</sup> Toni Bentley, *Sisters of Salome*; (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 36.

<sup>373</sup> This burlesque portrayal of Egyptian dance was similarly depicted in the 1951 film *Little Egypt*, which was advertised as “the shape that shook the world!” and “the scandalous tale of the spectacular girl who rocked the First Chicago World’s Fair with that famous Hootchy-Kootchy Dance!”; *Little Egypt*, directed by Frederick de Cordova, performed by Rhonda Fleming and Mark Stevens, (USA, Universal Pictures, 1951), film; Coasters, “Little Egypt (Ying-Yang),” in *Coast Along with the Coasters*, Atco, 1961, vinyl; Elvis Presley, “Little Egypt,” in *Roustabout*, RCA Victor Records, 1964, vinyl; Cher, “Little Egypt,” in *Mask*, directed by Peter Bogdanovich, (USA, Universal Pictures, 1985), film.

<sup>374</sup> Elvis Presley, “Little Egypt,” in *Roustabout*, directed by John Rich (USA, Paramount Pictures, 1964).

<sup>375</sup> Hank Williams Jr., “Naked Women and Beer,” in *Stormy*, Curb Records, 1999, CD.

Regrettably, the damaging impact of centuries of Orientalist descriptions of Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ sexual excess has endured, and the conceptual link between belly dance and striptease has continued to predominate to the point where even contemporary Egyptian female performers’ reputations appear to be impacted by the legacy of western representations. In 2015, Salma el-Fouly and Safinaz, two popular belly dancers in Egypt were imprisoned for six months under the charge of “inciting debauchery” following their participation in music videos deemed by the lawyers who prosecuted the women as too sexually provocative and “harm[ful] to the image of Egyptian women.”<sup>376</sup> Their sentencing, followed subsequently by the imprisonment of several other belly dancers, was the result of new legislation introduced by the Egyptian Syndicate of Musical Professions, which banned “revealing outfits” in an attempt to “recommit[t] to Egyptian values and tradition[s].”<sup>377</sup> As recently as April 2017, Dr. Mona Price, a lecturer at Egypt’s Suez Canal University, was suspended from her position and made the subject of a government investigation as a consequence of publishing a video of herself belly dancing on her private Facebook page.<sup>378</sup> As the continued disparagement and persecution of Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ serves to illustrate, representations of these women remain inherently political and their bodies remain symbolic of systemic insecurities surrounding gender, sexuality, and imperialism.

In addition to contextualizing the *‘awâlim* and *ghawâzî* within the early-nineteenth-century Egyptian socio-cultural milieu, the first chapter sought to demonstrate the historiographical importance of analyzing cultural politics and state control over female bodies in order to comprehensively understand the significance of Mehmed Ali’s 1834 banishment of public dancing women from Cairo. The enduring epistemological

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<sup>376</sup> “Egyptian Belly Dancers Jailed for ‘Inciting Debauchery.’” *BBC: Middle East*, (September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015,) accessed June 12, 2017, URL: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34140406>

<sup>377</sup> “Two Egyptian Belly-dancers Sentenced to Prison Over ‘Debauchery’ in Music Videos,” *Egyptian Streets*, (September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015,) accessed June 12, 2017, URL: <https://egyptianstreets.com/2015/09/03/two-egyptian-belly-dancers-sentenced-to-prison-over-debauchery-in-music-videos/>

<sup>378</sup> “Suspended Egyptian Lecturer Defiantly Posts Another Bellydance Video,” *Al Arabiya English*, (April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017,) accessed June 12, 2017, URL: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/variety/2017/04/17/Suspended-Egyptian-lecturer-defiantly-posts-another-bellydance-video.html>; As noted in this article, Dr. Price subsequently uploaded a second video of herself dancing on Facebook in protest of her suspension from employment.

impact of this edict's correlation between prostitutes and dancers is further explored in the next chapter, which examines the parallels drawn in British travelogues between Egyptian 'dancing girls' and prostitution and masculinity. In particular, Chapter Three endeavoured to determine why, exactly, British travelers considered these perceived parallels to be so deeply transgressive. I argue that 'dancing girls'' expressions of typically masculine attributes and behaviours, such as financial independence, assertiveness, smoking tobacco, and drinking alcohol excessively, demonstrated that women were capable of participating in male society thereby exposing the misguidedness of popular assumptions of the natural inferiority of the female sex. I additionally suggest that Egyptian female entertainers' associations with prostitution positioned the '*awâlim* and *ghawâzî* in direct contravention of bourgeois nineteenth-century British idealizations of womanhood which centred around the feminine domestic role as wife and mother. Lastly, in analyzing depictions of Egyptian 'dancing girls' in mediums such as fine art, theatre productions, photography, erotic images, and pornographic texts, the fourth chapter attempted to establish that the representative sexualization of the '*awâlim* and *ghawâzî* did not occur in isolation from the British metropole. The complicated power relationship between imperialism and desire is neatly encapsulated within the interaction between British travelers and Egyptian 'dancing girls.' On the part of British commentators, I understand the process of typecasting as an attempt to mediate the complexities of desire within an imperial context. In describing Egyptian female entertainers in relation to ancient Egypt, classical antiquity, and *femmes fatales* archetypes, I propose that British travelers intended to contain the subversiveness of these women within a mythical paradigm in order to render the '*awâlim* and *ghawâzî* more palatable for consumption by middle and upper class British audiences. As has hopefully been reinforced throughout this thesis, there is a politics inherent within imperialist representations of Egyptian female entertainers, which ultimately informed how gendered dynamics of power were culturally constructed and negotiated around the bodies of Egyptian female entertainers throughout the nineteenth-century.

Inevitably, the scope of a Master's thesis does not allow for each aspect of this topic to be covered in sufficient depth. As such, I would like to conclude by highlighting

a number of areas for further research into the topic of Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ and the politics of their representation. Firstly, as outlined in the Introduction, German, Italian, Greek, and other European travelers contributed substantially to depictions of the ‘*awâlim* and *ghawâzî*, but due to my own linguistic limitations, they do not receive adequate coverage in this work. Likewise, French travelogue authors participated substantially in representations of Egyptian female entertainers. Given the Anglo-French rivalry that prevailed in Egypt throughout most of the nineteenth-century, a comparative examination would likely illuminate interesting dimensions of both perspectives. Secondly, should it become safe to conduct historical research in Egyptian archives at any point in the future, it would be beneficial to incorporate indigenous primary sources that can speak to local perceptions of the cultural role of the ‘*awâlim* and *ghawâzî*, and shed light on how Egyptians themselves might have conceived of and responded to European representations of ‘dancing girls.’ There are several areas in this project where additional historicization from an Ottoman Egyptian perspective would have been valuable in balancing the disproportionate emphasis afforded to British and other European sources. Finally, it would be interesting to more comprehensively explore similarities between nineteenth-century representations of Egyptian ‘dancing girls’ and depictions of female entertainers in other parts of the world, from Indian ‘nautch’ dance to the Italian ‘tarantello’ and Spanish ‘fandango.’

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# Appendix.

## Figures



Figure 1 Richard Pococke, "Dancing Women of Egypt" in \_\_\_\_, London 1743



Figure 2 Luigi Mayer, *Ceremony at Ned Sili*, 1801.



Figure 3 Brandin, *Almée Danseuse au Caire*, 1810



Dancing-Girls (Ghawa'zee, or Gha'zee'yehs).

Figure 4 Edward William Lane, *Dancing Girls (Ghawa'zee, or Gha'zee'yehs)*, 1836



EGYPTIAN DANCING GIRLS.  
(Gha'wa'zee or Gha'zee'yehs.)

Figure 5 William Yates, *Egyptian Dancing Girls (Ghawa'zee, or Gha'zee'yehs)*, 1843





Figure 6 William Henry Bartlett, *untitled*, 1849



Figure 7 David Roberts, *The Ghawazees, or Dancing-Girls of Cairo*, 1855



Figure 8      Jean-Léon Gérôme, *La Danse de L'Almée*, 1863





Figure 9 A carefully staged example of the visual tropes of Orientalism that came to be associated with Egyptian ‘dancing girls,’ including the excessive smoking of tobacco.



Figure 10 An example of simulated motion against a garden backdrop



Figure 11 An example of simulated motion against a false backdrop



Figure 12 Underwood & Underwood, "Photograph of Type - Arab Dancing Girl after the Dance," 1897



Figure 13 Underwood & Underwood, "Photograph of Type-Egyptian Dancing Girl," 1897





Figure 14 Orientalist erotica



Figure 15 Orientalist erotica



Figure 16 Orientalist Erotica





Figure 17 Orientalist Erotica



Figure 18 Orientalist erotica



Figure 19 Pierre Bonnard, *Salomé*, 1865



Figure 20 Georges Rochegrosse, *Salomé Dancing Before King Herod*, 1887





Figure 21 Gustave Moreau, *Salomé*, 1876



Figure 22     Henri Regnault, *Salomé*, 1870