

Dancing Fear and Desire: Race, Sexuality, and Imperial Politics in Middle Eastern Dance (Cultural Studies)

Stavros Stavrou Karayanni



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Throughout centuries of European colonial domination, the bodies of Middle Eastern dancers, male and female, move sumptuously and seductively across the pages of Western travel journals, evoking desire and derision, admiration and disdain, allure and revulsion. This profound ambivalence forms the axis of an investigation into Middle Eastern dance—an investigation that extends to contemporary belly dance.

Stavros Stavrou Karayanni, through historical investigation, theoretical analysis, and personal reflection, explores how Middle Eastern dance actively engages race, sex, and national identity. Close readings of colonial travel narratives, an examination of Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, and analyses of treatises about Greek dance, reveal the intricate ways in which this controversial dance has been shaped by Eurocentric models that define and control identity performance.

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