

Bellydance and melancholia in Egyptian Golden Era cinema

Abstract:

In this paper I focus on the representation of mental sickness in popular screendance of Egyptian Golden Era cinema (1940s-1960s). I will debate the representation of neurosis, depression and melancholia in this type of cinema and how bellydance has been deployed as a cultural anchor to identify these maladies as part of women's daily life uses and ordinary life. I argue that the use of bellydance in these contexts reproduces the established idea that these maladies were suffered mostly by women, and thus it portrays a biased representation of these diseases through popular cinema. I have grounded my analysis in Pierre Bourdieu's thought and in recent studies of postcolonial sociology. This academic area draws upon previous scholarship in the field of post-colonialism acknowledging the legacy of the past in present inequalities as long-lasting historical consequences of colonialism, domination and inculcation, entangling postcolonial thought with social theory.

Keywords: depression, melancholia, mental diseases, popular screendance, Egypt, postcolonial sociology.