REFLECTIONS ABOUT WOMEN'S BODY AND SEXUALITY IN EASTERN DANCE: COMPARATIVES BETWEEN BRAZIL-EGYPT UNDER FOUCAULTIAN OPTICS

REFLEXÕES ACERCA DO CORPO E DA SEXUALIDADE DA MULHER NA DANÇA ORIENTAL: COMPARATIVOS ENTRE BRASIL-EGITO SOB A ÓTICA FOUCAULTIANA

REFLEXIONES SOBRE EL CUERPO Y LA SEXUALIDAD DE LAS MUJERES EN LA DANZA ORIENTAL: COMPARACIONES ENTRE BRASIL-EGIPTO A PARTIR DE LA ÓPTICA FOUCAULTIAN

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ABSTRACT: Art is classified through the ages, from the most remote, in the most distinct artistic characteristics, as a way of looking at the world. Among the most appreciated arts, the art of dance, present since the earliest civilizations, endures in modern times, enchanting generations. Through dance, whatever the style, one speaks, writes, draws, dreams, utilizing the body. The art of dance enhances bodily experiences in different social organizations. Its importance is in force in every epoch of history and is so unique that it changes and changes and has been present since the earliest civilizations. The aim is to give the subject the opportunity in the field of sensitivities, based on dance, allowing him to experience a cognitive/ affective experience, providing disruption in the way of reading/thinking and acting, about himself, the other and the world in an ethical and reflective way. In this way, the referring qualitative research sought to analyze the similarities and differences of the woman's body and sexuality in oriental dance in Brazil and Egypt through thematic analysis. The expected results signal an improvement in the ways of dancing in a pleasurable and critical way with greater emotional involvement, signaling the creation of an environment of spontaneity and creativity, allowing it to immerse itself in body language, enabling the construction and reconstruction of the gaze, the stimulation of the imagination, self-affirmation and autonomy, in addition to getting used to the existence of coexistence of form. In this sense, art can be innovative as it unfolds into a life project, in the (re)construction of new subjectivities impacting new modes of existence.

KEYWORDS: Body. Dance. Power. Sexuality.

RESUMO: A arte se classifica por meio dos tempos, desde os mais remotos, nas mais distintas características artísticas, como forma de se olhar o mundo. Dentre as artes mais apreciadas, a arte da dança, presente desde as mais antigas civilizações, perdura nos tempos modernos,

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encantando gerações. Por meio da dança, seja qual for o estilo, fala-se, escreve-se, desenhase, sonha-se, utilizando o corpo. A arte da dança potencializa as experiências corporais nas diferentes organizações sociais. A sua importância se faz vigente em cada época da história e é tão singular que se modifica e se transforma, seguindo presente desde as mais antigas civilizações. Pretende-se oportunizar ao sujeito no campo das sensibilidades, a partir da dança, permitindo-o a vivenciar uma experiência cognitiva/afetiva proporcionando disrupção no modo de ler/pensar e agir, sobre si, o outro e o mundo de forma ética e reflexiva. Deste modo, a referente pesquisa qualitativa buscou analisar as semelhanças e diferenças do corpo e da sexualidade da mulher na dança oriental no Brasil e no Egito por meio da análise temática. Os resultados esperados sinalizam para uma melhoria dos modos de dançar de forma prazerosa e crítica com maior envolvimento emocional, sinalizam a criação do ambiente de espontaneidade e criatividade permitindo-o a se embrenhar pela linguagem corporal, possibilita construção e reconstrução do olhar, a estimulação da imaginação, autoafirmação e autonomia, além de se habituar à existência de convivência de forma. Nesse sentido, a arte pode ser inovadora ao se desdobrar para um projeto de vida, na (re)construção de novas subjetividades, impactando novos modos de existência.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Corpo. Dança. Poder. Sexualidade.

RESUMEN: El arte se clasifica a través de las edades, desde las más remotas, en las características artísticas más distintas, como una forma de mirar el mundo. Entre las artes más apreciadas, el arte de la danza, presente desde las civilizaciones más antiguas, perdura en los tiempos modernos, encantando a generaciones. A través de la danza, sea cual sea el estilo, hablamos, escribimos, dibujamos, soñamos, usando el cuerpo. El arte de la danza potencia las experiencias corporales en diferentes organizaciones sociales. Su importancia está presente en cada época de la historia y es tan singular que se modifica y transforma, estando presente desde las civilizaciones más antiguas. Se pretende dar al sujeto la oportunidad en el campo de las sensibilidades, desde la danza, permitiéndole vivir una experiencia cognitivo / afectiva aportando disrupción en la forma de leer / pensar y actuar, sobre sí mismo, el otro y el mundo de forma ética y reflexiva. . De esta manera, la investigación cualitativa referente buscó analizar las similitudes y diferencias del cuerpo y la sexualidad de la mujer en la danza oriental en Brasil y Egipto a través del análisis temático. Los resultados esperados señalan una mejora en las formas de bailar de manera placentera y crítica con mayor implicación emocional, señalan la creación de un ambiente de espontaneidad y creatividad que le permite involucrarse con el lenguaje corporal, posibilitar la construcción y reconstrucción de la mirada, la estimulación de imaginación, autoafirmación y autonomía, además de acostumbrarse a la existencia de la coexistencia de formas. En este sentido, el arte puede ser innovador cuando se despliega en un proyecto de vida, en la (re) construcción de nuevas subjetividades, impactando nuevos modos de existencia.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Cuerpo. Danza. Poder. Sexualidad.

Introduction

Art is an important element in the reconfiguration of life. Art is part of a creative process that allows the practitioner to reinvent themselves and the world around them. Gombrich (2000,

p. 15, our translation) mentions about art, "many people like to see what they would also like to see in reality", but "the problem is that tastes and patterns vary immensely".

Thus, it can be said that art, in the most different styles - music, dance, cuisine, poetry, among others, exist to present, cause in us disorder, disproportion, absent ourselves from regularities, creations, other movements. Deleuze (1983) mentions that

> if states of affairs become world movements, if the characters become figures of dance, dance, [...] ballet, mime abandoned figures and poses to release values that were not posed, not pulsated, that reported the movement at any moment (our translation).

Would the use of dance be just a clothing of a power in relation to the body and sexuality?

However, the art of dance can be an instrument for promoting deeper readings of the game to be able to (re)signify your life, the world around you and yourself. Based on these questions, it is proposed to take a look at a theme dear to today, sexuality and the constitution of subjectivities through languages, discourse, codes, dance, technologies.

Thus, among the most appreciated arts, the art of dance, present since the oldest civilizations, endures in modern times, enchanting generations. The art of dance enhances bodily experiences in different social organizations. Its importance is present in each epoch of history and it is so unique that it is modified and transformed, present since the oldest civilizations, it is a device that allows the functioning of technologies of the self, in the Foucauldian molds that can take the student to a process of self-care in the ethical construction of its existence.

In the early days, people danced to celebrate birth and even to communicate with supernatural forces. It was a way of expressing feelings, emotions and thoughts. It is assumed that dance was used as a ritual to revere birth, celebrate success in hunting or even to mourn deaths during struggles between peoples. The people who lived about 15,000-10,000 years before the Christian period, left their records engraved on natural stones on the walls of the caves. They are cave paintings found by archaeologists on all continents.

In Brazil, for example, it is still possible to contemplate samples of rock art at the Homem Americano Museum Foundation (Fumdham) in the Serra da Capivara National Park, located in Piauí, sustained for years by the Federal Culture Incentive Law, popularly known as Rouanet Law (BRASIL, 1991).

In ancient times, dance had sacred characteristics in the midst of divine character. On the walls of Egyptian temples, it is still common to find records of dancers during the demonstration of worship to the deities of the time. The image of the Egyptian papyrus shown in figure 1 demonstrates how important art is in the daily life of the people of ancient Egypt. Some musical instruments like flute, harp and lute were normally used in religious parties, accompanied by many dances.

Figure 1 – Egyptian papyrus painting titled Three Dancing Music.



Source: Authors' archive

There was an artistic composition for the beginning of a ritual "accompanied by musicians, dancing and singing" in which "the sound purified the mood, singing praised life... dance was a body and soul expression of feelings, desires" (MIEL, 2019, p. 103) in which dance once again appears as a personification of reality, dreams and the yearnings of humanity.

This was also the case in India and China, where dances inspired the manifestation of beliefs through body movements. In Greece, in addition to the divine character, it was used to turn the bodies of soldiers who should also learn to dance in order to harmonize body and soul.

On the other hand, in the Middle Ages, a period marked by the rise of Christianity, a movement begins that places dance as profane, practiced only by peasants. The distancing of beliefs enabled greater popular participation in the art of dance.

However, the feeling of guilt began to introject during the Renaissance and religious intolerance gave the dancing body the mysticism of punishing it as a pagan, considering bodily manifestations as sin.

Thus, popular dance resurfaces during the Renaissance with stylized forms. Hence, it was also appreciated by the nobility as entertainment during court parties, symbolizing power with luxury and ostentatious costumes in the choreographed performances of palace ballets.

It can be thought that the construction of identity comes from the singular relationships established as a result of the experiences, the personal history of each one and the other(s) that constitutes the subject, implying at all times, strangeness, to the different, in giving new meanings, displacing it, making it possible to (re)signify its mode of existence

and its subjectivities. Thus, we can consider that, through dance, the subject can reevaluate itself and perhaps reveal itself in another subject more authentic of itself, reconstituted of identities, subjectivities and other singularities.

It is the possibility of modifying with their actions, the opposite actions present in the other, ways in which discursive and non-discursive practices, sometimes by the speeches that one is forced to produce, sometimes by the movements of which they become victimized by the organization that affects it sometimes without proper awareness and reflection. They are ways through which society places itself and moves, kings and subjects, laws that operate, who determine them and those who must obey

to point out simply, not the very mechanism of the relationship between power, right and truth, but the intensity of the relationship and its constancy, let's say this: we are forced to produce the truth by the power that requires that truth, and that needs it to function, we have to tell the truth, we are coerced, we are condemned to confess the truth or find it (FOUCAULT, 1987, p. 29, our translation).

In the transition to Modernity, other intentions were established in dance. The dance broke with the predictable, changing amid intense experiments. Brazilian dancer Vianna (2005, p. 41, our translation) mentions in an inspiring way that "it is not just dancing, there is a need for a whole relationship with the world around us", recognizing the body in the art of dance as a creative movement.

The passionate dance movements that enchanted generations open spaces for new possibilities of creation, other modes of existence, becoming-dance. Deleuze mentions (1983, p. 16, our translation) that "the whole is created and continues to be created in another dimension without parts, as that which takes the set from one qualitative state to another, as the pure incessant becoming that passes through these states" that involve, affect, imprison or release and allow language to remain and function.

Dance, as "the art of body movements is lost in the most distant history of humanity" (DOURADO, 2004, p. 103), makes possible an artistic process that gives subjects other possibilities to unravel the mysteries of the world and transform themselves with or through it. Through dance, whatever the style, we speak, write, draw, dream, educate using the body.

And within this broad relationship with Education in which bodies educated themselves, are educated and educate other bodies, the related qualitative research sought to analyze the similarities and differences of the body and sexuality of women in oriental dance in Brazil and Egypt through the analysis of senses. This type of approach was fed with data from individual or collective experiences regarding speeches, drawings, photos, narratives, documents,

observations, brought in later. The categories of body model in dance were analyzed to show their evolution over time and in different spaces and the different ways that bodies are educated in the art of dance.

From rags sharqi to belly dancing

Based on the experiences of the past in line with the present, in Brazil, around the 1950s, the raqs sharqi (oriental dance) mentioned by the Palestinian Sharkey (2002, p. 6, our translation) emerged as the dance of the east "where the sun rises and from where the woman receives the sun's energies".

It is said that around 7,000 years before Christianity, in the Arab countries (Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Morocco, among others), the oriental dance was performed by women, the priestesses. These offered the dancing movements to Isis - the fertile womb goddess, the great goddess. Among the millenary aspects, this style was and is marked by wavy movements and hip beats with elegant movements sometimes coming from ballet, perpetuating the junction between past and present.

Practitioners of this modality refer to oriental dance more broadly, as it brings characteristics of folklore in fusion with other cultures as well as the use of ornaments such as veil, cane, tambourine, candelabrum, bowls, sword, etc.

In the dance of the seven veils, for example, the dancer uses the adornment in reference to the priestesses in worship of Isis. Full of mysteries, among the myths surrounding the appearance of this dance, whether Roman, Greek or Egyptian, "the deities appear, disappear, change their names and functions, depending on the circumstances", reports Traunecker (1995, p. 18, our translation).

One of the myths brings veils closer to the colors of the rainbow "formed by the sun's rays reflected in the rain, in which the combined colors where they come together look the same, but within short distance from the contact point they are entirely different" (BULFINCH, 2002, p. 133, our translation), relating them to the great star and the planets of the Solar System: yellow veil = Sun (or Ra - god of light), red veil = Mars (or Ares - god of war), orange veil = Jupiter (or Zeus - god of the heavens), green veil = Mercury (or Hermes - god of commerce), blue veil = Venus (or Aphrodite - goddess of beauty and love), lilac veil = Saturn (or Cronos - god of time) and white veil = Neptune (or Poseidon - god of the oceans).

Only by experiencing the seven veils is it possible to reach the portal that guards the passage from one world to the other, or even, the inter-worlds of dance as an escape line, in

which the senses happen, manifesting what you want to do with your body in dance, empowering yourself.

The movements symbolize the fertility of the womb, the maternity of the breasts, the surrender of the body, the joy of the shoulders, sadness, yearnings, requests with the folding and unfolding of the trunk [...] degrees of conscience with colors (MIEL, 2019, p. 103, our translation).

Dancers from ancient Egypt are believed to have used snake oil to make their joints more flexible during their acrobatic dances. This refers to the fact of the possibility of contorting the belly on all sides. These dancers were sculpted on the walls of many Egyptian temples as shown in figure 2.



Figure 2 – The belly of the contortionist dancers depicted inside the Luxor temple

Source: Authors' archive

Although, in contemporary times, with the influences of cultures from different countries, oriental dance has undergone changes, its historical trajectory is so linked to the imagery of Western culture and widespread whether through cinema, television or the internet. There are Egyptian dancers who have gained prominence with their beautiful *performances*: Samia Gamal (Zeinab Ali Khalil Ibrahim Mahfouz, 1924-1994) and Taheyya Kariokka (Badaweya Mohamed Kareem Al Nirani, 1915-1999) who received this artistic name after the *derbakista* mixed in hers performances sounds of Arab music to the sounds of Brazilian music. In an attempt to resemble the gods, dancers leave their baptismal names to incorporate their artistic names, perhaps, metamorphosing themselves according to the situations.

In Brazil, the dawn of oriental dance is simultaneous to the arrival of Arab immigrants in the middle of the 19th century. In the 1950s, oriental dance was widely propagated by the pioneer Shahrazad Sharkey (Madeleine Iskandarian Kitishian, 1940-2014).

Over the years, the Arab nomenclature gained the definition of belly dance and some spaces started to promote the teaching of this art throughout the country, where simultaneously presentations of oriental dance and its variations and mergers take place.

Generally, spaces for the presentation of oriental dance art are organized in a very similar way and offer study environments as well as environments that characterize the ancient temples of the pharaohs, tents and harems decorated with furniture, chandeliers and walls painted in the pharaonic style, used during presentations to the public. In these environments, cafeteria services are offered simultaneously with the dance presentations.

These dance shows are usually offered by different groups of dancers. There are presentations by beginner dancers who are still studying oriental dance at a basic stage of artistic development. They are guided in training courses with more experienced dancers, seen as dance divas, goddesses, or something similar. In these spaces, art is tasted in a mixture of sensations, savoring the menus and presentations of the beautiful women who dance in spaces that resembles to the harem.

But why harem?

In the harem of the great Arab empires, for example, women are kept in reserved spaces in the house, where the sultan's - absolute, powerful lord - orders dominate exclusively. They are meticulously chosen, entering as odalisques - a term derived from the Turkish *odalyk* which, according to the online dictionary Michaelis (2009) designates a "woman of the sultan's harem", however exchanging their own names for Persian names in order to enhance their qualities, practice still adopted by the great dancers of oriental dance around the world.

The Michaelis online dictionary (2009, emphasis added) expresses the meaning of the word harem, from Arabic *haram*, as

1 Part of the Muslim home for women. 2 Set of legitimate women, concubines, relatives, and servants of a Muslim home. 3 *Zool* Group of females associated with a single male. 4 Lupanar.

Considering that the last expression given by the dictionary is associated with the house of prostitutes, in this way, different meanings permeate between the real and the imaginary about dancers of oriental dance that are commonly confused with odalisques.

Giffoni (1974) mentions the odalisque dance as "social purpose", since, once in the harem, at the disposal of the sultan's wife, they learn to dance, recite poems and perhaps become a sultana, the sultan's favorite, going from encounter with the relations between sexuality and

power that Foucault (1987 p. 133) establishes as "productive relations" and that intertwine so many stories in society.

Bodies, sexuality and power: dance-becoming

Dance is the art that sets the body in motion, demonstrating, through the body, the different forms that society is organized.

The role of dance artists in society, both in Egypt and in Brazil, bear similarities to male looks. They receive proposals from private *shows* that suggest prostitution even though they sometimes do not engage in such parallel activity.

Both countries show similarities in the form of the woman's body manifestation through the art of dance; both Egyptian and Brazilian *show* halls also present the image of the bodies of the dancers as a commercial product.

Although oriental dance is linked to the erotic image of women and it is still common practice, in Arab countries, to put money on the ballerina's clothes after a dance performance, Sharkey points out (2002, p. 5-6, our translation) that "a dancer should not accept that men put money in her body. They say it is customary, but this is not true. The woman's body is sacred and the people must watch this dance with great respect and admiration".

In this way, Foucault (1987) presents power as a correlation of forces that shapes the way in which an individual acts on the action of one or more individuals and, also, on the way in which he acts on himself. The exercise of power consists of putting in place mechanisms of power.

Power mechanisms are made up of specific technologies for each desired objective. For example, in Discipline and Punish, Foucault (1987) describes in detail the disciplinary techniques with the aim of showing the process of domestication of the bodies and minds of individuals. Various institutions, such as the school, hospitals, barracks, and prison developed mechanisms, from the XVII century, based on uninterrupted surveillance and the control of individual behavior in its smallest details. For example, pastoral power exercises a technique of control and direction of conscience, which consisted of inciting individuals to talk about themselves, to confess the most intimate of themselves.

When such power is put into practice, institutions such as the Church, the family, educational, artistic and medical institutions, intensify control over individuals not only through objectifying their behaviors, but also, from what constitutes the subjectivity of these individuals. The truth does not exist outside of power or without power. The truth is of this

world; it is produced in it thanks to multiple constraints and produces regulated effects of power in it (FOUCAULT, 1987, p. 12).

In Egypt, after the first menstruation, women use a scarf to cover their hair. The entire body of the woman needs to remain hidden in the midst of clothes with a lot of fabric, a fact that differs from dance artists who seem to obtain a license in art to present the body the way they want.

The body shows "the role that representations, beliefs, effects of consciousness play in it" (CORBAIN *et al.*, P. 8) and these representations define sexuality.

Power is important in the representation of the woman's body and sexuality because, like dance, it is not static, it is something that moves. Foucault (2013, p. 89, our translation) states that "power is everywhere, not because it encompasses everything but because it comes from everywhere". Power materializes in the woman's own body through dance with the aim of disciplining and training her own sexuality, because

in power relations, sexuality is not the most rigid element, but one with the most instrumentality: usable in the greatest number of maneuvers, and can serve as a support point, articulating the most varied strategies (FOUCAULT, 2013, p. 98, our translation).

And the acting, changing, unstable power enables other senses. From its continuities and ruptures, it is the basis of the studies that Foucault (2013) makes when analyzing the relations between madness and civilization, or when examining the structure of knowledge at a given time. His studies show how the production of truth happens in discourse (in practices and their regimes of sayability, visibility, devices of knowledge and power, etc.). This truth is discontinuous and needs to be continually taken up and revised, since the history of discontinuities, teaches Foucault (1987), is not acquired once and for all; it is impertinent in itself.

From east to west, oriental dance has also broken with the predictable, changing in the midst of intense experimentation. Formerly danced in the harem only for the sultan (and exclusively to him the entire erotic and sensual manifestation of oriental dance), today it is danced in a harem composed of a mixed and sometimes unknown audience. And the bodies of the dancing women are subordinate to this audience. It can be mentioned that all this heterogeneous public inspires the (de)construction of the bodies of the women who dance.

Deleuze mentions (1983, p. 16, our translation) that "the whole is created and continues to be created in another dimension without parts, as that which takes the set from one qualitative state to another, as the pure incessant becoming that passes through these states" involving and

affecting it. In becoming-dance, each creation allows contagion, another dance as a way of experiencing life. If for Deleuze and Guattari (2017, p. 67) "all becoming is minority", the sexuality of the woman who goes through belly dancing is a becoming, because all becoming is a connection.

The becoming-dance can continue to be captured by power or transgress it. For Furlani (2016, p. 62, our translation), "as women self-represent [...] a cultural process of deconstruction of the negative concepts that mark women as "inferior, subordinate" is established" and in this sense, becoming-dance enables a deconstruction of processes that imply women's sexuality for other understandings, for empowerment.

Therefore, writing about other senses in oriental dance allows perpetuating significant information about the body and sexuality of women in society, as well as unveiling what is not immediately visible or is absolutely hidden, but which is there, in retreat, in pause, do not enter, in the instant.

Dance is a path that puts us in connection with the world around us and in this way educates us. As the term suggests, all change brings in dance the possibility of transformation, of expanding knowledge, of other movements that promote learning in different ways of positioning oneself in life because it emancipates while providing significant changes for the expansion knowledge in relation to the physical, psychic body, contributing to socio-cultural advances.

As an example, currently, several Egyptian dancers have taken to the streets of Cairo to manifest through dance against sexual harassment that continues to rise in Egypt, according to UN data (2013). The project became known as *Ballerinas of Cairo*, recorded by photographer Mohamed Taher as opposed to the male lines that suggest that women remain inside their homes.

This space, that of discourse, is systematically called into question in each discursive practice, mainly in research. Still, according to Maingueneau (2015, p. 31):

[...] the "discourse" is not presented as a circumscribed territory, but as an uncertain space between two massifs, where "the apparently strong bonds between words and things are undone", between language and the world. The uncontrollable proliferation of the notion of discourse appears as a symptom of an opening, in the last decades of the 20th century, of this uncertain space.

Therefore, it is from this place where the theoretical lines proposed here, in relation to the questions of language, history and the subject, are crossed, that the research is directed. Foucaultian studies, as already discussed, are interdisciplinary, using various areas of knowledge such as philosophy, linguistics, art, history, among others.

It is considered, therefore, that it is necessary to overcome disciplinarity (Sociology), dialogue with interdisciplinarity (School Education) and, to the limit, with anti-disciplinarity (Cultural Studies). To try to go beyond these fields, giving them a new meaning, is to use anti-disciplinarity (AD) not simply as a "[...] toolbox in the vast set of 'qualitative methods' of social and human sciences", as the discourse analyst Maingueneau (2015, p. 32, our translation) explains, but as a theory that dialogues with other theories throughout the course of this work and not only in the final moment, in the analyzes.

In this way, the AD is also the posture of this subject-researcher in relation to this thesis. Furthermore, Orlandi (2012, p. 26), considers that the analysis of the discourse does not want to stop at a "truth", but seeks to build analytical devices and methodologies so that the analyst can identify "reading gestures" and understand them from its device. For the analysis of the discourses, the constructed device has, on its basis, assumptions of Foucault's discursive studies (FOUCAULT 1987, 2013), and of the media's relationship with discourse (GREGOLIN, 2001; CHARAUDEAU, 2006). Just as there was the construction of a method for this thesis, the analytical device of AD is also constructed, using constant praxis, as the analysis develops in practice, the theory is sought and vice-versa.

Final considerations

Currently, dance, in its most varied styles, gains space in social life. Oriental dance is an example. With a genuinely feminine style, more and more women seek to practice it. It is expanding in the national and world territory. The woman's body plays a central role in this artistic style and goes through an educational process that helps in empowerment. Based on this circumstance, the spaces that promote oriental dance offer in their advertising a free dancing body and connected with their sexuality. So, women who practice oriental dance have the possibility to connect experiences to their sexuality.

Just as movements are changed, so is power. Power, which likewise acts on these bodies, allows, through the representation of women in oriental dance, to think of other ways of becoming their own sexuality.

This demonstrates that, although certain events influence the control of desires and emotions, the result of power relations, associated with a sexually erotic body that needs an ethical orientation, the woman's body finds other spaces in dance to manifest her freedom.

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