Apricots from Damascus

Learning to Dance

Marwa Arsanio
I am not a dancer...However for the next 40 minutes I will be learning dance and became more aware of my ways of dancing. As an adolescent my main dance movements were falling and posing. Not too stretched out, in a way I was stuck in this way of dancing. So it would be good to move learning dance and become more aware of my ways of dancing taken inside a ballet dance school. I was struck by their seeming out and expanding. I was also curious about the different poses to frame them. Like for example this woman doing a hand stand them in strong virtuostic poses. I looked at my body looked and realized that I actually had a quasi scientific gaze upon it. I was not simply looking at photographs, I was looking at a revealing its different parts, the anatomy of the muscles, the articulation muscles and expand the body in order to be able to achieve and trained in order to lift and do the hand stand. I found myself looking at these photographs of dance with admiration comes a certain objectification. industry in our country” is the title of an article that school. “If you pass next to an industrial building, don’t think factory! No! It is a big hangar but nothing of what you expect get trained to dance in a certain manner and join the natu that have learnt to dance ballet to become or not ballet learn ballet. The magazine where I found the photographs based in Cairo. At that time publishing was already nationalized lated were clearly promoting a certain state project. The dancing ballet as well. All the previous images I showed you acc
I am not a dancer...However for the next 40 minutes I will be learning and poses. This is my strategy to learn to dance. What I need to think through five main movements that are central for my leg falling and posing. As an adolescent my main dance movement was the hand up doing small rotations. Not too stretched out, in be stuck in this way of dancing. So it would be good to move learning dance and became more aware of my ways of dance taken inside a ballet dance school. I was struck by their seeming out and expanding. I was also curious about the different poses to frame them. Like for example this woman doing a hand stand them in strong virtuostic poses. I looked at my body looked and realized that I actually had a quasi scientific gaze upon I was not simply looking at photographs, I was looking at analyzing its different parts, the anatomy of the muscles, the articular muscles and expand the body in order to be able to achieve and trained in order to lift and do the hand stand. I found myself looking at these photographs of dance with admiration comes a certain objectification. industry in our country” is the title of an article that school. “If you pass next to an industrial building, don’t think factory! No! It is a big hangar but nothing of what you expect get trained to dance in a certain manner and join the na es that have learnt to dance ballet to become or not ballet learn ballet. The magazine where I found the photographs ed in Cairo. At that time publishing was already nationalized related were clearly promoting a certain state project. The dance ballet as well. All the previous images I showed you acco
I started thinking about this process of when I saw these images of ballerinas strong and muscular bodies stretching in which the photographer had decided or this one flying at those photo-

graphs trained dancers' bodies. All of dissection etc... and understand how much one should work the those virtuoso poses understanding the way it has built itself

To defy gravity. I tion. And of course "The most beautiful talks about a dance is a new metal or car is a place where bodies troupe." Bodies in mass.
The new body had to from 1958 and was print-
the articles that circu-
ce school was obviously part of it, and the new bodies danc-
panied this article. These modern bodies of dancers would
become representatives of the country with its specific border and its unique culture. 

Colonialism and wondered if my body would be able to do that kind of stuff. To ground the feet, lean the knees and find their verticality through a strong, active, powerful stretch, jump, and jump while stretching upwards, as if two opposite forces were pulling into the thigh and the second leg wide open. The body of the dancer took the jump in the air and flew. Her body flies over for a moment, then it returns again quickly. The ballerina will defy gravity. She is the center of gravity. While trying to look on, I got in touch with Magda Saleh. A ballet dancer who danced for the order of Nasser and was awarded by Nasser himself, the Order of Nasser, for her work in dance and as a political leader of the arts in Egypt. She collaborated on ethnic dances in Egypt, titled “A documentation of ethnic dances in Egypt,” which was taken from her thesis. “The land of the pharaohs, submerged under lake Nasser, The High Dam. This immense structure, harnessing the Nile for agriculture and industry, resources was the total submersion of rich in archaeological sites, became the focus on monuments. While archaeologists and engineers recorded for posterity the fate of Old Nubia....” Magda started observing and reconstructing the history of each
A specific gesture or a dance movement is representative of hands. I looked at myself again, looked back at the images in the mirror for example? How to fly? In order to fly successfully one needs a straight spine. Consider the spine as the center of the body, push towards the spine by pulling in both directions upwards and downwards, bringing the foot up. The expressed idea is now flying. It learnt to fly. After certain conditioning, second, she thinks she will stay up in the air but she has to land of the modernist project in the way she defies the very idea of for dancers that were part of the ballet dance school, jina at the opera house in Cairo. She had joined the ballet in the fountain of Bakhshisarai directed by Lavrosky and was verit, A medal for her role and dance. She was the first dancer Magda Saleh shared with me the thesis that she had written onic dances in Egypt”. The following paragraph I will read is hia, extended from Aswan in Egypt to Dongola in the Sudan has disap-sest man-made lake in the world, formed by the building of the Aswan which took a decade to complete, is “....modern Egypt’s ambitious effort to f purposes...” The price Egypt paid for the anticipated development of Nubian lands. Nubia, renowned throughout the world as an ancient land widespread concern and plans were made for the rescue of its celebrated forests worked against time at this task of preservation, and artists and uties of this disappearing land, many people visited the site for a glimpse at her thesis in 1977 when she traveled along the Nile to ld so called ethnic dances that she thought were disappearing. ent towns along the way, in Nubia, Siwa, Marsa Matruh and ces using the labanotation system, a dance annotation system. pace through its geography de-
scribing the way tectonic plates have moved through out the topography of the Nile, and how man made lakes have submerged communities. In this landscape she followed the currents of the river concerned with transmitting knowledge, afraid the kind of dances she learned and would be submerged just like the institution to which she belonged to, as knowledge were getting older. If the dancer dies and becomes like the waters, it is bound to disintegrate, perish and become part of the landscape.

From Magda’s thesis “I hear from a physician... Standing on one side of her abdomen and an empty glass, the glass filling the full glass, project the water from it, so as to attracted to the virtuosity of dancers and was the reason why she had since left the ballet dance school. However, from the folkloric dances, that the ballet dance school had in their repertoire, they were serving and building the whole or submerged under the institution, but also saving the dances. Magda was fighting for this, and she states: “Early evolutionists contended as a primitive response, it had greater meaning for primitive peoples coming of civilization. That theory having been discredited, It has been replaced by the phrase as “primitive dance”. The term is meaningless”...” Magda bases her specific phrase “There is no such thing as primitive dance”. She draws from the colonial eye, and differentiates her gaze from the colonial perspective.
years, shifted eastern Africa apart forming the current geog-
arched ancient monuments and displaced towns and whole com-
ple water moving south. She was mainly
this embodied knowledge, and was
the went after were slowly disappearing
like old Nubia by the modern dance
longed; the dancers who embodied this
er; and knowledge dies when the body of
es a stagnant entity. Slowly, muscles start
ones stop their articulations. Here is a short dance description
that a dancing girl can lie on her back, and with a full glass of water
in the other, can by the contraction of the muscles on the side support-
fill the empty glass.” (148) Magda was still impressed by and at-
still looking for it in the dances...even though this is exactly
ethnographic work can be read as a reaction to the rupture
posed by promoting ballet as the dance to modernize bodies.
modern institution of annotating, recording, archiving, pre-
maybe she thought she was saving them from being forgot-
under the lake or under the river, under the modern dance
m the colonial gaze that would categorize them as primitive

At the beginning of the thesis: live oscillating pelvis
on the vertical axis
ence: ( )
for the first quarter
alute, then plunges i
stating her "locality". "Local" in her understanding Nation-State and disregards any class, ethnic, gender, non-citizens. I looked for "the hip rotation" amongst found several explanations as it was a central movement closely at movement ing to do it: my body the tech- would be rather than a quite pre- the hip rota- And deline- disjuncture from each other so that each part would be working alone, independently whole and becomes a body of different parts that follows the movement where the spine is the center and the body works as a whole. Perhaps ment and the hip rotation with all its different variables with her own training as a ballerina with the spine at the center, a pelvis. Through the labanotation system, her genderless annotation liberate the female dancer, herself included. With those and a new fiction of heritage, a new fiction of the nation. A fiction flying for which her body was trained. In fact, it was a situa- tions: She came out of this image and put herself in the audi- stage and sat with the audience to look at the ethnic dance geographic of the Nile allowed for a new space to open and
How to rotate the hips? In order to do so, consider the pelvis as the center of gravity (legs and torso), creating an axis around the torso and disconnecting it from the other. The body is part of the pelvis. Unlike the hips, the pelvis is not a fixed part of the body. It might have also been a way for Magda to re-center the body. As she re-connected to her own experiences, she was able to unlearn the fiction of a simple move: she switched to a new dance to counter the fiction of being a flying moveable robot. Disrupted small moves disrupted the fiction of being a flying moveable robot. Some kind of resistance to it. I cannot follow her kind of body moves. But to this as well I have found that brought her back to earth and countered the fiction of the body, some kind of necting them stops being a flying moveable robot.
between the ethnographer and the dancer, between the dancer and the landscape. Perhaps a combat or game, is for a player or combatant to seek an opening (called bab “door”) and perform on or against the antagonist, by means of which a blow may be inflicted, while himself defending. This is achieved through the circular swinging manipulation of the weapons, such as the head, neck, torso, back and knees, while the two opponents perform feints, thrusts, parries involving jumps and sudden changes of position, occasionally deliver a resounding blow on each other’s slacks... if in the course of the game the game may turn into feud as the two antagonists and their respective kin and friends get involved. The audience is looking at a dissection, but the audience looks at the dissection. It is one thing to dissect the body, ethnographer is all of those who are looking at themselves in the mirror while dancing, at once. I was looking at the mirror while dancing, the mirror dancing, I was looking at myself in the mirror, dancers are looking at themselves in the mirror. Magda is looking at herself flying, The special...
eer and the dancer, between the dancer and the photographer, dance: The object of the combat is in the defense of the opponent or maintaining an impenetrable defense stick about the body, protecting opponents circle warily around each hinges of level and directions, and when two real enemies happen to dive supporters engage in a violent and of ethnographic work performance. Or simply the ethnographer is an auditor at a dance performance as the audience may simply the body and its skeletal art the ethnographer's gaze as Magda did, and another to be, and another to be looking at a body in the purpose of dissection. In fact, this is the difference between the viewer, the audience, the witness, and the ethnographer. Or perhaps the
ist is looking at the dead body, or the convicted body, or operating cracking while we are looking at ourselves trying to do the rotation? Observing, following, imitating, unhorizontally, not only the muscular slides, hills, earthquakes, mud, bones, and means learning that the earth and the human mere dichotomy between flying and landing becomes useless. Bones, Muscles and liquids. In every flight there is a fall, in every flying again I follow Magda along the Nile and go on the trip to looking for a place outside of modernity nor healing Magda institutions that allowed it. I am rather looking for a certain ground to earth following the water in order to condense her movement. Initially one needs to keep a strong verticality push towards the barely move those feet. I follow those tectonic plates that push movement. quick moves... an earthquake; This is what made them let them make me move. But I will not expect so much from the ball and fall? I followed the dancer. It was hard right when she turns and goes in the opposite of switching directions. She Stumbles as if she was and doesn’t fall, and suddenly she does, we see forth, until I learnt the move. I repeated it so fall needs a lot of muscles. To let oneself power followed her. I Stumbled; I was not powerful enough to fall. I skipped the flying is a strong, muscular, defying the earth, with the human never falling at least not inside the frame. But this was 1958, 1977 ten years after 1967, is the moment Magda attempts to lead the representation of the nation and another representation of the state. The
ating on the open body, or dissecting the body. The bones are rotation. How are the bones moving while we are doing the understanding the forces that are pushing you vertically and get also the earthly forces. Gravity, weight, movements, grounds, articulations, currents, liquids, water... Learning to dance in body are an inseparable entity in their movement, and the ess, Earth and sky, Verticality and horizontality, Blood and fall there is a tapping the ground, in every tapping the ground there is a that brought her back to earth. And by doing so I am neither e's rupture, the thesis belongs in the first place to the modern ideological movement that allowed Magda to make a leap back ment and extend it horizontally. In order to extend horizon-une floor feel the weight in the feet, feel the heaviness. I can pushed her on her trip, imagining the force produced by their ie Magda move. Instead of defying the force of gravity I will the ground and I will not mystify it as Magda did How to Stum-d to follow her intentional hesitation. Right left. I thought she was going direction, unexpectedly turns back again and goes right. It was a game of will fall, but she doesn't, in fact she will. She Stumbles, she holds herself te her on the floor. In this twist I followed her back and forth, back and many times, I learnt it well and always got Stuck on the Stumbling. The erfully fall one needs a lot of muscles and Strength. Without hesitation I be fall. The Nation State as seen in the image of the Ballerina in body at its center, reaching for more and never stumbling, Magda received her medal in 1966. The story shifts after 1967. re this image and goes on her trip. She looks for another fic- ice defeated State needs a new dancer, the defeated State is not
falling it is collapsing. It is not the same thing. Between flying, we were trained as ballerinas and had joined the dance company. We were known as the twins. This is what one of them writes: “For the full swing but for the time of a lull we would take a break on the balcony. The ballerina on her balcony when the fighting paused. The funny fashion comes out and poses. She doesn’t dance, she simulates the fighting stops. She simulates the act of being a dancer on the balcony. She is a dancer even if she is not dancing for the moment. The fighting stops. She steps forward. As soon as the fighting stops she steps forward. She comes a dancer again. At least for a while the time to take a break. The purpose of this process of learning to dance is neither to deconstruct the ethnic and gendered meanings of ballet nor to liberate the ethnic and gendered meanings of dance. It is not solely about the modern project’s impact on bodies, how they were trained, but rather a way to look at a history of movements through graphic notes. The dancer’s body was trapped in between the academy and totalitarianism. But don’t worry, we are not here to just break away when she rebels here to challenge the academy and the center, to question the horizons of horizons. It’s disjunctive, it’s disjointed. It allows for movement. It allows for dancers’
slumbering, falling and collapsing maybe. Let's take a pause. Two sisters any, combining folkloric dances and ballet. The twins. They next to her photo that she posts on Facebook. "The war was in a pony of my room" seen by the photographer Houda. The pose of the ballerina poses. She poses the moment, out on the balcony and her pointe in a moment or she had to stop her balcony and before the balcony of the antique of the framed, choreographic projects of democ-dancer's body. Perhaps we are not sure, Magda has left vertebrae upwards extending with the spine as its body, took a leap back to the ground following the waters in search of the body, moving in circles with the pelvis at the center of the body. Mystifying the ground and its tectonic plates did not want the dance to happen. Maybe I should look for the next move will not be posing, I look at my body again look back at the and think maybe I should continue jumping.
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