Post-media poetics in a digital composite: *The oriental dancer*

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Abstract: The essay addresses deep remixability in dance, film, software, media, and metafiction in *The oriental dancer,* a digital project of various composites created by Sadim Mansour-Rondeau. The objective is to contest former anthropocentric constructs pertaining to dance and aesthetics. Attention is given to technical inventiveness and creativity in three digital composites in the project, in the framework of Deleuzian-Guattarian and Derridean notions, together with post-media and software studies. It interrogates the dynamicity of the combinations or assemblages in three of the project's numerous composites to identify processes of deploying software for apprehending what escapes recognition. The concluding results stipulate the importance of appreciating digital composites as productive of sensations, affect, and forces, in a Deleuzian-Guattarian sense. This reiterates the dynamicity of software as a non-human agency that transposes multiple content, along with realities intensifying experience, thereby promoting various modes of seeing and being (Manovich; Parikka). Basically, the encounter with the digital composites in *The oriental dancer* generates a poetics of potentiality that releases infinite modes of becoming, a gateway to open possibilities of future reinvention.

Keywords: Software; Remixability; Virtual-actual; Poetics of potentiality; Metafiction.

Introduction

As of late, dance has been addressed through transdisciplinary studies tracing encounters in cinema, moving-image, dance, and philosophy (DELEUZE, 1986; RANCIÈRE, 2009, 2019), dance and anthropology (LOIACONO, 2018) among others. With the post-media turn, choreographers explored the potential for the convergence of dance and the 3D world through collaboration with diverse art communities and digital creators. Since the late 1990s, there is an increase in the list of choreographers engaged in web dance and internet performance (CUNNINGHAM, 2017; NAUGLE, 1998). Bianca Li (2022), a choreographer, dancer, filmmaker, and director of interactive exhibitions is inspired by virtual and physical forms of expression; *Le bal de Paris* (2021), one of her latest performances merges actual and virtual

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worlds. There are encounters between disciplines and styles in her performances, as for her, "everything begins and ends with movement and dance" (LI, 2022). Furthermore, Angelin Preljocaj merged Deleuzian philosophy in the dance performances he set up and arranged. Inspired by Deleuzian philosophy, Prelojac reimagined dance not as the execution of an idea but an idea in movement, (La danse n'est pas une pensée que l'on met en execution mais une pensée en mouvement (BUNEL, 2021). Consequently, encounters between dance, software and the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, Deleuze and Félix Guatarri, as well as Rancière expand on the idea of dance beyond its traditional boundaries, promoting a "new choreography … aligning dance and philosophy" (CVEJIĆC, 2015, p. 13).

While ballet, European choreography, and dance studies were explored as continuous processes of encounters and recreations, oriental dance, or belly dance, known in Arabic as *raqs sharqi* or *raqs baladi* has been given a lesser priority. Lately, a limited number of dissertations were defended in this field (KEFT-KENNEDY, 2005), and there is a rise in the number of academic publications that have focused on oriental dance, which has become internationalized in several metropolitan cities worldwide (HAWTHORNE, 2019; JOHNSTONE; TASSIE, 2009; LOICANO, 2018). Cultural inhibitions in its countries of origin may have led to the inattention to oriental dance, commonly underestimated as a performance for sexual solicitation. Such an attitude may have been relayed to academic scholars who for long have over-looked Samia Gamal's (1928-1996) contribution to the modernization of oriental dance in line with the modern art movements that were taking place in Egypt and around the world.

Gamal was the first to modernize oriental dance by engaging spectators in an artistic performance of a distinct style. Her performance in Egyptian cinema during the mid-twentieth century diverged from the female seductress stereotype associated with the *baladi* dancer. She performed in Europe and the United States where she set up her own dance school, as she sought to modernize traditional oriental dance by merging trends of dance inspired by diverse cultures, as well as freed from following strict forms. Gamal's modern oriental dance may be reminiscent of Loïe Fuller, whose modern dance formed part of the twentieth century modern artistic movement in Europe and the United States (COFFMAN, 2002; GUNNING, 2003; PARFITT, 2009). Loïe's performance was a transformation in modes of dancing prevalent in the nineteenth century which

flaunted the female body (COFFMAN, 2002; GARELICK, 2019; PARFITT, 2009). Similarly, Gamal danced with her whole body, introducing the movement of arms, undulating torso, and limbs, as against traditional belly dancers whose body movement focused on the chest/breast and hips. Her dance stemmed from inner motivation to convey concepts through body movement. Accordingly, Gamal joined modern dancers in Europe and the United States in creating her own dance style that gives expression to inner experience and sentiments procuring affect. The flowing veils fluttering around her body in her dances, reminiscent of Loïe's, attracted New Yorker spectators, who invited her to teach oriental dance in New York.

In an interview published in the *White cargo* Program, a play by Leon Gordon she acted in, Gamal expressed her rejection for being defined as belly dancer on the grounds that the term has become a pejorative for sexual enticement. She even protested classifying her dance under the label "oriental dance", which she estimated as an inaccurate description of her performance (BADRIYA, 2020). Her innovative style corresponded to innovations in all fields of modern art movements in Egypt, pervading since the early twentieth century.

Encounters between diverse modes of art production in the twentieth century, which sparked planetary modern art movements are referred to in Deleuze's *Cinema 1: the moving image*. He stipulates that art critics revised their evaluation of movement in painting, in tandem with dance, ballet, and mime. Instead of stereotyped figures and poses, art critics wanted to "release values which were not posed, not measured, which related movement to the any-instant-whatever". Accordingly, "art, ballet and mime became actions responding to accidents of the environment" (DELEUZE, 1986, p. 6-7). Subsequently, the question raised in this essay is not solely framed within the role of Gamal's dance in modernizing Egyptian dance or undermining established concepts underrating oriental dance. The interest in dance, in the age of post-media takes different trajectories, specially that it has undergone major transformations due to technological developments.

That said, it has become imperative to interrogate the artistic shifts taking place in dance and its transformations upon being mobilized by post-media art, which is also known as intermedia, "deep-remixability", or "digital composites", as coined by Manovich (MANOVICH, 2007), or else software art as termed by Jussi Parikka (PARIKKA, 2010). Earlier, Matthew Fuller

was among those who postulated that "*art methodologies*" open possibilities for using computational and software media "to generate ways out of the position of homogenization" (FULLER, 2006, p. 2). Against this background, this essay will engage in an interactive encounter with digital composites[2] selected from *The oriental dancer* project to determine their potential in generating a new poetics.

Driven by the same creative energy that propelled Gamal to renovate dance in the modern period, dance as movement has been reimagined beyond the domain of traditional art and dance by Sadim Mansour-Rondeau in her creative digital project *The oriental dancer,* which she has started posting on Instagram, December 2015 (https://www.instagram.com/the_oriental_dancer/). Sadim MR is a creative digital designer, using interactive formats, layering several media to compose storytelling narrative. With a background in scenography, graphic design, digital strategy, and web design, she enhanced her experience in digital design by using new digital tools like augmented reality, 360 image, social media storytelling, NFT, and transmedia. Her training in diverse networked channels enabled her to combine aesthetics and software to invoke the viewer's interaction[3]. The essay will focus on three reels selected from *The oriental dancer, Circles* (MANSOUR RONDEAU, 2022a)*, Graphics* (MANSOUR RONDEAU, 2022b)*, and The Secret City 2. The Underground City* (MANSOUR RONDEAU, 2017), a reel which interacts with Ibrahim Farghali's novel, *Temple of silken fingertips* (2015).

The project is distinguished by its skillful compositing of numerous visual languages, and media technology, film clips, design, graphics, and software to create a new hybrid. The digital designer uses film editing software, *Photoshop*, *GIF*, and *After Effect*s, among others, interactively, splicing the film clips together as in graphics. The composites combine different temporalities to problematize time duration, playing them off against endlessness, as in the recursive movements in GIF. The significance of the project is not limited to the skilled use of technicalities but in its endeavor to move beyond the media classification of dance, cinema, and graphics to fathom a potentiality for empowerment that engages both user/creator and viewer. It is

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[2] A digital composite according to Manovich, is a remix of various elements from different media, software, or visual languages that interact together to form a new species, a "composite of layers of imagery" (MANOVICH, 2007, p. 77). 2D composites have developed into 3D compositing which transform the computer graphics into a moving media design, as operated in *The oriental dancer* reels referred to in this essay.

[3] Avaiable from: https://sadimcreation.com/a-propos/. Accessed in: 16 mar. 2023.

an artistic composite that deterritorializes the user-viewer away from prior anthropocentric constructs of the aesthetic. By experiencing dance composed by software, a non-human agency, this engages the user-viewer in an art experience that generates inexhaustible openings, or passages for "becomings" (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1994, p. 169).

The art experience derived from *The oriental dancer* is at variance with dance performances presented by innovative choreographers as in the case of Angelin Perlojic. He reiterates that dance is movement, a performance that transports "any-instant-whatever" (DELEUZE; PARNET, 1987, p. 7), to the "spiritual", hence promoting a new aesthetic experience (PERLOJIC *apud* BUNEL, 2021). Conversely, the present argument does not endorse claims propounding that dance is transcendental. It stipulates that software encounters with dance as movement in, *The oriental dancer* breaks away from the spiritual experience provided by the *tannoura* Sufi Egyptian dance, which will be discussed later, as well as the traditional response to oriental dance. Instead, *The oriental dancer* project configures a new concept in digital creation that transposes dance in a composite form, engaging user-viewer by generating new "becomings", an aesthetic power charged with affect (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1994, p. 169). This essay will consider the "deep remixability" (MANOVICH, 2007) in dance, film, diverse digital codes, and software, within the framework of philosophical and software studies. One of the objectives is to introduce the aesthetic potential of digital composites that break away from new media, which is exploited for commercial use, in a globalized environment.

Digital and software critical theory posited by Lev Manovich (2007), Colin Lankshear & Michele Knobel (2007), Matthew Fuller, and Jussi Parikka (2010) is commensurate to the shifts in philosophical concepts in Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, and Jacques Rancière, notions that are in tune with software practices. Parikka contends that software art is that of the "imperceptible", which counters visual representations. Instead, the imperceptible would include "affects, sensations, relations and forces", notions that approach artistic events as processes of "unfolding" rather than fixed "spatial identities". Furthermore, the art of the imperceptible is material, as software transposes diverse codes replete with information to the visual interface, which Parikka hypothesizes as "intensities" developed in the framework of "affect" (PARIKKA, 2010, p. 116-117). Subsequently, this drives us to determine the transposition of aesthetic

appreciation in the act of using-viewing *The oriental dancer,* which repositions the relationship between user-viewer, the dancer and the dance, and the poetics generated from such transpositions.

The poetics of body movement in digital creations

As previously indicated, *The oriental dancer* is a transposition of film clips featuring Gamal into newly created digital composites, a hybrid visual language which Lev Manovich defines as "deep-remixability" of techniques, working methods, languages and assumptions" (MANOVICH, 2007, p. 84). Manovich opines that media remixability emerged at the turn of the millennium (MANOVICH, 2007, p. 76), enabling digital compositing of multiple levels of imagery. This raises interest in examining the potential of remixability in a software environment to generate subtle aesthetics that "supplements other paradigms already in use" (MANOVICH, 2007, p. 84), which would ultimately empower dancer <—>dance.

According to Manovich, the simulation of any media in a computer changes its identity substantially, subsequently releasing it from its source. Building on that, Gamal's physical performance in entertainment film changes its nature through software applications. Away from cinematography, the digital creator has drawn from graphic design, software applications, and film clips, an innovative visual language, especially in 3D compositing of a poetic potential. Unlike the "moving image" in cinema, the process of compositing creates a hybrid, an infinite number of loaded layers from a plethora of software. The "moving image" is no longer time-based in a narrative sequence but composition based (MANOVICH, 2007, p. 78) when used in three-dimensional 3D remix. Manovich indicates that a move away from the sequential, as in cinema, conceptualizes, "*a modular media composition",* which he defines as, "*deep remixability"* that displaces former media studies. Digital creations generated from remixing software is a process of software-artist interchange, whereby the software stimulates the artist, and the artist readjusts the software in the remixing process (MANOVICH, 2007, p. 79).

In *The oriental dancer* the body is set at the forefront of individual experience within intensified levels of deep remixing. Such a procedure creates a virtual Samia that simultaneously

engages the digital creator/user and viewer in the dancer's performance. The digital creator and viewer exchange roles, becoming user-viewer, in line with the virtual-actual exchange postulated by Deleuze. According to Deleuze, the "virtual is not opposed to the actual; it possesses a full reality by itself (DELEUZE, 1994, p. 211). Accordingly, in the act of remixing, the digital creator transposes herself into the virtual Samia, both becoming reciprocate or interactive, which displaces the role of the dancer and the dance. In this context, Rancière stipulates that the recreation of a dancer's role posits a new subject position, a "body speaking to audience in a universal language of movement" (THE MOMENT of Dance, 2014 *apud* CVEJIĆ, 2015, p. 9). Rancière is referring to the physical body; in the case of the virtual Samia, the body is transposed in the act of being remixed by multiple languages that open it up to other circuits of viewing. This breach with former aesthetics engenders the formation of different subjectivities. Likewise, the digital creator makes use of her experience — comprising knowledge and emotion — by compositing a digital creation that brings about "deep-learning to be" (GEE, 2007 *apud* LANKSHEAR; KNOBEL, 2007, p. 172), in the process of compositing. Within a Deleuzian framework, such an experience is an enhancement of life experience that replaces judgement with "affect" (DELEUZE, 1988, p. 51; DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1994, p. 164). The difficulty in defining affect is that it is an experience that eludes representation. Simon O'Sullivan indicates that affect is "extra-discursive and extra-textual"; once the nature of affect is determined, it would be subjected to deconstruction. Subsequently, affect attributes an aesthetic power which distinguishes it from other cultural objects (O'SULLIVAN, 2001, p. 126). Basically, digital creation, as an art has redefined experiential formulations of dance, body and philosophy that generated a different poetics.

Dance as potential for becoming

Digital compositing is layering software, hardware, and media to develop virtual reality that engenders new forms and distinct movements. The redefinition of dancer-dance, and the user-viewer as corresponding to virtual-actual exchange generated a new perspective on subjectivity. This owes to the evolvement of virtual reality, in as much as to changes in philosophical concepts.

An understanding of the potentialities in the digital composites that will be explored in this essay requires new strategies that enable the user-viewer to comprehend modes of creativity and intercreativity by which subjectivities are transformed.

As aforementioned, *The oriental dancer* project is a series of composites including few clips drawn from Gamal's cinema performances in mid-twentieth century Egyptian films. The digital creator indicates at the forefront of her website that the composites are not meant to represent "Samia Gamal", the star but to create a virtual figure through remixing film and software. Deleuze's notion of repetition and difference resonates here; there is a repetition of film clips but a repetition with difference. After several years of experimentation, the project was posted on Instagram (@*the_oriental_dancer*), (2015), supplementing the digital creator's proper name as an artistic director of the project. None of the composites are captioned, except for a few that are commented upon by poetic or textual quotes when posted on social media. Composites configuring a virtual body in movement have a deterritorializing function of making the user-viewer a body without organs (BwO)*,* devoid of subjectivity. By being absolved from subjectivity, user-viewer can accesses what is outside the self to experience the event as affect, a becoming, a passage to another world. Composites, or software art activate a poetics that concurs with contemporary art. O'Sullivan accounts for this process in his analysis of contemporary installations and art works, as "a dance with art", which activates a poetics that transform "our sense of our 'selves' and our notion of our world" (O'SULLIVAN, 2001, p. 127-128).

In traditional oriental dance, the body is subject to the spectator's gaze, imagined as a paradigm of fictional sexual maneuvers. Conversely, Gamal's dance performance was a deviation from the traditional norm, as she declares in one of her interviews in Arabic. The digital creator adds the quote to one of her posted composites: "You may taboo dance, consider it sinful, or whatever. However, it's only when dancing that I become like a bird welded into air molecules, into nature, and the mysterious force driving me to go on living" (BADRIYA, 2020). Unlike Samia, Mansour Rondeau is more engaged with a distinct poetics, highlighted in her composites as the mysterious force, an indeterminate sensation in dancing. The movie star, "Samia Gamal" is displaced in the process of compositing different choreographies configuring a virtual Samia. Virtual products, according to Deleuze, "perpetually renew themselves by emitting yet others …

which go on in turn to react upon the actual" (DELEUZE, 2006, p. 148). Virtual-actual are not separate but coexist in constant exchange, creating indeterminacy, thus replacing mass institutional and organizational judgements with affect.

In The oriental dancer project, the composited figure, whether still, animated, or GIF becomes a transposition of the movie star. The music accompanying the dance performance in film is muted, breaking away from the norm, abstracting, all the more, the movement conceived in the composited event. In Circles (MANSOUR RONDEAU, 2022), the spinning movement of the veil in circles surrounding the body conjure the tannoura, Sufi dervish whirling dance (BELL'MASRY…, 2017) a heritage Egyptian dance that takes the dancer and spectator to spiritual levels. Upon reading Rancière's analyses of Fuller's dance, one may be inclined to suggest that the dancing figure in Circles is resonant with Fuller's the Serpentine Dance Girl[4], referred to by RANCIÈRE (2019, p. 103-119). However, in Circles, the dancing figure's movement is not meant to convey birds, or flowers; there is no fixed symbolic significance to movement, but it is open to different ways of viewing. The physical media is simulated by combining layers of media and operating software using different techniques. By remixing layers of software interactively the identity of the source media, the film clip used is transformed. Based on that, the virtual dance or the digital creator's technical skill cannot be appreciated independently. The user-viewer is immersed in distinct forms of becomings generated by the film clip, which is re-conceptualized as a graphic design, involving technical skill/reason and artistic talent/emotion. The mutuality binding actual-virtual, as well as imagination and technicity become an event that recreates both digital creator and virtual figure in an interactive experience, an encounter — a rencontre — in Deleuze's terms that immerses the user-viewer. It is a synergy enhancing the user-viewer experience in a new poetics, an affect that occurs with the creator's "joy in creation, a liberation that explodes everything" (DELEUZE, 2004, p. 134). The digital creator, as user of software immersed in remixing the virtual event undergoes processes of becomings along with the viewer, another instance of user-viewer interactivity.

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[4] Avaiable from: https://youtu.be/DGMoWTqc8X8. Accessed in: 16 mar. 2023.

Rhythmical movement in the absence of the soundtrack

In *Circles* (MANSOUR RONDEAU, 2022a), the flowing rhythm created by the 3D illusion mirror effect is produced by reflective surfaces of body movement, beams of light and color, continuously flashing. This technique recurs in *Dancing and graphics* (MANSOUR RONDEAU, 2022b), that configures the virtual Samia as plural by the 3D illusion effect, supplemented by colorful beams, intercepted by black and white. It is a frontal and close view of the dancer's posture reminiscent of dancers carved on bas-reliefs on the walls of ancient Egyptian temples and tombs. Bas-reliefs are brought up in Deleuze's *The Logic of Sensation,* as he relates Francis Bacon's paintings to ancient Egyptian bas-reliefs, on account that both

lack depth. Deleuze's association of Bacon with ancient Egypt can be related to *Dancing and graphics.* It actualizes what Deleuze described as a "*flat surface* which allows the eye to function like the sense of touch", bestowing upon the eye a haptic function (DELEUZE, 2003, p. 122). Similarly, in digital art creations, the modulation of software to produce affect confers on the eye a haptic function, albeit of a different nature than that attributed to Bacon's paintings.

To clarify this experience, we can apply Deleuze's (2006) postulate to digital art, and I will be guided by M. Fuller, in this context. Unlike the painter's eye, the digital artist's perceptive eye is mobilized in another direction by perceiving reality through the combination of software, data, and different materials, while retaining the aesthetics of art heritage active in the background. The digital creator's eye perceives an alternative reality in the process of mobilizing it by a skillful remixing of digital software that replaces the painter's eye and touch. The process of remixing these elements to produce a distinct poetics requires a deep understanding of their ways of operating and deploying them in practice.

The elimination of the soundtrack accompanying dance in the cinematic clips used in the *Oriental Dancer* project is counterbalanced by the flashing color lights that bestow on dancing a rhythmical sense of jubilation, experienced in ancient Egyptian festive dances. Erica Meyer-Dietrich indicates that dancers in ancient Egypt are usually configured in straight rows as in the Tomb of Antefoker and his wife Senet in Thebes (MEYER-DIETRICH, 2009, p. 2). The frozen postures and movements in the tomb drawings are visualized in a sequence, capturing a beatific

moment in the dance. These postures are transposed in virtual Samia's twisted torso, her raised incurving arms arching and stretching, alternatively above her head. While ancient Egyptian dancers were carved on bas-reliefs as identical figures in linear relationships, virtual Samia is a solo dancer. However, mirroring virtual Samia's figure in a 3D GIF counterbalances the absence of multiple figures in group dance. The 3D recursive GIF of the virtual dancer's receding movement, recaptures ancient Egyptian dance on ancient walls in a flowing rhythmical movement, in a new dimension devoid of music, as in all other composites to focus on the deep remixability in movement and visuals. However, the composite is not a *mimesis* of ancient Egyptian dance, the *tannoura* dance, or "Samia Gamal", the real star. To mobilize Derridean terms in this context, the composite is "self-duplication itself; *ad infinitum*, since this movement feeds its own proliferation" (DERRIDA, 1981, p. 191).

The immersion in this repeatedly bouncing posture engages the viewer-user in endless becomings. According to Deleuze, intensive becomings increase joyful affects, which in this event emancipates dance from serving a particular end and stimulates the user-viewer to become dynamic. The virtual Samia in the digital composite has intensified the real Gamal's experience of liberation through dance, as indicated earlier (BADRIYA, 2020). It also resumes the previous allusion to the *Tannoura* dance, which is performed to be liberated from the self or the human in order to become part of the "Entity" (DELEUZE, 1986, p. 96) that cannot be reached except in the act of dancing. The virtual Samia is a digitally remixed body in motion, undergoing color shifts, denoting a potential for multiple self-becomings. Experiencing *The Oriental Dancer* reels within the Deleuzian concept of becomings is in line with Claire Colebrook's stipulation that "dance is a confrontation with life as a plane of open and divergent becomings" (COLEBROOK, 2005, p. 5).

Proliferating doubles, *The secret city 2. The underground city: soul searching and self discovery*

Expanding on Colebrook's "divergent becomings", in *The secret city 2. The underground city: soul searching and self discovery* (MANSOUR RONDEAU, 2017), the virtual Samia does

not perform as a dancer but becomes an avatar that simulates several states of self-search and becoming. Mansour Rondeau, the digital creator was inspired by Ibrahim Farghali's[5] novel, a metafiction titled *Temple of silken fingertips* (FARGHALI, 2015), (following referred to as *Temple)*, a pseudo-anonymous autonomous metafiction — a metafiction narrated by its protagonists. The digital creator captured a motif of soul-search and self-discovery in the metafiction that resonate with the "becomings" in *The Oriental Dancer* reels. The selected compositions previously covered in this essay manifest different configurations of self-mirroring, self becomings, as well as repetition and difference that may be experienced as divergent states of self-search or attempts at becoming. The last reel referred to in this section is a reconfiguration of becomings parallel to incidents in Farghali's metafiction novel.

Farghali's metafiction novel revolves around a manuscript found in an empty boat, abandoned by an unknown author at an unnamed seaside. It is surmised that the author drowned, in the act of escaping from the harassment of extremists and autocratic censorship, whose allies hover around, chasing dissenters in the bleak city — named — the "City of Injustice". The narrative is partly recounted by the inhabitants of the bleak City of Injustice, while other parts are retold by survivors who escaped this city by taking refuge in The Underground City. The latter city shelters anti-autocratic protestors, youth, intellectuals, artists, bloggers, and scribes. The survivors are in the process of preserving manuscripts and books containing the cultural heritage that were rescued from deliberate devastation.

Among those who fled from The City of Injustice is a protagonist named Sadim (not referent to the digital creator), a dissident blogger, fleeing her pursuers. Sadim, the blogger joins other women in preserving the multilayered Egyptian heritage by inscribing its texts on their bodies, which they will expose to the public. By preserving the Egyptian and world heritage on their bodies, women are forming a world depository — a "temple" woven by silken fingertips. The preserved texts include works by major authors in world literary heritage, considered as insurgents

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[5] Ibrahim Farghali is an Egyptian author, the Sawiris prize winner for his novel *Sons of Gabalwi*, and longlisted in Arabic Booker prize for his novel *Temple of silken fingertips*. He is also longlisted in Zayed Literary Award for his novel *The Ink Vampires* for young readers. He published six novels, and is currently an editor in AL-Arabi Kuwaiti magazine.

by oppressive regimes. The inclusion of world authors in the narrative enhances the presence of world readers who will be able to access the manuscript stranded by an unnamed seashore, available for reading, *ad infinitum*.

The secret city 2. The underground city: soul searching and self discovery (following referred to as *City*) remixes film, software, as well as the *Temple*. The composite titled *City* is divided in two parts: a virtual still image of a bleak, inanimate city in the upper part, while the GIF of the virtual Samia moving in the underground city is placed in the lower part. The bleak cityscape in the upper part is a perpendicular geometrical frame, as in cinematic shots, which counter to Deleuze's postulate is not a "spatial composition of parallels and diagonals" constituted in such a way that give an "equilibrium" to those who will occupy it (DELEUZE, 1986, p. 13). Conversely, it is a chaotic cityscape of disequilibrated building blocks conveyed in black, white, and shades of grey, with impenetrable dim windows converging as "frames in frames" (DELEUZE, 1986, p. 14). The upper cityscape configures the deterritorialization of the inhabitants, the breaking of their relationship with their geographic territory. The upper and lower parts of the composite are connected by uniform grey shades pervading the scene, dispersed by streaks of light descending from background to foreground buildings. The shades and shadows transmitted by the rays of light breaking through darkness in the lower part generate a cinematic optics which Deleuze depicts as "the hour when it is no longer possible to distinguish between sunrise and sunset" (DELEUZE, 1986, p. 14), an hour of uncertainty.

In the lower part, the 3D illusion mirror effect doubles the presence of the virtual Samia <— > virtual Sadim, in a sequence bifurcating in two streams forming a bottom-up triangular space. The virtual Samia-virtual Sadim is composited in an everyday outfit, descending through arched inlets (frames within frames), in the underground city. The focus is on her-their shaded figure in a hurried movement that gradually slows down until the two converging streams of the mirrored virtual figure(s) arrive at a stopping point. In the last still frame, the shaded face and figure give way to a lit space, which reflects light on the face of the virtual Samia-Sadim, despite the appearance of a grey shade on the white background. It is a virtual "reflective face" in Deleuzian terms (DELEUZE, 1986, p. 89), a close-up of a face turning around in anticipation, gradually lowering the eyes under the impact of an indeterminate thought that challenges binary

identifications. To deploy Deleuzian terms in this context, the body becomes immobile, while the face bears intense expression, a "combination of a reflecting, immobile unity and of intensive expressive movements which constitutes affect" (DELEUZE, 1986, p. 97).

To elaborate further, the face is a bipolar composite of an "affection-image" (DELEUZE, 1986, p. 97), a transposition of the internal self-search undergone by the virtual Sadim, <— > virtual Samia, whose encounter duplicates the search. Subsequently, the *City-Temple* composite is a verbal-visual deep-remixability, producing multiple doubles, or endless experiences intensifying the affection-image. The close-up of the virtual face in the *City* is not detached from its surroundings but acts as an abstraction of all the experienced events undergone in the narrative. It is an abstraction that "raises [the close-up] to the state of entity" (DELEUZE, 1986, p. 97), adding another dimension to the narrative events that generates affect, "sensation, sentiment, emotion or even impulse [*pulsion*] in a person" (DELEUZE, 1986, p. 97). Furthermore, the virtual Samia's close-up configures a rhizome networking an endless series of transpositions: the digital creator-the virtual Sadim <—> the DANCER <— > Samia Gamal-virtual Samia <— > virtual Samia-virtual Sadim blogger in *Temple*. It is an affective assemblage that does not communicate a determinate subjectivity.

Against this background, the author of this essay, now immersed in the GIFF as viewer-user is inclined to draw on Derrida's "The Double Session" in *Disseminations* (DERRIDA, 1981, p. 173-225) to add another reading. The viewer-user is enticed to speculate on the virtual Samia's-virtual Sadim's act of crossing inlets in the lower section of the composite, delving deeper in the underground. The viewer remains uncertain as to whether the point at which the GIF stops marks a moment of arrival-departure <—> continuity-discontinuity. This problematizes the inlet-outlet passage reenacted by the real Samia-virtual Sadim in the GIF. The question raised by the rhizomic remix is whether the figure's passage is inwards, a self-search heading towards the underground interiors, or outwards, a becoming heading to an unknown destination. In other words, does the virtual figure's movement plunge into a bottomless abyss or is it an ascension traversing boundaries to "individuation"? Along these lines, the virtual Samia-virtual Sadim may be immersed to probe her-their inner-self, or the deper layers of the subconscious, in a silent dialogue, or she-they may be moving outwards after mapping an alternative trajectory. To use Derrida's

terms, this uncertainty marks an "indefinite fluctuation between two possibilities" (DERRIDA, 1981, p. 225), which remains endless in the *City* despite the change effectuated by the final appearance of the reflective face, at which the motion comes to a halt.

In the internal-external journey undertaken by the duplicate virtual Samia-Sadim, there is difference and repetition. Digital creator-Samia take an inward course, a self-search, while the virtual Sadim takes an outward trajectory by inscribing the textual heritage of preserved books on her body for public exposition. Samia is probing her soul, while Sadim is exploring books. Some philosophers have contended that self-probing is a silent dialogue that occurs equally, in the book and the soul. Derrida begins by citing Philebus for whom the book is a "a dialogue or a dialectic … stilled, silent internal discourse". Socrates continues the argument by comparing the soul to a book, as it converses inwardly, silently with itself, holding a sort of "dialogue … a minor interchange, equivalent to the loss of voice" (DERRIDA, 1981, p. 184-185). In brief, the book and the soul are reciprocal images, each supplementing-complementing the other, both being "reproductive, imitative, and pictorial … in essence, both mirroring each other" (DERRIDA, 1981, p. 188). Furthermore, Derrida contends that painting and writing "are both interpreted as images, reproductions …of something alive" (DERRIDA, 1981, p. 188). If we expand on Derrida's postulate, both *City,* as a composite (visual) and *Temple* (verbal) as metafiction are considered mirroring images of repetition and difference, generating affective intensity. Subsequently, the *Temple-City* composite brings back Deleuze's concept of difference and repetition. The *City* may be a repetition of the underlying motif in *Temple* but with difference.

The constant user-viewer <—> *Temple- City* shifts challenge a one-way reading, as there is no identifiable referent, or reference to an original, either in the metafiction or the digital composite. By being signed by the Dancer, the film clips do not refer to a digital creator, nor do they pertain any more to the film they were drawn from in the *City*. Likewise, the stranded manuscript in *Temple* lies unauthored, narrating its own metafiction, very much in line with Roland Barthes's postulate on the "death of the author" (1977, p. 148). Neither GIF or manuscript are set within bordered geopolitical locations or are meant to address an identifiable public. The interrelations in the ramified rhizome, as well as the remixability deterring definitive collocations bring the viewer-user to surprise that becomes "the condition and delight of reading", according

to Derrida (DERRIDA, 1981, p. 226). The affection-image of the face or close-up bringing the GIFF to a halt in the *City* conveys high potential for experiencing, as it is irreducible to definitive significations, which intensifies affect. Affect stimulates the user-viewer with "the power of acting" (DELEUZE, 1988, p. 51), a source of joy, according to Deleuze.

Parikka connects Deleuzian philosophy with software art, which he defines as "the art of the imperceptible" that can be explained as "affects, sensations, relations and forces" (PARIKKA, 2010, p. 120), beyond the representational (PARIKKA, 2010, p. 120). He illustrates this process in terms of software use; by templating raw material subjectivities according to its scheme of performance, software produces different sequences of seeing and doing. The imperceptible in these systems of digital coding probes the potential for mutations, in Deleuzian terms, encountering difference within systems of relations. This does not only determine codification, but transformations produced within a broader networked society, collaborating for transforming reality (PARIKKA, 2010, p. 128-130). Fuller describes this modulation process as "a poetics of potentiality" (FULLER, 2003, p. 61 *apud* PARIKKA, 2010, p. 117), a poetics Parrika endorses. He adds that in the act of programing new connections with data and code develops new relationships in art projects (PARIKKA, 2010, p. 120). Based on that, one can conclude that the process of compositing *The oriental Dancer* as a project invokes a poetics that unfolds open landscapes, inspiring potentialities for creative living.

Conclusion

Dance, the art of body movement was frequent in twentieth century cinema, featuring Fuller, the star of innovative dance performances in Europe and the United States. In like manner, Gamal, the Egyptian star reconfigured oriental dance in the United States and in major Egyptian films. By modernizing traditional dance, both dancers unleashed a revolutionary potential that engenders creative forces enabling open passages for seeing and being. The focus in this essay is on the innovative creativity in the post-media era, as reconfigured in *The Oriental dancer,* a

composited project that conveys new perspectives on dance as the art of motion, and on computer technology as comprising prospective that can harness the conceptualization of new artistic forms.

The essay highlights cinema, software, and metafiction remixability in *The Oriental dancer,* viewed within the framework of philosophical and software studies. The virtual Samia is deterritorialized from her role as a star to intermediate multiple subjectivities. The digital creator of the project does not sign the posted composites in her name but uses a variety of virtual signatures. In the process of modulating the composites, there is an interactive relationship between the virtual Samia and the digital creator, perpetuating the virtual-actual exchange, which in turn, immerses the actual viewer.

The three digital creations explored challenge linear or referential interpretations as they lack an identifiable reference or referent. The production of subjectivity in the composites is in the form of an encounter with difference in various spatialities and temporalities made possible by remixing software. Contrary to looking for representations as was the case in old media, deep remixability brings heterogenous materials, disciplines, and perspectives into productive encounter that enables the user-viewer to apprehend the effective production of subjectivity as self-creation. The different sequences of seeing and doing, in *The oriental dancer* change the perception of dancer-dance, making them open to various experiences that are explained as affects. Samia Gamal, the star that refused to remain confined within a restrictive definition of an oriental dancer, is now succeeded by the virtual Samia open to deep remixability, liable to unfold the imperceptible. Remixability as a transformative process has created a new artistic form in *The oriental dancer,* endowed with a poetics of potentiality that undermines the dominant mode of subjectivity in a homogenized global landscape.

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Poéticas pós-mídia em A dançarina oriental, uma composição digital

Resumo: O artigo aborda a remixabilidade profunda em dança, filme, software, mídia e metaficção em The oriental dancer, um projeto digital composto por Sadim Mansour-Rondeau. O objetivo é contestar antigas construções antropocêntricas pertencentes à dança e à estética. A atenção é dada à inventividade técnica e à criatividade em três compósitos digitais do projeto, no quadro das noções deleuzianas-guattarianas e derridianas, juntamente com pós-mídia e estudos de software. Interroga a dinamicidade das combinações ou montagens nos compósitos digitais para identificar processos de implantação de software para apreender o que escapa ao reconhecimento. Os resultados conclusivos estipulam a importância de apreciar os compósitos digitais como produtores de sensações, afetos e forças, em um sentido deleuziano-guattariano. Isso reitera a dinamicidade do software como agência não humana que transpõe múltiplos conteúdos, junto com realidades que intensificam a experiência, promovendo assim vários modos de ver e ser (Manovich; Parikka). No fundo, o encontro com as composições digitais em A dançarina oriental gera uma poética da potencialidade que libera modos infinitos de devir, uma porta de entrada para possibilidades abertas de reinvenção futura.

Palavras-chave: Programas; Capacidade de remixagem; Virtual-real; Poética da potencialidade; Metaficção.