

Dance, Consumerism, and Spirituality

C. S. Walter (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

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<http://www.palgrave.com/page/detail/dance,-consumerism,-and-spirituality-c-s-walter/?sf1=barcode&st1=9781137460332>

Dance is a powerful and dynamic expressive form that may be read through diverse lenses. Since ancient times, dance has evolved as aesthetic and participatory phenomena. Communities have evoked gods, venerated ancestors, and commemorated epic events through dance. Historians, social scientists, and theologians have contemplated the value of dance in various spheres. Contextualization of rhythmic movements and gestures associated with dance is informed by historical, cultural, and social functionality.

In *Dance, Consumerism, and Spirituality*, dancer and scholar C.S. Walter explains how dance rituals perpetuate mystical awareness, and fulfill human desire for self-actualization. This desire drives consumption of dance and dance-related products. Walter's proposed *womanist transmodern* (6) frame of reference demarginalizes dance rituals as mystical experiences and cultural commodities. Two prevalent constructs supporting her frame of reference are *theodanceecology* and *cyberity*. *Theodanceecology* refers to "the study of dance, its power, and its assets in spiritual/mystical and emotional service to humanity, over time" (8). *Cyberity* is "the place where consciousness is connected to brands and symbols, where marketing messages are conceived, received, and delivered and where the consumer buys into hegemonic memory structures of purchase to create

identity" (8). Walter's approach also provides a refreshing exploration of dance and mysticism rooted in human consciousness and cultural authenticity. Her analysis circumvents the tendency of ambitious scholars to sterilize the integrity of cultural artifacts in the process of excessive interpretation.

Throughout the text, Walter effectively analyzes various forms of qualitative and quantitative scholarship to concretize critical concepts supporting her perspective. In addition to referencing traditional research, the author relies on the strength of auto-ethnography to substantiate her claims. In the tradition of Isadora Duncan, Walter associates "deep levels of mystical connection" with repetitive dance practice (32). She acknowledges the manner in which dance allows her to remain emotionally and spiritually connected to her higher self and ideals (8). Like anthropologist, legendary choreographer, and dance scholar Katherine Dunham, she has the capacity to lift the spiritual and emotional elements of dance from the field. While Walter's shared experiences as participant observer are limited, they legitimize her procedure for writing about dance in the contexts of aesthetics, mysticism, and consumption.

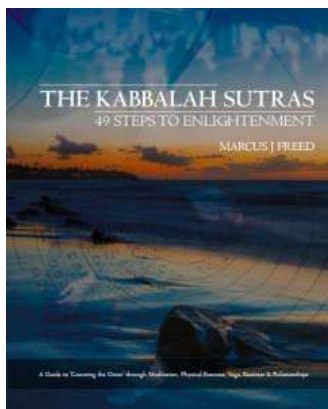
Walter accomplishes the task of defining concepts and validating frames of reference in six chapters. Chapter 1 contains adequate definitions of religion and spirituality, with excellent justification for using

mysticism as a more suitable concept relevant to discourse on the emotional and cultural significance of dance rituals. The author also establishes innovative correlations between the consumption of "spiritual gifts" (24) and the business of spirituality. In chapter 2, Walter discusses the circulation and consumption of Black social dance through a womanist transmodern lens (43) to exemplify how dance is consumed in different cultures. Chapters 3 and 4 address the functionality of aesthetics, spirituality, and transmodern dance motifs in the creation of mystical identity. Chapter 5 examines dance consumption in cyberity and the impact of dance on the human experience in parasocial contexts. In chapter 6, the author urges spiritual empowerment through direct engagement of dance rituals that promote mystical awareness. She also encourages advancement of womanist transmodern discourses relevant to dance and consumer behavior.

Dance, Consumerism, and Spirituality will advance scholarship across multiple disciplines. Walter's extensive discourse on dance rituals, mysticism, and consumption will appeal to scholars of dance, anthropology, cultural studies, gender studies, religious studies, sociology, and visual communication. The text would also be a suitable resource for advanced undergraduate or graduate courses emphasizing anthropological or spiritual approaches to dance.

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The Kabbalah Sutras: 49 Steps to Enlightenment

Marcus J. Freed (Los Angeles, CA: Freedthinker Books, 2015)

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In today's Kabbalistic world there are three main streams: Theosophical, Prophetic, and Practical Kabbalah. Each of the streams provides a different spiritual path, but all have the same end goal: creating a more direct connections with the transcendental. The most developed and well known out of the three is Theosophical Kabbalah, which aspires to deepen our understanding of the world and its relation with the Divine. In its classic form, it requires years of

learning and experience to reach the inner depths of this spiritual practice, but modern era Kabbalah has seen an opening towards the lay world. As part of this modern movement in Kabbalah we see its syncretism with other spiritual practices, especially in meditation, and it is this intersection between classic Kabbalistic teachings and meditation practices, most notably Yoga, that we encounter in Marcus Freed's *Kabbalah Sutras: 49 Steps to Enlightenment*.