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“OUT-SALOMEING SALOME”:
DANCE, THE NEW WOMAN,
AND FAN MAGAZINE ORIENTALISM

“The feminine instinct within Salomé to command and rule that which she loved persists in the race from the legend of Eve to the newest divorce story.”
—Alla Nazimova¹

From its virtual beginnings, the cinema has been drawn toward Orientalism, a phenomenon defined by Edward Said as “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”² Hollywood’s creation of an imaginary East, represented archetypally as mysterious and sensuous, would seem to be an especially significant and rich arena for film studies. Certainly, it would appear relevant to any historical inquiry into film’s representation of gender and sexuality in relation to formations of race and ethnicity.

Even the most cursory glance at Hollywood film suggests a wide range of narrative formulas for orientalism, from biblical films to historical bio-pics with Mid or Far Eastern settings, from foreign legion films to Arabian nights adventures. As might be expected, the popularity of orientalist films has varied over time, with periods in which they flourished counterpointing others in which their popularity waned. One of the periods of greatest popularity of Hollywood orientalism was, not surprisingly, simultaneous with a broadly registered influence of orientalism in American culture at large. For the purposes of this study, I am setting off these years as 1916–1926. 1916, the year the United States entered World War I, was marked also by two important orientalist events: the appearance of D.W. Griffith’s *Intolerance* and the Ballets Russes’s debut in the United