IMAGING THE *ALMEH*: TRANSFORMATION AND MULTICULTURALIZATION OF THE EASTERN DANCER IN PAINTING, THEATRE, AND FILM, 1850-1950

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This dissertation entitled

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This dissertation explores the images of the Middle Eastern and North African dancer, also known as *raquisah sharqi, almeh*, and belly dancer, and the role of Western and Eastern male artists in developing her persona. It argues that Jean-Léon Gérôme, Oscar Wilde, and Farid al-Atrash position the dancer according to their own agendas and persuade the viewers to gaze at her to advance their art. Al-Atrash, however, enables the dancer to suggest elements other than her sexuality when she dances to his music. The artworks of these artists are examined through the theory of the gaze, the postcolonial double marginalization of women, and the discourse of Orientalism.

The representations of the *almeh* in Gérôme’s paintings are also explored via methods of feminist art historians that advocate interpretation through the examination of cultural and political context. This methodology reveals the effect of the Middle East in the development of Gérôme’s realistic style and exposes his bourgeois inclination, which is similar to Ingres and Delacroix, in portraying nude women and prostitutes. Gérôme’s *almeh* complements the representations of Eastern women by other Orientalists.

The exotic dancer also attracted Western women, who liked her freedom and at the time were demanding their rights in the early twentieth century. Consequently, these women forced the film industries to cater to their needs. In response, the silent cinema offered them Rudolf Valentino as a sheik to satisfy their emotional and sexual wishes and
to restore patriarchal power. Such films portray destructive aspects of Eastern cultures and emphasize Western supremacy. Other films reveal the special circumstances whereby a Western woman is permitted to adopt the Eastern dancer, who represents the *femme fatale*, as her ideal.

The Egyptian cinema imitates Western art and presents the early Eastern dancer as an Arab *femme fatale*. Farid al-Atrash changes this image by presenting Samia Gamal as an artist worthy of international recognition. She, however, succeeds because al-Atrash’s dance-music influenced her to borrow from Western choreography to express her art. The Western and Eastern artists motivate the Eastern dancer and globalize her performance.

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Introduction

Allah curse all dancing girls.
Their hips full of abandon,
Make young men full of nonsense

(The Son of the Sheik).

“What a charming amusement for young people this is, Mr. Darcy! There is nothing like dancing after all. I consider it as one of the first refinements of polished societies.”
“Certainly, Sir; and it has the advantage also of being in vogue amongst the less polished societies of the world. Every savage can dance.”

(Austen, Pride and Prejudice 34).

The idea for this dissertation started when Eastern dancing began to appear daily in music videos on MTV. Many young female singers such as Shakira, Britney Spears, Jennifer Lopez, and Beyoncé shimmied their hips, undulated their bodies, and snaked their arms in their music videos. They used these exotic moves to rebel against proper behavior, appeal to international fans, show off their talents, and introduce new vocabulary to their dance routines. These stars spread Eastern-inspired dancing to young audiences around the globe through their music videos, which were available via satellite, television, DVD, and the Internet. This caused some American parents to complain about such dance styles and to address their concerns in newspapers, radio and television. The performances of these artists, however, suggest the need for a serious discussion of the cross-fertilization apparent in the Eastern and Western arts.

Consequently, this dissertation deals with the images of the Middle Eastern and North African dancer, known in Arabic as raqisah (“dancer”), in the period from 1850 to
1950, before the arrival of the aforementioned entertainment technologies. To begin with, it concentrates on the dancer who entertained her customers in live performances in her natural environment, which fascinated Western artists who popularized her and, to a considerable degree, determined the nature of her representation back in her own home as well.

The *raqisah* who dances in public and is hired to participate in occasions such as engagements, weddings, births, funerals and religious festivals in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, came from a lower social status but served a variety of social functions. Different countries gave her different names such as *almeh*, *mu’alimah*, *sheikhah*, *ghazieh*, *nawarieh*. This type of dancer was called in Egypt by the generic term of *almeh* (“learned woman”) and *ghaziyeh* (“invader”) or (“gypsy”). The *almeh* had a higher status than that of the *ghaziyeh* because she was involved in instructing and educating brides in delicate matters, such as the art of love making, through her singing and dancing. Her association with sex education, similar to that of Diotima’s, the learned woman who instructed Socrates in love, may have contributed to the misunderstanding of her acts and have mistaken her for a prostitute. Although the *almeh* and *ghaziyeh* had a different function in Egyptian society before the nineteenth century, the term eventually came to mean the same thing in the nineteenth century after their tribes were expelled from Cairo to Upper Egypt by Muhammad Ali Pasha, the political leader who seized power in Egypt in 1834 (Nieuwkerk 32). The *ghaziyeh* dancer practiced her dances in the rural areas of Egypt and shared and borrowed steps from folk dances common to these places. These dances were brought back to the entertainment milieu of Cairo around the
beginning of the twentieth century. There, the dancer who performed in cabarets, theatres, and movies became known as *raqisah sharqi* to differentiate her from *raqisah gharbi*, those who danced in a Western style. The *raqisah sharqi*, then, danced a modified version of the rural dances in terms of choreography, costuming, and presentation.

This inquiry is also concerned with the European and American concept of the woman dancer of the Middle East and North Africa, referred to as “belly dancer.” This name is a translation of the French colonial term “*danseuse du ventre*,” a woman who is also known as “*danseuse orientale*” (“Oriental dancer”). The term “belly dancer” was used first by Sol Bloom for the Eastern dancers of the Chicago World’s Fair of 1893. What appears peculiar, however, is that peoples of Eastern (Middle Eastern and North African) origins, who live in America and do not favor Eastern dancing, also refer to Eastern dancing as “belly dancing” to debase it. ¹ In this investigation, the term “Eastern dancer” will be adopted due to its commonality and correctness. Eastern dancer here refers to the Middle Eastern and North African woman dancer.

Eastern dancers have been depicted in art since the early existence of Mediterranean cultures. Evidence of Eastern dancers has been found in ancient writings and on ancient sculptures, vases, and wall-paintings where the female dancers were

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¹ As an example, for a recent wedding reception in Columbus, Ohio, the groom hired an Eastern dancer. When he invited the priest who conducted the ceremony at the church to the reception at a club, the priest lectured him on how the body is the “temple of God” and how the Eastern dancer contributes to abusing it. The priest, a Coptic (Christian) Egyptian, indicated that not only the dancer but also everyone attending to watch her dance would be denied communion. The only term he uttered to refer to “Eastern dancing” was “belly dancing.”
mostly represented as goddesses, priestesses, and worshippers. Several descriptions of
women dancers as leaders of a group or as solo dancers also exist in the Old Testament;
for example, where Judith, Miriam, Mary, Salomé, and others danced for religious or
special occasions.

Many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Western writers and artists, such as
Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Eugène Delacroix, Charles Leland, and Étienne Dinet
were fascinated by the Eastern female dancer and depicted her in their writings and
paintings. Some writers and artists, however, such as Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880),
Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824-1904), Gustave Moreau (1826-1898), and Oscar Wilde (1854-
1900) immortalized the sexual aspect of the Eastern dancers in their writings and works
of art. They used different mediums to explain and describe their personal experience
with Eastern dance and its dancers. Gustave Flaubert, for example, wrote from Egypt to
his girlfriend Colette explaining in detail the physical and the emotional interaction
between himself and Kuchuk, an Egyptian prostitute and dancer he met during his trip to
North Africa (Flaubert in Egypt 114). Jean-Léon Gérôme, on the other hand, depicted
dancers from Egypt both veiled and unveiled, based on one or more dancers that he
encountered in Egypt during his trips to the Middle East and who performed a variety of
Eastern dance styles. He marketed the dancer’s images to European and American art
collectors. Similarly, Gustave Moreau and Oscar Wilde used the Eastern dancer, based
on a story from the Bible, as a sexual subject illustrating the emergence of the femme
fatale in Europe at the nineteenth-century fin de siècle.
On the contrary, few Eastern artists depicted the Eastern dancer in their works of art and certainly none in the early period mentioned above for Western artists. Among the notable exceptions in a later age were the Algerian painter, Muhammad Racim (1896-1975); the Egyptian writer and Nobel Prize-winning novelist Naguib Mahfouz (1911-present); and the Syrian-Egyptian composer, singer, actor, and film producer Farid al-Atrash (1915-1974). These artists deal with the Eastern dancer in a variety of ways. For example, Mahfouz acknowledges her appeal in Egyptian society and introduces her freedom as the cause of trouble in his novel *Palace of Desire*. Racim portrays the Eastern dancer in his miniature paintings as a modest but active contributor to society, and al-Atrash promotes her and shares with her a leading role in many of his films, presenting her as an honest, free, playful, charming, and hard-working figure.

**The Problem**

Jean-Léon Gérôme, Oscar Wilde, and Farid al-Atrash, although belonging to different centuries and opposing cultures, revealed an interest in the Eastern dancer and created many of their art works around her subject. Moreover, they all affected the evolution of the Eastern dancer and popularized her by displaying her and acknowledging her role as an active member of society. Each one of them introduced the dancer to the viewer’s gaze to facilitate a judgment of her actions, morality, and environment. While Gérôme presented realistic paintings of the Eastern dancer and appeared to carefully arrange and choreograph her pose and location, Wilde fixed her forever as a *femme fatale*, and al-Atrash furthered her character as an exuberant individual identified with his
music, which was especially composed for her dance routines. In other words, the Westerners Gérôme and Wilde, and the Easterner al-Atrash positioned the dancer according to their own visions of fantasy and their own personal agendas as a means of influencing the viewers’ reaction to her actions. As a result, they all benefited from fame and fortune due to her image, and they linked themselves to her history.

The dancer of al-Atrash, however, was not an immediate descendent of those in the paintings of Gérôme or the play of Oscar Wilde. She was the result of many influences, including the dancer in Western movies during the first half of the twentieth century. These cinematic representations were important to the evolution of the Eastern dancer and shaped her, ironically, as an excellent candidate for characters in the films of al-Atrash. The variety and breadth of depictions of the Eastern dancer suggests her significant role in influencing the arts and a meaning more profound than merely the casual interest of Western and Eastern artists in her dancing.

The question that imposes itself is: How did the Eastern and Western male artist affect the depiction and portrayal of the female Eastern dancer? To understand the role of the male artist on both sides of the globe and how he contributed to the evolution of the Eastern dancer, other social, political, and philosophical factors must be analyzed to explain relevant issues. My main questions are: How did Western artists perceive the Eastern dancer? What was her role in Western art? What was the meaning of the Eastern dancer in Western art? How did she influence the Western artist and evolve in Western art? How did the interaction between West and East affect Eastern dance and the Eastern dancer? Did the portrayal of the Eastern dancer differ in Eastern films from that of
Western films? These questions reflect my personal situation as a naturalized Syrian artist and a scholar embodying a bicultural, specifically Eastern-Western, identity. This “hyphenation,” although unsettled in a duality that links, separates, and simultaneously represents the concepts of belonging and not belonging, reflects a unique relationship to both sides. This distinctive liaison allows the writer a special interpretation that comes from the ability to shift her position between the two identities. Like other scholars with dual nationalities, shifting alliances between the two results in a unique sensation, “born over and over as a hyphen rather than a fixed identity,” as Trinh T. Min-ha puts it (159).

Likewise, the questions above address the issues of the male depiction of the female body and the politics of patriarchal societies, the cultural interaction between Western and Eastern countries, and the effect of those interactions on each other.

**Historiographic Review**

Many contemporary writers deal with the Eastern dancer as part of their discussion of the Eastern female nude and the harem. They do not concentrate on the Eastern female dancer as a main subject in their studies but include her in their discussion of the Western depiction of Eastern women during the nineteenth century. Scholars such as Malek Alloula, Sarah Graham-Brown, Linda Nochlin, Dolores Mitchell, Rana Kabbani, Ruth Bernard Yeazell, Ralph Locke, and Ella Shohat have written on the fantasy of Western artists and the ways they have depicted Eastern women in photography, painting, literature, music, and film. These scholars consider the erotic
depiction of the Eastern woman as a way of satisfying the European male’s sexual fantasies.

Another group of scholars addresses Eastern dance ethnographically. These include Karin Van Nieuwkerk, who cleanses the Eastern dancer from her exotic image in her study of Egyptian dancers. She provides highly regarded insight into the lives and struggles of the dancers in their own society, and discusses the dancers and singers as figures of entertainment in Egypt. Carolee Kent and Marjorie Franken offer an historic study of the dancer’s participation at Egyptian weddings and her importance to the wedding procession. Wendy Buonaventura proposes a romantic history of the Eastern dancer from her start as an ancient worshiper to a movie star, though without supplying a critical or analytical approach to her study. Matthew Bernstein and Gaylyn Studlar have edited a volume about Orientalism in film, and make available American and European visions of the East, which include Eastern dance. Their book discusses the effect of the East in the representation of women in Western movies and the politics behind Western artists’ representations of gender and race. Viola Shafik also traces the development of Arab cinema from colonial times to the present and analyzes the relationship between Eastern cinema and commercial Western cinema as a factor that shaped Eastern movies. This book indicates the Eastern dancer as an indispensable aspect for the commercial success of the Egyptian musicals. The books edited by Sherifa Zuhur introduce a variety of essays on Middle Eastern art and artists that include the representation of women in some Egyptian movies and the stardom of Farid al-Atrash as a singer, composer and a movie star. These books provide background information and sometimes resolve issues
of dispute in Arabic sources. Zuhur also includes information on Farid al-Atrash in her
discussion of his sister Asmahan who was also a singer and actress. Farid composed
many of Asmahan’s songs, sang and co-starred in her films. The dance historians
Anthony Shay and Barbara Sellers-Young discuss aspects of the transformation and
acculturation of Eastern dance in the West and deal with the transmigration of “belly
dancing” and the reasons for its appeal to American women.

In recent years there has also been an enormous amount of research into modern
American dance that has been influenced by cultural studies. Robert Allen studies the
burlesque, Eric Lott analyses the American minstrel show, Jessica Glasscock explores
striptease and the effect of exotic dance on American dance and examines low cultural
production from the perspective of race, class and gender. Toni Bentley investigates the
effect of the Eastern femme fatale on the exotic Western dancer of the turn of the century.
Susan A. Glenn tackles the woman as “spectacle” from Sarah Bernhardt to the
Hollywood musicals, including the Americanization of the Eastern femme fatale.

Other feminist scholars in film studies, such as Miriam Hansen, Anke Gleber, and
Jeanine Basinger discuss reasons for manipulating the images of the Eastern dancer and
her male partner. All of them indicate an important change in writing and filming that
catered especially to women, who had become by this time commonplace in public
venues and important as consumers. Their writings suggest the appropriation of the
Eastern dancer in Western films as a means of stressing codes of acceptable behavior
expected of these progressive women while keeping them entertained.
None of the above writers, however, addresses the effect of multiculturalism on Eastern and Western art and the contribution of the Eastern dancer to both arts. This examination, while greatly influenced by the works of these scholars, differs from their works in its concentration on the images of the Eastern dancer that focus on her sexuality and present a visual history of her physical actions. In this regard, Gérôme especially contributed a great deal in “writing” such a visual history of the Eastern dancer that was as important as the works of Moreau and Wilde. These Western artists created works of art that have become a formative vehicle for depicting the sexuality of the Eastern dancer, which ultimately may have contributed to attracting critical attention to her. Taken as a whole, the works of these artists may well have influenced the shaping of the Eastern dancer in al-Atrash’s movies. Therefore my dissertation not only chronicles an historic progression of the image of the Eastern dancer in relation to the time period, but also analyzes her perception in Western and Eastern art from the point of view of both cultures, and investigates the cross-cultural hybridization that takes place.

Theoretical Basis

During the period of European imperialism in the Middle East and North Africa (the nineteenth century through the first half of twentieth), various cross-fertilizing influences arose naturally through the close cultural contacts between opposing populations. Relationships between the colonizer and the colonized, the powerful and the powerless, the novel and the traditional, the masculine and the feminine became important aspects to investigate when studying the art of a culture experiencing
interaction with external forces. Regardless of the reality of colonial domination attained in the East through a measure of Western force, both populations influenced each other. The colonizer observed the colonized to acquire knowledge and power, while the colonized (Algerians, Egyptians, Syrians, Lebanese, for example) gazed back from a different perspective to mimic the “civilized” cultures and to imitate their conventions. Reflections of this invisible gaze of the colonized East, though generally unperceived by the West, are clearly evident in the modified aesthetic conventions and practices of Eastern cultures, which at the same time transformed the arts during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For example, depicting a cinematic dancer, such as Samia Gamal, on postcards and merchandizing her image not only represents a Western idea, but also defies Eastern practices that prohibit the realistic portrayal of human beings. It also contradicts the customary “concealment” of women. The gaze, then, both effected change and inspired an extraordinary socio-cultural exchange of ideas. Therefore, the theory of the gaze represents a pivotal theoretical underpinning in this analysis.

Conventionally, the word “gaze” is used to describe a fixed observation or controlled intent performed by the viewer through the eyes. This way of seeing is what the poststructuralist Jacques Marie Émile Lacan (1901-1981) calls the gaze (in French le regard, “the look”), which is reciprocated. Lacan illustrates this relationship in his example of the can of sardines that reflects light from an unseen location. To Lacan, “I,” the subject, is distinct from “the eye,” the organ of seeing; therefore as the subject sees, he or she is also positioned as object, spectacle, and consumer. Also, seeing is a way of negotiating the relationship between the subject and the object. Lacan contends that it is
in this relationship that the idea of selfhood or ego is created, and the subject’s ego becomes its object like the other. Through the other, which is already an object, the subject sees his or her ego. Also through his or her ego, the subject sees the other. In other words, the subject perceives others in terms of his or her own representations and creates them in his or her own image. This image can also be the subject’s opposite, because, as Lacan explains in his example of the mirror stage of the child, mirror images are reversed. The subject recognizes itself in its opposite (67-104). This relationship is influential to my research in order to understand the influential role of the dancer in reflecting the artist and his society.

This theoretical interpretation of the gaze, however, is extended to include Laura Mulvey’s discussion of the male gaze that branched off from it. Mulvey’s theory depends on Freud’s and Lacan’s psychoanalytical points of view, with an added feminist twist. The theory of the gaze analyzes, among other things, the unconscious perspective of the patriarchal society that has generally infiltrated the male-dominated film structure. For Mulvey, male filmmakers are ambivalent towards the image of woman. As a common trend, the woman is the image and the bearer of meaning, the erotic, while the man is the bearer of the look, the source of pleasure (scopophilia) that objectifies the other. Therefore, the female actress is the erotic object of the character and of the viewer. She becomes a fetish to reassure the viewer of his masculinity. The fetishistic scopophilia, “builds up the physical beauty of the object, turning it into something satisfying in itself” (Visual Pleasure 14). Mulvey also considers how the female viewer must accept identification with a female heroine as she is depicted by patriarchy (6).
Therefore, the male gaze is always dominant because female desire is repressed. This dissertation will echo Mulvey’s opinion but questions the relationship between the Eastern dancer and her eroticized male partner. Although women take pleasure in gazing at the eroticized male actor, it is intended to show masculine superiority and to objectify the female as a consumer and spectacle. The comparison between the behavior of the Western male and the Eastern dancer also reveals an intended message of superiority between nations, particularly as related to their backgrounds and beliefs.

In a related manner, the following discussion will consider Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s postcolonial theory which deals with the double marginalization of women within the spheres of patriarchy and colonial control. Spivak argues that patriarchy and colonialism displace the “third-world woman” by marking her as an object in need of protection. The patriarchal system protects her from her own “evil” and lack of responsibility, while colonialism shields her from her own male-dominated society. Although accounts of female struggles are sometimes documented by the colonized patriarchal societies, “the subaltern as female cannot be heard or read” (104). The dancer, however, differs from this notion of Spivak’s in that she can “talk back” by influencing the artists in her culture of origin. This will become apparent in the detailed discussion below of the films of Farid al-Atrash. Since Western artistic and commercial representation may have affected the decision process involved in representing the ideas important to the Eastern artist, the result may actually have benefited the chosen subject matter equally. This external influence, then, has stimulated creativity and, in the case of the Eastern dancer, worked to her artistic advantage.
The images of the Eastern dancer and her function in art can also be examined and analyzed by employing methods of feminist art historians, such as Griselda Pollock and Linda Nochlin, who look at the images and allow themselves to respond to what they reveal (Avant-Garde 26; Imaginary Orient 125). This last point is essential in this writer’s search to reveal the meanings of the Eastern dancer in Gérôme’s and al-Atrash’s art. Of course, the ideas in Edward Said’s well-known and formative study, Orientalism, will appear as necessary background to introduce the perspectives of the West on Eastern issues and the way Western power can be addressed. Yet, unlike his perspective, the following discussion considers alternative creative answers by Easterners to their depiction by Western artists.

Nevertheless, these various theorists have helped shape the personal conceptions of this inquiry, which is based on bicultural, female lenses. Above all, this dissertation contributes to E. Ann Kaplan’s contention that once women understand how the patriarchal myths function to position women, then the strategy for changing discourses can take place to change that objectification (34).

### Outline

This dissertation starts with an examination and analysis of the almeh dancer’s representations by Jean-Léon Gérôme, which were popular during the second half of the nineteenth century, to establish a relation between art and culture. It uses primary sources, like his edited biography and his companion Paul Lenoir’s autobiographical account of their trip to the Middle East, as well as the critical reception of his work.
In order to bridge the representation between the East and West, the development of the dancer’s image will be traced, and the character of Salomé in the play of the same name by Oscar Wilde will be examined. *Salomé* will be examined because she symbolizes the “dangerous” East and the immorality of its woman, an idea that continues in early Western films.

The last part of the dissertation examine the films of Farid al-Atrash and relies on al-Atrash’s memoirs and writings to understand his thought, vision, and influence. It relies on primary sources in Arabic, and the biography and writings of other Arabic artists and critics. With respect to Arabic films, it concentrates only on the works of al-Atrash with Samia Gamal, whose dance steps originated in the dance of the *almehs* and were modified to complement the music of al-Atrash.

Thus, this examination discusses the dancer and dance in relation to Gérôme and al-Atrash, the men who reflect their backgrounds and cultures through the depiction of the woman dancer. Both of them exhibited their interest in the Eastern dancer, the active woman who is not necessarily following the rules of good behavior demanded by Western and Eastern societies. They both contribute to her assertive and elegant personality. They differ, however, in how they identify with her, and what she means to each of them.

The bridge I create through the dancer between Eastern and Western cultures is both academically exciting and personally satisfying. The dancers of Gérôme and al-Atrash allow me to incorporate my past and my present in one work. I learned Eastern dancing in Syria, my country of origin (also the country of origin of Farid al-Atrash), and
have lived in Egypt, visited France, and learned how to be a scholar in America. All these aspects of my life are joined in one interdisciplinary work.

Chapter One highlights the factors that influenced Gérôme and the reasons for adopting the iconography of the Eastern dancer. It discusses the evolution of the artist, the effect of his ethnographic style, and the role of the Eastern motif to his success. It analyzes the many images of the dancer and the perception and reception of her images in Western society. Finally, it presents the possibility of the international migration of the dancer through the paintings of Gérôme.

Chapter Two explores the effect of the Eastern dancer on Western society and her transformation into an icon of wickedness in Western art. It analyzes the exotic persona of Salomé at the end of the nineteenth century and the effect of the dance of the seven veils in enhancing her wickedness. It also discusses the reasons for choosing the Eastern dancer to portray masculine fear and her function as a messenger of corruption. Through a feminist analysis of the Eastern dancer as a contextualizer of a decadent era, this chapter will show a female perspective of the portrayed femme fatale and how she related to struggling Western women at the fin de siècle.

Chapter Three explores the images of the Eastern dancer in five motion pictures that incorporate her in their plots. It traces the changes in her persona and the ways she was incorporated to serve Western ideology. It also examines the relationships of the Eastern dancer to the masculine authority in her life and her role in directing the female spectator to the ideal behavior accepted in Western society.
Chapter Four examines the dances of Samia Gamal in six historic movies produced by the legendary Farid al-Atrash during the period 1947-1952. It discusses the formative role of al-Atrash in revolutionizing and refining the image of the Eastern dancer, while, at the same time, highlighting the uplifting effects of Western attitudes, fashion, and choreography on raising the status of the Eastern dancer. It also analyzes how the shift in the films produced by al-Atrash’s in portraying the Eastern dancer, her casting in leading roles, and innovative music and choreography brought about a positive change in her popular perception.

All the translations from French and Arabic are my own unless otherwise indicated. The texts of the Arabic songs included are from my personal collection of CD’s, tapes, videos, and DVD’s.
Chapter One

The Eastern Dancer in the Paintings of Jean-Léon Gérôme

Thus you see, dear sister, the manners of mankind do not differ so widely as our voyage writers would make us believe. Perhaps it would be more entertaining to add a few surprising customs of my own invention, but nothing seems to me so agreeable as truth, and I believe nothing so acceptable to you.

(Montagu, To Lady Mar 97).

Whether the erotic object be breast or buttocks, shoes or corsets, a matter of pose or of prototype, the imagery of sexual delight or provocation has always been created about women for men’s enjoyment, by men.

(Nochlin, Eroticism 9).

Introduction

With the exception of a few paintings, the Eastern woman appears exclusively as a dancer in Jean-Léon Gérôme’s (1824-1904) canvases. He shows her in a variety of positions, including dancing, sitting, standing, waiting, and interacting with customers. He refers to her as “almeh,” “woman of Cairo,” or “Arab girl,” and presents narratives about her lifestyle in his art. He concentrates on her movements, costumes, and interaction with the spectators, and he positions her as the focal point of his paintings. Gérôme had not been exposed to the foreign dancer when he was growing up. He perhaps imagined her from the writings, paintings, and engravings of Western Orientalists. Masterpieces such as Racine’s Bajazet of 1672, Galland’s Mille et Une Nuit (Arabian Nights) of 1704-17, Montesquieu’s Lettres Persanes (Persian Letters) of 1721, and the letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the wife of England’s ambassador to
Constantinople, which were published in 1763, must have attracted the youth with his artistic inclination. When he was growing up, Gérôme might have seen the paintings and engravings of Carle Van Loo, Jean Baptiste Marie Pierre, Jean Baptiste Van Moor, and Joseph Marie Vien, all of whom illustrated some aspects of the Eastern dancer (Ettinghausen 16, Moreau-Vauthier 37). The style he developed to paint the almehs must have been influenced by his art education, environment, and ideals.

The Childhood and Early Experience of Gérôme

Jean-Léon Gérôme was born to Pierre Gérôme and Claude Françoise Mélanie Vuillemont in Vesoul. Both parents were born to families of merchants with no special artistic inclination. Pierre Gérôme followed the family trade and became prosperous from selling the work of silversmiths and watchmakers and occasional jewelry crafted by himself. Jean-Léon was older than his brother Claude Armand (1827-1850) and the most gifted. He received prizes and honorable mentions in the subjects of Latin, Greek, history, geometry, chemistry, physics, drawing and painting during his years at the Collège de Vesoul, now Lycée Gérôme, where he earned his high school degree at the age of sixteen (Ackerman, Life 14-6). Charles Moreau-Vauthier, Gérôme’s biographer, who collected notes, anecdotes, letters, and conversations about the artist after his death revealed the painter’s early interest in painting as a job like any other one. The young Gérôme contemplated that painting might be “un métier agreeable” (“an agreeable job”) that was “assez intéressant” (“interesting enough”) for a career. Gérôme, in fact, preferred painting to other subjects but was required to follow the school’s curriculum of
rhetoric and philosophy, a task that left him less time for more painting classes (12).

Gérôme’s introduction to painting came from his first art teacher, Claude Basile Cariage (1798-1875), who instilled serious training habits and discipline early in his life. The artist recognized the effect of the early techniques and methods he learned in Vesoul. Gérôme wrote:

Mr. Cariage was my first teacher and I deeply recognize the good advice he gave me since I was almost an enfant. Under his direction, I began to break through the relative proportions of things; I learned to place and bring to this difficult task all the motivation imaginable. He was meticulous and we got used to doing everything with care; and I have kept this excellent habit, never parting with any work of art until I had included in it all my integrity as an artist, starting over two and three times the paintings which seems finished.²

The teaching technique of Cariage emphasized the classical methods of relying on excellent skills in drawing. He focused on each part of the body from different angles before placing them together. He also trained his students to master accurate anatomy, perspective, and form. Relying on the description of another student, Gaston Coindre, Gerald M. Ackerman writes in *The Life and Works Of Jean-Léon Gérôme* that “nude

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² “M. Cariage a été mon premier maître et je lui suis profondément reconnaissant des bons conseils qu’il m’a donnés quand j’étais presque enfant. Sous sa direction, j’ai commencé à me pénétrer des propositions relatives des choses; j’ai appris à mettre en place et apporté à cette operation difficile toute la volonté imaginable. Il était exigeant et nous habituait à faire tout avec soin; aussi ai-je gardé cette excellente habitude, ne laissant partir un ouvrage que lorsque j’avais apporté toute ma probité d’artiste, recommençant deux et trois fois des tableaux qui me paraissaient terminés” (Moreau-Vauthier 13-14).
models were absolutely unknown” in the Collège of Vesoul and the use of statues as models was not part of the training of Gérôme (16). The teacher, therefore, depended on the method of copying the drawings and paintings of famous artists as classroom exercises to endorse the “academic style” of the École des Beaux-Art in Paris. Albert Boime notes that although copying did not necessitate creativity and analysis as in the original work of art, it was fundamental to the students of art because it developed their skills of observation and analysis. It was also a “work of art in its own right,” because it required a laborious and scientific approach to document the original work of art (122). Copying a work of art led to documenting nature and inspired the artist to include his own vision of it.

Many nineteenth-century artists like Gérôme’s teacher adopted the inspiration of formal painters, such as Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) and Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825). The Classical style in painting made its way back to the academic arena during the rule of Louis XVI when Joseph Marie Vien (1716-1809) was appointed to head the Académie de France in Rome in 1775. Like many other artists, he was inspired by the frescoes of the recently excavated Villa of Mysteries in Pompeii by the German art historian and archeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) in 1748. Vien rejected the ornamental style and floating figures of the Rococo painters such as Jean Antoine Watteau (1684-1721), François Boucher (1703-1770), and Jean Honoré Fragonard (1732-1806) and the frivolous genre of their paintings. Beginning in 1753, Vien implemented subjects influenced by antiquity and originated the simplified “à la grecque” style (Gaehtgens and Lugand 67). This early Neoclassical method combined
late Rococo lightness and eroticism with motifs borrowed from Pompeii. Else Marie Bukdahl indicates that Vien’s innovative approach attracted the attention of contemporary critics, such as Denis Diderot (1713-1784), who believed in the moral aim of art and applauded the artist who “recreated” the antique (97). This notion integrated itself into the art of many nineteenth-century artists.

Vien’s teaching methods emphasized the basics of perspective and anatomy, encouraged Classical themes, stressed life-like drawing, and necessitated a clarity of Classical Antiquity in the works of art (Noël 13). This classical direction of precise teaching; the historical themes fostered by the comte D’Angiviller, the new director of the French Academy from 1774 to 1791, who aimed to alter the French taste and reform the Academy; and the need for didactic art, all established the stylistic direction of Vien’s student Jacques Louis David (1784-1825). He became the leader of a new art movement: the Neoclassical style. His techniques in paintings such as The Oath of the Horatii (Paris, Musée de Louvre), David’s reply to a commission from King Louis XVI in 1784, manifested the ideals of the Neoclassical style that became a model for nineteenth-century artists and their students. Significantly, such a technique was emphasized at the famed atelier of Paul Delaroche (1797-1856), Gérôme’s teacher in Paris (Roberts 4-5).

An unidentified friend of Paul Delaroche who lived in Vesoul at the time encouraged Gérôme to continue his training in painting. This came about after this friend admired Gérôme’s rendition of Alexander Gabriel Decamps’ Learned Monkey and Dogs, a copy of which was given to him by his father. The friend recommended Gérôme to the famous Delaroche and induced Pierre Gérôme to send his talented son to Paris.
Gérôme’s father, who was afraid that his son would not be able to earn his living if he chose painting for a career, agreed on one condition. “I’ll give you a year” he said, “If it goes well, you will continue. If it does not, you must think of something else.”3 This parental support gave Gérôme a chance to investigate his talent and allow it to develop. The thousand francs a year financial support from Gérôme’s family permitted the young student to dedicate all his time to his art and aid his friends who were less fortunate than him and whose allowances were inferior (Moreau-Vauthier III; 29; Ackerman, Life 20).

The Effect of Delaroche

Delaroche was also a follower of the formal documentary style. He was one of the early artists to adopt the juste milieu manner of balancing the radical and passionate Romantic and the conservative and reserved Neoclassical methods of representation. This approach reflected the attitude of the French artists who were seriously involved in the political and cultural life of France and who enjoyed their responsibility and popularity. Albert Boime describes Delaroche and compatible artists as “sophisticated men who recognized the implications of the Classic-Romantic conflict, but who could take neither side whole-heartedly. They instead tried to effect a compromise between the two, borrowing variously from both” (10). This attitude permitted both originality and the appropriation of new ideas. For example, by substituting universal themes with individual psychological studies, Delaroche was able to turn history painting into a genre. This methodology he transferred to his student during his teaching from 1832 until 1843.

3 “Je te donne un an... Si cela va bien, tu continueras. Si ça ne va pas, il faudra penser à autre chose” (Moreau-Vauthier 21).
Moreover, Delaroche inculcated a concern for originality that may have affected Gérôme’s images of the Eastern dancer. Delaroche also insisted on thoughtful compositions, demanded an academically laborious training in drawing and painting from a live model, and encouraged the Romantic themes and innovative ideas of his students (58). Apparently, the principles and methods of Delaroche, the mood of his atelier and the group of artists there stimulated the young Gérôme. “Every morning, I ran, I flew to my work!” he declared. On the other hand, the classes he was enrolled in at the École des Beaux Arts limited Gérôme’s imagination because they were too reserved and uninspiring. “I always liked to work without feeling I was in prison, it made me tired, exhausted me that I could not say a word.”

In 1843, during Gérôme’s third year in Paris, Delaroche left the atelier and they went together to Italy. In Rome, the picturesque nature and Roman antiquities were available to Gérôme and inspired his future work. This inspiration, the meticulous training, and his education at the next atelier would be instrumental in his paintings of the almeh, the dancer in Egypt.

**The Influence of Gleyre**

Many of the students of Delaroche studied also with Charles Gleyre (1808-1874), who took over the atelier in 1844. It was difficult to classify Gleyre because he was independent from the Academy and the École des Beaux Art. He produced an original

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4 “Chaque matin, je courais, je volais à mon travail!” (Moreau-Vauthier 23)
5 “J’ai toujours aimé travailler sans être en prison. Cela me fatiguait, cela m’assommait de ne pouvoir dire un mot” (Moreau-Vauthier 36).
style that conveyed a unique mood that was neither classic nor romantic. Gleyre’s teaching methods and techniques were similar to Delaroche’s, but he instructed his students also in ways of executing innovative compositions for a “sincere expression of feeling” and personal qualities of the themes (Boime 59-60). He also exposed them to the sketches and paintings of his voyages to the Near East, which inspired a new genre.

Charles Gleyre went to the Near East to assist John Lowell, Jr. (1799-1836), a rich American industrialist, who had inherited a fortune from his father and decided to tour the globe in 1834 after he lost his wife and two daughters in an epidemic of scarlet fever. Lowell required an artist to record visually the civilizations of Greece, Turkey, and Egypt. This was a time before the invention of photography, when writers or serious travelers took notes and depended on painters to back up their memory. They would pay for a reliable, skillful, and willing artist who could paint what was significant to them. As a result, Lowell contacted Horace Vernet (1789-1863), the director of the French Academy in Rome, who recommended Gleyre as the perfect companion thanks to his accurate method and skills of reproducing quick and polished scenes from nature. The two men wrote detailed journals of their observations, and Gleyre sketched and painted many sites and a variety of ethnic peoples. The collaboration of the two travelers ended in 1835 when they took different routes after their visit to Egypt; Lowell went to

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6 Horace Vernet, another popular painter of the *juste milieu*, and Delaroche’s father-in-law, visited Algeria for the first time in 1833. He was so intrigued by the exotic civilization of the East that he made several other trips to Egypt and Palestine. Vernet started using photography to record his trips a few months after it became available to the public in 1839 (Munro 230).
Bombay, while Gleyre continued his journey through Egypt and then Syria until 1838 (Hauptman I: 78-9; Stevens 150).

Many of Gleyre’s watercolor and oil works of that period reflected his observation of the Eastern light and overall yellow tone of the atmosphere. They also indicated his interest in the colorful ethnic costumes and everyday items used by Near Eastern peoples of both sexes. Although Gleyre did not find much inspiration in the sexuality of Eastern women, whom he found “dégoutantes” because of their lack of hygiene (Hauptman 91), his Eastern portfolio and style may have inspired his students to investigate the East as a potential place for inspiration.

Like his friends, Jean-Léon Gérôme enrolled with Gleyre after he came back from Italy to prepare for the upcoming competition for the Prix de Rome, the highest of a series of competitions initiated by the Academy in the seventeenth century. Winning this prize guaranteed five years’ scholarship at the Villa Medici, exhibition of the envois (the required works sent annually by the winner to the Academy), and prestige. Thus, the Prix de Rome would allow financial independence and more exposure to artistic inspiration for Gérôme. He decided, however, to leave the atelier of Gleyre after a short period to work on a joint commission with Delaroche, Charlemagne Crossing the Alps (Versaille, Musée National de Versailles). This commission contributed to the development of a new original style.
The Early Style of Gérôme

In 1846, Gérôme entered the Prix de Rome competition but did not win it because of what was considered his deficient figural representation. To sharpen his skills in executing the nude, he studied human and animal anatomy for a year, and to practice, he started a large 56 1/4” x 81 1/2” painting, *The Cock Fight* (Paris, Musée d’Orsay). The catalogue *Jean-Léon Gérôme 1824-1904* of the Ville de Vesoul indicates that Gérôme painted *The Cock Fight* (figure 1) in his studio at 9 rue de Fleurus and showed it to Delaroche, who convinced him to enter it in the Salon of 1847. *The Cock Fight* was accepted, exhibited in the same space as *The Romans of the Decadence* (Paris, Musée de Louvre), the large painting by Thomas Couture (1815-79), and won a third place medal (101).

*The Cock Fight* shows two young nudes on a shore beside a pedestal and a sphinx encircled by a small garden. A girl leans upon the cage of the fighting cocks. Her body curves while she is sitting, and her thighs are gathered comfortably under her. Her eyes are lowered, her mouth is parted in a hinted smile, and her head is crowned with a coronet of blonde hair that contrasts with her young, radiant skin. A combination of silken yellow and pink fabric held by an orange cord glides behind her to reveal gauze underwear. The boy on the right is kneeling and bending forward to stimulate the cock and watch the fight closely. He has a wreath of leaves lying on his brown hair and a blue and red garment on his right shoulder. His darker skin, idealized muscles, and explicit activity contrasts with the lighter skin and relaxed pose of the girl. The birds are not touching, and one of them is flying up, while the other one is bleeding but still pursuing
him from below. This unique combination of the naïve nudes with their back to the
sphinx, the painful entertainment of the birds, and the outdoor natural setting give the
scene a hard to resist, intellectual, erotic flavor.

The poet and critic Théophile Gautier was attracted to the subject matter and the
unexpected large format. Fanny Hering\textsuperscript{7} translates his enthusiastic revue about \textit{The Cock Fight} in \textit{La Presse}:

\begin{quote}
Let us congratulate ourselves that the jury apparently through inattention
has admitted a charming picture full of delicacy and originality by a young
man of whom we hear for the first time…. This subject, apparently trivial,
has, under his fine and delicate handling of pencil and brush, taken on rare
elegance and an exquisite individuality. It is not as one may think, from
the theme chosen, a canvas of small dimension, as is usual, The figures are
life size, treated in an entirely historical manner. A great deal of talent and
resourcefulness have been necessary to elevate such a common scene to
the level of a noble composition. (52)
\end{quote}

Gérôme demonstrated his creativity in contrasting the contemporary scene with
the ancient figures, and the ordinary topic with the academic style. The large size of the
painting also contradicted the intimacy of the subject matter, and transformed the artwork
into a multi-toned bas-relief sculpture. In addition, the artist confirmed his ability to

\textsuperscript{7} Fanny Hering published an incomplete version of the autobiography of Gérôme in
English. According to Gerald M. Ackerman, Gérôme kept a manuscript of his short
autobiography, which he wrote first for his friend, the painter, Charles Timbal for his
article in the \textit{Gazettes des Beaux-Arts}. He, then, lent it to other writers including Fanny
Hering (335).
observe, retain, and then recreate by using many sources. For example, the young girl in the picture recalls the pose of Mary in the 1333 Annunciation of Simone Martini (Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi), while the pose of the male youth may have been influenced by the 1305-6 Piéta (“Lamentation”) of Giotto, or the 1638-9 Et in Archadia Ego (“The Arcadian Shepherds”, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale) of Nicolas Poussin.\(^8\)

The innovative mind and skills of Gérôme, coupled with the inspiration from his trip to Rome, the insight of Delaroche’s juste milieu style, and Gleyre’s soft colors contributed to the success of this first exhibited work. The Cock Fight publicized the artist, brought him several commissions, and initiated the popularity of the Néo-Grec style. It also formed an attitude that prepared him for his later rendition of the almeh.

Gérôme and his colleagues from the ateliers of Delaroche and Gleyre—among them the painters Charles Henri Picou (1824-95), Gustave Boulanger (1824-81), Jean Louis Hamon (1821-74), August Toulmouche (1829-90), Earnst Jean Aubert (1824-1906), and Armand Jobbé Duval (1821-89)—were influenced by ancient settings. For their paintings, they fantasized themes from their own contemporary lifestyle in historic motifs and depicted the ancients in familiar incidents from everyday life. Some of these painters lived together since they started their training in Paris at the same time. Gérôme, Hamon, Picou, and Boulanger lived together first at 9 rue de Fleurus in the building known as Le Chalet and then at 27 rue de Fleurus starting in 1848. They moved to 70 rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, which was known as La Boîte à Thé, in 1857. It was at that

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\(^8\) Moreau-Vauthier indicates that Gérôme was mostly influenced by nature during his stay in Italy. The artist was not keen on the order, rhythm and symmetry in the art of the Italian masters, but their artworks influenced and inspired him (63-5).
location where other painters, such as Eugène Lambert, Gustave Brion, and Louis Schutzenberger joined their group and formed a larger community (Lafont-Couturier, Gérôme 13). This group, however, continued what Vien and the earliest Neoclassicist painters were envisioning, but added a naive element to it. For example, Hamon, who continued with the Néo-Grec style most of his career, painted his women as having a certain charm, capturing simultaneously both the woman and the child in her, or as having a distinctive childish doll-like quality, for instance, in the 1860 painting entitled Old China Shop (Norfolk, The Chrysler Museum).

C. H. Stranahan explains the style of Gérôme and his friends who acquired their popularity from the “delicacy of conceit and charm of execution” as “a genre stepping back to snatch, for a while a classic garb” (329). The members of this “school of Gérôme,” who were also criticized by Chamfleury as “école du calque” (‘tracing school’), for copying the past without logic rather than imagining it, wanted to legitimize and justify their bourgeois lifestyle by the use of history (Lafont-Couturier, Gérôme 16-18). From a stylistic point of view, Gerald Ackerman described the Néo-Grec as “a progressive movement that looked like a reactionary one” because their work “accomplished a change of consciousness for themselves and the public” (“Chink” 190). The sensibility of this school allowed it to remain academic and accepted by the “official” art establishment, while differentiating itself from the “vulgarity” of the opposing style of Realism. Therefore, the young painters became known also as the Pompéistes or Artists Pompiers (“Pompeian artists”) (Harding 14). Unlike the Realists, their figures remained elegant, seductive and idealized according to the classical
tradition. For example, Gérôme’s nude female casts her eyes, tilts her neck, swirls or curves her body. In contrast, the male nude, even when idle, embodies motion. In other words, the young bourgeois painter idealizes the figure of the female and infuses her with calm erotic sensuality that could easily be dominated. This rendition will surface later in the painting of Gérôme’s almeh.

The bourgeois Gérôme may also be revealed as a man of his time from his depiction of *A Greek Interior* (Figure 2) in 1850. He indicates his interest in eroticism and his idea of the role of women in society in his representation of the female nude. The nude women in this painting are introduced from different angles that betray the artist’s classic approach and anticipate his interest in intense sexuality and prostitution. In this painting two men in the background look as if discussing the many choices of women available to them in a brothel. The wall also reveals an open door with a flirting couple making its way to another room. C. H. Stranahan notes that this 25” x 34” painting was prepared for the competition of the Ideal Figure of the Republic. It was severely condemned both in public and private for its immorality. Louis Napoleon, the president of the Republic at the time bought it and kept it away from the public (Stranahan 310). It seems that a sketched version of *A Greek Interior* was inscribed “à mon ami Douillard” (“to my friend Douillard”) in 1848 (Lafont-Couturier, *Gérôme* 19). Such a painting reveals the intention of the twenty-four year old Gérôme to defy society by rebelling against its morality.

The rebellious stage in Gérôme’s life was also revealed in some of his behavior. C. H. Stranahan introduces a rare incident about Gérôme, who supported free sexual
relations and headed “a delegation to petition for the abolition of marriage” in the same year (313). Gérôme was also involved in a duel because of what seems an illegitimate relationship with a woman. Rosa Bonheur wrote to her friends, M. and Mme. Auguste Cain, about Gérôme’s duel in 1861, which resulted in an injury to his right wrist and arm:

I hear that simpleton, M. Gérôme has nearly got himself winged for the sake of a light-o’-love. It would have been fine if he had deprived art of one of its first champions. Happily he is all right again. May it be a lesson to him and may he in the future prefer painting to women. It’s much wiser and less deceitful. (221)

Such gossip revealed Gérôme as a man who would put his life in jeopardy for a romantic or sexual adventure. It reinforced his interest in erotic fantasies that would reveal themselves later in his “ethnographic” depiction of the dancers of the East.

The Impact of Photography and the Exotic

Gérôme’s success at the Salon and his ability to attract attention to his work granted him plenty of assignments, culminating in a request from the French Government for an entry in the Universal Exhibition of 1855. He responded by presenting his choice, *The Age of Augustus*, which represented the peaceful time of Augustus, with Christ and Augustus surrounded by ethnic peoples of different nationalities. To contrive his vision, Gérôme traveled towards Russia, accompanied by the actor Edmond François Got (1822-1901), to research ethnic peoples and costumes from the plains of Asia and supply
himself with accurate renditions of the “barbarian peoples” in his painting (Moreau-Vauthier 104-5).

On their way to Rumania, they were stranded at the port of Galatz, where Gérôme sketched a group of Russian soldiers amusing themselves with music and dancing near their camp. When exhibited at the Universal Exhibition of 1855, the *Recreation in a Russian Camp* (France, private collection) attracted much more attention for its new genre. The small picture (23.25” x 40”) won enthusiastic responses from many critics for its objective realism. The size of the *Recreation in a Russian Camp*, the smooth brush strokes, the frozen moment of the subject matter, and the accurate rendering of the figures gave the picture a photographic finish that communicated a visual account of Gérôme’s encounter during the trip.

On the other hand, *The Age of Augustus* (Paris, Musée d’Orsay) was hailed for its “genuine history” and was exhibited for a short time, then stored away (Ackerman, *Life* 42). Although the government’s response to *The Age of Augustus* was not very enthusiastic, Gérôme was made a Chevalier of the Légion d’Honneur (Moreau-Vauthier 110). The contrasting responses to *Recreation in a Russian Camp* and *The Age of Augustus* led Gérôme to realize the potential inspiration of the exotic themes as a style that could enhance his paintings.

Gérôme was inspired by the trip with Got, which ended in Turkey via Malta. His lodging in Constantinople promoted a strong artistic stimulus from the East. Although a passage in Hering mentions that the reason for the trip to the East was the artist’s sadness over the failure of his painting, a note quoted in Moreau-Vauthier indicates his artistic
motivation: “My short stay in Constantinople whet my appetite, and the East appeared more often in my dreams.” This attraction to the East marked the beginning of an inspiration that motivated the artist till the end of his life.

Pursuing this inspiration in 1856, Gérôme, and the painters Léon Charles Adrien Belly and Narcise Berchère, the playwright Émile Augier, and Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi, the sculptor of the Statue of Liberty, embarked on an eight-month voyage to Egypt. The trip to the East was essentially an opportunity for the five artists to paint and find inspiration. Bartholdi, who was trained in using the camera, both exposing and developing the images, took with him a great deal of photographic equipment (Ackerman, *Life* 44; Lafont-Couturier, *Gérôme* 20). He perhaps made copies of photographs for his friends to keep as souvenirs and aids for their artworks. The precise details in Gérôme’s paintings must have depended not only on his sketches, notes, and memory, but also on photographic sources.

Many artists accepted the camera and considered it the ultimate tool to boost their art because of its manageability and accuracy. For example, the French photographer, Gaspard Felix Tournachon, known as Nadar (1820-1910), who was also one of Gérôme’s friends, stresses the convenient aspects of photography and comments on the then fairly-new invention in 1856:

Photography is a marvelous discovery, a science that has attracted the greatest intellects, an art that excites the most astute minds— and one that

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9 “Mon court séjour à Constantinople m’avait mis en appétit, et l’Orient était le plus fréquent de mes rêves” (Moreau-Vauthier 63; 113).
can be practiced by any imbecile. Photographic theory can be taught in an hour, the basic technique in a day [...]. (Prinet and Dilasser 115-6)

Nadar acknowledged how easy it was for someone to take a picture, but as an artistic photographer he revealed his talent through a unique vision and the manipulation of light to achieve the desired mood. Through such manipulation Nadar revealed the personality and psychological aspects of his subjects.

After the announcement of the daguerreotype in 1839, inventors were active in developing the medium further to make it more accessible to photographers, scientists, and artists. Frederic Scott Archer, the English sculptor and photographer, introduced collodion (a solution of guncotton in ether, or alcohol and ether) to photography and offered his wet-collodion process free to the public. He published the new technique in easy-to-follow steps in The Chemist in 1851.10 European artists followed closely the development of photography and utilized the medium to document their trips. It became an important tool for nineteenth-century artists because it helped them in depicting accurate renditions for their new realism.

The veracity of the camera, however, was unflattering to some people, who wanted portraits of themselves because photographs did not give them the pleasing effect

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10 The collodion was discovered in 1847 by an American, Maynard, and was first used for medical purposes. Frederic Scott Archer published a book in 1852 describing the variation of his wet-collodion process. This negative on glass image was then printed on paper coated with albumen (eggwhite), ammonium chloride, and silver nitrate. The French photographer Louis-Desiré Blanquart-Evrard had introduced the albumen paper in 1950 as an improvement on the calotype printing. The combination of wet-collodion process and albumen printing produced an easier way to carry the photographs and a more economic way to photograph because by cleaning and re-coating the glass, the photographer would use the same piece of glass to make several exposures (Coe 32-5).
of painting. The photographic artists were still unable to correct the imperfections of nature and portrayed the subject too truthfully. For example, in the early days of daguerreotype portraiture, Queen Victoria voiced her concern and asked the painter Alfred Chalon whether his profession was threatened by photography. He assured her with his French accent: “photographie can’t flatter” (qtd. in Gernsheim 96). People who wanted portraits of themselves, therefore, demanded from the painter a realistic and pleasing rendition. Such was the case of Mlle. Durand, an actress at the theatre of the Palais Royal, who refused to buy the portrait Gérôme painted of her because the painting did not faithfully reproduce her traits. Although the portrait was judged as “full of charm and talent,” the court decided in Durand’s favor for the reason that she was not closely represented in the painting (Ackerman, *Life* 40). It is unlikely that the artist could not paint a close enough resemblance of Durand, but rather that his academic training, which idealized beauty, prevented him from copying nature. He copied what “he saw.”

Indeed, Gérôme embraced the truth introduced by photography that allowed him to paint in a more exacting manner and did not shy from borrowing new poses from photographs to reproduce in his paintings. For example, he acquired a photograph made of Gleyre’s painting of *Evening* (Paris, Musée du Musée de Louvre), which became the source of his painting *Prisoner* (Nantes, Musée des Beaux-Arts) of 1861 (Hauptman 1:138; Edidin 115). He also requested Nadar to photograph a model in a pose he envisioned. Nadar photographed the model Marie Christine Leroux (*figure 3*), known as Roux (1820-1863), for him in 1861. Gérôme used it for his *Phryné before the Areopagus* (Hamburg, Hamburger Kunsthalle), which was exhibited the same year in the Salon
(Rionnet 48). The picture by Nadar depicts a frontal view of a nude woman standing in a *contrapposto* stance. She turns her head to the left and wraps her right arm around her face while the other arm is raised to hold her wrist next to her left ear. The nude is shot in front of a black background that is highlighted on the top behind her dark hair. A black and white blanket under the woman’s feet echoes her dark pubic hair. This last detail was omitted in Gérôme’s *Phryné*, who also had a golden necklace, a bracelet, a turban, and a pair of white sandals. Gérôme also used the same pose depicted from the back, which could be from another photograph, in his *A Roman Slave Market* (Baltimore, The Walters Art Gallery) in 1884. Utilizing the image in such a manner shows the artist’s tendency to disregard the old method and adopt the new technology for an accurate rendition of his art.

Other nude poses of women had been commercially available in Paris since the 1840s. The photographers of the period had images in stock to cater to the elite who could afford expensive pictures and for artists who needed them for their paintings. For example, Delacroix painted some nudes based on photographic images produced by Eugene Durieu (1800-1874). Such images were so much in demand that a photographer in Paris suggested opening photography studios specializing exclusively in nudes (Nazarieff 7). A photograph (whether daguerreotype, calotype, albumen, stereograph, carte de visit, or postcard) allowed the artist to observe the details that were otherwise unnoticed and to manipulate the form and proportion to suit his vision. The latest invention became especially important to Gérôme, when he shifted his style to a new
“ethnographic” genre, which he developed further when he started painting the Eastern dancer.

Watching closely the works of contemporary artists and the response they evoked from the critics and public also contributed to Gérôme’s resolve to explore the East. In other words, the artist, who grew up in a family of businessmen, utilized the latest technology, adapted to the new demand, and refocused his talent and style to follow the vogue of his time. Of course, exploring the East and unveiling its secrets grew to be a fashionable excursion for the nineteenth-century bourgeois society.

The East as Ideology and Trend

The Western interest in the East started during the Roman Empire and reached its zenith in the nineteenth century after the European colonization of parts of Asia, Africa, and the Levant. The French campaign to the East was perhaps the result of a political decision to stop the struggle over the revolution and divert attention in another direction. It began in 1798 and was realized through Napoleon Bonaparte’s search for glory, his political desire to prevent the English control of the route to India, and his scientific interest in discovering the remains of old Eastern civilizations (Clayton 15).

Bonaparte found his utopian ideal and freedom in the East. On 3 November 1803, Augustin Laurent de Rémusat, one of Napoleon’s assistants, fell ill during a visit to Pont de Briques, near Boulogne. Napoleon summoned his wife, Claire de Rémusat (1780-
1821), the Lady-in-Waiting to Empress Josephine, to take care of her husband. During one of their dinners together, Napoleon told her about his love for the East. She recalls him saying:

In Egypt, I found myself freed from the wearisome restraints of civilization. I dreamed all sorts of things, and I saw how all that I dreamed might be realized. I created a religion; I pictured myself on the road to Asia, mounted on an elephant, with a turban on my head, and in my hand a new Koran, which I should compose according to my own ideas. I would have the combined experience of two worlds with which to set about my enterprise; I was to have ransacked, for my own advantage, the whole domain of history; I was to have attacked the English power in India, and renewed my relations with old Europe by my conquest. The time I passed in Egypt was the most delightful part of my life, for it was the most ideal. (I: 149-50)

This utopianism inspired many Western artists who were hired or motivated to propagate and glorify the events of Bonaparte’s military success, and to document the monumental ruins of the old civilization. Travelers to the East began also to highlight the cultural differences between the East and West, and their fantasies about the desert, harem, and the mysterious East were recorded in a new style. They presented their work

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11 Claire de Vergennes became the wife of Augustin Laurent de Rémusat in 1796. He was appointed the Prefect of the Palace of Napoleon in 1802. Soon after, Claire became Dame pour Accompagner (Lady-in Waiting) to Josephine, but the title was later changed to Dame du Palais (Lady of the Palace) (de Rémusat xxvi).
in a powerful eyewitness style, resulting from their interpretation of the significant events which inspired them.

This idealized method started with the propaganda paintings of Antoine-Jean Gros (1771-1835), who won a competition initiated by Napoleon to commemorate his glorious and heroic deeds during the Egyptian and Syrian campaigns, and to advance the rationale of the expanding French Empire. *The Battle of Nazareth* (Nantes, Musée des Beaux-Arts) of Gros in 1801, followed by *General Bonaparte Visiting the Pesthouse at Jaffa* (Paris, Musée de Louvre) in 1804, and the *Battle of Aboukir* (Versailles, Musée Nationale du Château) in 1806 established the moral superiority of the West in the eyes of its people (Siegfried 252). To render an accurate composition for his historic paintings, the painter depended on information from the military records and notes, sketches, and paintings of Vivant Denon, a witness to the events who accompanied Bonaparte to Egypt. Gros also had to include references to authentic everyday items, such as Eastern clothes and weapons. In 1804, Gros wrote to Denon, who became the director of the museums of France and the obligatory advisor to artists who were asked to paint episodes of Bonaparte’s campaign:

> I have the greatest need to have in my studio the Eastern cloths, covers, and weapons you so obligingly offered to lend me […] An artist benefits immensely from painting as close as possible to life […] May I remind you to send that blue tinged damask sword, which in a well-practiced hand would whisk enemy heads off like as much stubble. (qtd. in Lemaire 105)
Therefore, these stylish paintings were made authoritative through close adherence to the data, outlines, and items supplied by the government or private collections. The administration also restricted the size of the painting to a mural canvas and life-size figures that show detailed action on the battleground and highlight the differences between the two combating sides. Of course, exotic iconography and accurate typographic elements were mandatory to establish convincing visual rhetoric. For example, Nazareth, Mount Tabor, and Cana are included in Gros’ painting The Battle of Nazareth. However, these were also used for political propaganda. Todd Porterfield points out that the typographical aspect in The Battle of Nazareth induced a Christian claim to the land via an evocation of the life of Christ and his miracles (47). Such a suggestion highlights the importance of driving the intruders (Arabs and Turks) out of the Christian holy sites. It also reveals a plan to broaden the gap between Eastern and Western cultures to justify the Western presence in the East. Edward Said explains this Western attitude towards the East and the ideological differences between the cultures as follows: “There are Westerners, and there are Orientals. The former dominate; the latter must be dominated, which usually means having their land occupied […]” (Orientalism 36). Although Said’s point was made in response to the later English occupation of Egypt, his remark applies correctly to the French invasion as well. To imply this standpoint, Gros switched the position of the French troops and their opponents on the battleground, so that the Western army becomes the guardian of the holy sites.

Such visual tricks and other hints at the “barbaric customs” of the adversary reinforced the “civilized” manners of the Christian army and established a moral contrast
between Western and Eastern civilizations. This genre of historic paintings, which applied the methods of slanted reportage to emotions and actions, also started an artistic strategy based on new ideology. The authentic rendering of the subjects and paintings in a scientific style conforming accurately and correctly to record the movements, color, light, atmosphere, and costumes also became the official criteria for paintings accepted in the Salon (Schlenoff 154). Of course, young artists like Gérôme embraced this new ideology and adopted it in their art. For example, the 1864 *The Reception of the Siamese Ambassadors At Fountainbleau* (figure 4), which shows a line of Siamese ambassadors bowing in supplication in front of Napoleon III and the Empress Eugénie, reveals Gérôme’s absolute belief in the supremacy of the white race.

This biased style and its focused message affected other genres of paintings, such as the representation of exotic women and the female nude. The paintings—*The Grande Odalisque* (Paris, Musée de Louvre) of 1814, the *Odalisque with a Slave* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Fogg Museum) of 1839 by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780-1867), and *The Death of Sardanapalus* (Paris, Musée de Louvre) of 1827 by Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863)—all depict a fantasized Eastern woman, including authentic items, such as jewelry, instruments, and fabrics from the East. Such paintings were inspired by the popularity of previous paintings and fashioned by artists from a shared culture, background, and beliefs in the same principles. In other words, the artists who depicted the sensuality of the East and envisioned its women in this way invoked their ideas by using the same convincing methods and ideological criteria as the historical paintings.
Ingres and Delacroix were not obliged to conform to specific instructions or report actual events; therefore, their paintings attracted public attention and caused many old (and recent) discussions regarding the technical merit and the objectivity of the artists. Some nineteenth-century critics commented on the technical deficiency, for example, the distortion of Ingres’ female nudes and the exaggerated intensity of the flesh of Delacroix’s stripped women (Huyghe 165; Rosenblum 87). I think that the masters’ approach not only aimed to emphasize the feminine body to satisfy the sexuality of the bourgeois male spectator and reflect the concern of their bourgeois society, but also to signal their power over women and their superiority over the East by subjugating its women. In this regard, while Ingres elongated and brightened the body of the odalisque to heighten her sexual appeal, Delacroix presented the foreign woman distorted in many poses so that her sexuality became entangled with death and destruction. Such manipulation paralleled the handling of Gros’ “serious” subject and served just as effectively. In sum, French art presented the Western army defeating the strong Eastern warriors and conquering their women as prizes for the victorious men’s sexual fantasies.

The Eastern woman was indeed reconstructed and revealed again in Delacroix’s masterpiece *The Women in Algiers* (Paris, Musée de Louvre) in 1834, which introduced the spectator to an “imagined” scene of an early “documentary” genre expected from the traveling artist. This “true painter of the nineteenth century” (Baudelaire II: 440) claimed that he saw the Algerian women he painted and executed a scene from his personal
account of his journey in the colonized country. Delacroix’s easy access to these women in private may be questionable but he created a convincing rendition of their leisurely time. The Algerian writer Assia Djebar suggests that the “stolen glance” in the painting, indicated in the servant’s gesture of withdrawing the curtains to reveal the private section, tells about the attitude of the painter and the way he acquired his theme.

*The Women in Algiers* caused a debate not over its authenticity, but because “it reminds us that ordinarily we have no right to be there” (137). The voyeuristic aspect of the image allows the spectator a powerful position. If Delacroix had succeeded in visiting the harem, he had done it as a “thief” who violated the hospitality of the East and spied to represent an unauthorized version of Algerian women. Therefore, the artist “recorded” the Algerian women as he “saw” them and forwarded the plundered, isolated, and “out of context” information to the public. Delacroix's painting, however, captured the veracity of Gros and the rest of Napoleon’s painters, and culminated in the artistic and critical practices applied to representations of the East during the first half of the nineteenth century. It also prompted a “true to nature” genre adopted by many artists who traveled to the East and represented exotic aspects of its culture in their arts. The demand for this type of representation and the public response to its message may have influenced Gérôme’s decision to travel to the East for inspiration when he was searching for artistic revelation as well as an academically approved subject matter for his paintings. He

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12Delacroix left Toulon for Morocco on 11 January 1832. He arrived in Tangiers and stayed there till 5 March. After ten days, he left for Meknès, arriving 15 March and stayed there till 12 April. Next, he left Tangier and visited Spain from 16 to 28 May. From 10 to 28 June, Delacroix spent time in Oran and Algiers. Then, he was back in Toulon on 5 July of the same year (Huyghe 535).
perhaps expected to find extraordinary surprises that could channel his artistic ability to a new direction.

**Gérôme’s Perception of the Exotic Dancer**

Gérôme’s dream of the East culminated in many trips to the ancient lands. He made four trips to Turkey, two to Spain and Algiers, one to Greece, and four to Egypt, Palestine and Syria. His trip to Egypt and Syria in 1862 linked him with these poetical and delightful lands, which renewed his acquaintance with nature and supplied him with an excitement of the novel and the unknown. Eastern lands, peoples, items, and customs stimulated the creativity of the young artist, who often regretted leaving behind the many intriguing attractions that he could not sketch when moving from town to town (Moreau-Vauthier 164-5). One of these attractive subjects was the *almeh*, the dancer whom the artist met in Egypt.

As a painter who knew the value of an exotic female to his art, Gérôme wanted to meet the *almeh* to represent her in his work. He and his traveling friends read about and observed the *almeh* in the writings and paintings of contemporary artists. Théophile Gautier, for example, detailed the dancer in his 1845 novel *Une Nuit de Cléopâtre* (“*One of Cleopatra’s Nights*”). His description of Cleopatra must have excited young artists with its use of salacious language and the erotic imagery applied to the powerful woman:

> Her beautiful arms, rounded like the handles of an alabaster vase, shook out bunches of sparkling notes; and her *crotali* pratted with ever-increasing volubility. Poised on the pink tips of her little feet, she
approached swiftly to graze the forehead of Meïamoun with a kiss: —then she recommenced her wondrous art, and flitted around him; now backward-leaning, with head reversed, eye half closed, arms lifelessly relaxed, locks uncurled and loose-hanging like a Baccante of Mount Maenalus; now again, active, animated, laughing, fluttering—more tireless and capricious in her movements than the pilfering bee. Heart consuming love, —sensual pleasure, —burning passion, —youth inexhaustible and ever-fresh, —the promise of bliss to come: she expressed all! (63)

Gérôme may also have seen the albumen print images of the dancer that were shot in Roger Fenton’s studio in London after his trip to the Crimea. This British artist, though five years older than Gérôme, may have met him and the rest of the Néo-Grecs in Paris where he studied painting. Gordon Baldwin concludes that Fenton may have been a student of Delaroche before he left for Italy and then of Gleyre’s (8). Fenton acquired his reputation as a prominent photographer during the Crimean war and exhibited his photographs for Queen Victoria and Prince Albert and for Napoleon III and Eugénie in 1855. He may have renewed his connection with the French painters when he visited the Emperor and started exhibiting regularly in Paris (16). The interest of Fenton in Eastern subjects was greatly influenced by French art, especially that of Denon and Delacroix. The paintings of both artists were very much known through exhibitions and publications. Some of Fenton’s images of the dancing girls (figures 23-27) were also exhibited at the Photographic Society in Scotland in 1858 and at the Photographic Society in London in 1859 (83). The *Egyptian Dancing Girl* (figure 23), *Reclining*
Odalisque (figure 27), *Pasha and Bayadère* (figure 24) may have inspired Gérôme and his friends to seek the dancer of the East as well.

Paul Lenoir, Gérôme’s student, who accompanied him in 1868 on his third trip to the East noted their encounter with the dancer of the East in his book *Le Fayoum, le Sinai, et Petra*:

> Not wishing to lose time, we applied to the dragoman, who, according to directions easily obtained, conducted us to the quarter where the dancers lived—the *almehs*, whom we had seen in a mirage, and of whom we dreamed every evening and sometimes in the afternoon.

> After numerous detours among small, dirty houses, we arrived at a little door, through which Arabs of all ages, sexes, and sizes were going in and out. It was not the mysterious sanctum we had imagined, guarded by fantastic beings adorned with sabers and costumes of brilliant colors; entrance was free to all, and we went in without the slightest formality of an announcement.¹³

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¹³ “*[M]ais quelques-uns de la petite bande ne voulant pas perdre leurs frais, s’adressèrent au drogman, qui, sur des indications faciles à obtenir, nous conduisit immédiatement dans le cartier où habitaient les danseuses que nous voulions tant voir, ces femmes dont le mirage nous avait soutenus jusqu’ici au milieu des épreuves et des plus grandes privations depuis Paris; ces almées, enfin, dont nous rêvions tous les soirs et quelquefois l’après-midi.

Après de nombreux detours entre des maisons basses et malpropres, nous arrivions à une petite porte par laquelle entraient et sortaient une quantité d’Arabes de tous le âges, de tous les sexes et de tous les tailles. Cette porte, par son animation, semblait être un véritable passage.

Ce n’était pas cet antre mystérieux que nous nous étions imaginé, gardé par des êtres fantastiques ornés des sabres et de costumes aux brillantes couleurs: c’était
Lenoir’s remarks revealed the truth about the fantasized East. Western artists were intrigued by the challenge they expected and the adventure they prepared themselves to explore. They dreamt of the East of Mozart and Byron, which challenged them. Edward Said points out that visiting the East was not always appreciated because it contradicted the fantasy. He analyses the disappointment of some Western artists and notes that some of them regretted visiting the East because by doing so they lost their imagined version only to replace it with a memory (100). In this regard, the poets Gérard de Nerval and Victor Hugo expressed their frustration at such a loss in their writings. The real East betrayed their dreams and disputed their imaginations. Such Romantic creators of beauty were not interested in the modern East; what they wanted was the exotic unknown that could boost their creativity and enhance their vision (Nerval 93; Hugo 580). Gustave Flaubert, conversely, like Delacroix, reveled in the East because he applied to it a complicated reality that he fashioned from his memory. He describes the dance of Kuchuk Hanem, a dancer from Damascus, Syria, who was “lighter in coloring than an Arab,” whom he met in Esna, Egypt in 1850:

She rises first on one foot, then on the other–marvelous movement: when one foot on the ground, the other moves up and across in front of the shin-bone– the whole thing with a light bound. I have seen this dance on old Greek vases. (115)

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"l’entrée libre la plus libérale, et nous y pénétrions sans nous faire annoncer le moins du monde" (Lenoir 98).

14 Flaubert calls the dancer Ruchiouk in his published memoir rather than Kuchuk (little princess).
The fact that Flaubert contemplated that Kuchuk was dancing the old dance painted on the ancient vase justified and beautified her dance because it replicated the art of the ancients. It was precisely this connection that urged Flaubert to accept the foreign dance steps without comparing them to contemporary Western dance. Also, after a steamy “coup” with the prostitute, who made him feel “like a tiger” because “her cunt felt like rolls of velvet as she made [him] come,” he fantasized as if they were “Judith and Holofernes sleeping together” (118). This particular imagery explains that his feeling of danger enhanced his excitement, and the sexual experience with an Eastern prostitute became an adventure that charged the writer’s imagination and evoked in him all kinds of myth and reality he recognized from man’s history.

Likewise, Lenoir and Gérôme must have fantasized or waited for a clandestine possibility like Delacroix’s to fire their imagination and bring back a unique interpretation of their experience to the Salon. In addition, Gérôme was concerned with the commercial aspects and the response of the art market to his paintings, must have directed him to choose his subjects carefully. In pursuit of commercial success, the artist also formed a close relationship with the publisher Adolphe Goupil (1806-1893) when he married his daughter Marie (1842-1912), a “rare beauty” and “charming grace” (Lafont-Couturier, Gérôme 101). She not only was eighteen years younger than Gérôme but also brought a dowry of a hundred thousand francs in 1863, which also may have served as a consideration for the groom. Although Goupil had liked the work of Gérôme since the time he started working with Delaroche, a closer connection must have been formed through the marriage, a connection that brought him more fame and security (Renié 165).
The firm of Goupil started in 1829 as a collaboration between a printing shop in Boulevard Montmartre, in the middle of Paris, and the art dealer Henry Rittner (1802-1847); it grew to become famous for its fine and affordable prints. They used engraving, lithography, etching, and other printing methods to reproduce and sell the art works of both famous old and new painters. This method allowed the art works to be reproduced in different sizes and forms, which allowed easier and more economic distribution. The paintings were reproduced as large as the actual canvas and as small as a carte de visite. Soon after, the company developed a new system that employed photography for faster and more accurate renditions of the arts, which established its authority in the commercial art field. They also started purchasing original works to obtain exclusive rights of reproduction and attract more clients by exhibiting these precious works of art in the firm’s own galleries. With growing profit, the Goupil company started to commission art works painted especially for the reproduction and distribution not only in the domestic market but also the international market. The demand for art reproductions led to the opening of branches and warehouses around the world, including America, England, and Egypt (Lafont-Couturier, *Works for Goupil* 13-4). Buyers everywhere were pleased with the quality of the Goupil’s reproductions because they were “of great excellence” that “have rarely been surpassed” (Rewald 1). The format, size, and quality contributed, then, to the prosperity of the firm and the artists connected to it.

The connection of Gérôme to the Goupil company also benefited him by supplying the photographic equipment and the photographer needed for his travels. His brother-in-law, Albert Goupil (1840-1884), a photographer, painter, and collector of
Eastern paraphernalia, traveled with Gérôme to the East several times and photographed aspects of Eastern life that include the dancers and landscape. These photographs became available to Gérôme beginning in 1862 (Hering 142). Even after the death of Albert and Adolphe Goupil, Gérôme kept his special relationship with the new partner, Léon Boussod (1826-1896), whose son Étienne (1857-1918) married Jeanne Elizabeth (1863-1914), the eldest of Gérôme’s children, in 1882. Boussod started his partnership with Goupil in 1856 and changed the firm’s name to Boussod, Valadon & Cie in 1884 (Lafont-Couturier, *Works for Goupil* 16). Gérôme’s ties with this commercial firm must also have influenced his sensitivity to choosing popular subjects for his art. The reputation of the *almeh* her fashions, and movements earned her a prominent place on Gérôme’s list of popular subjects.

Gérôme painted around sixteen images of the *almeh* between 1863 and 1897, using her as the focal point of his composition. He also included her in a few others, for instance, the 1885 *The Pyrrhic Dance* (lost), the 1886 *Terrace of the Seraglio* (private collection), and the 1897 *Entry of Christ into Jerusalem* (Vessoul, Musée Garret). Five of the main paintings show her entertaining customers by dancing (one in 1863, three in 1875 [one of these is a replica], one in 1885), one of her playing chess (1870), one of her singing (1880), two close ups (one of them a three-quarter portrait [1882] and the other framed by her window [1887]); the other seven depict her either sitting, standing, or communicating with a customer close to some architectural setting. The latter were
The dancers of *Dance of the Almeh* (1863) and *Sabre Dance in a Café* (1875) were also cast as bronze statuettes by Antonin Mercié (1845-1919), commissioned by Adolphe Goupil around 1875. The 15.24 inches tall (40 cm) sculpted dancer was sold in a limited edition (Rionnet 50).

The first and most famous of all of these paintings is *Dance of the Almeh* (figure 5). It depicts a voluptuous young dancer in a *khan* (“rural coffee shop”) clapping her *sunouj* (“finger cymbals”) and moving to the sounds of the *rababah* (“violin with one or two strings”), *darbakah* (“a handheld drum”), and *nay* (“flute”) of the local musicians behind her. Her hips form a *déhanchement* position as her head leans toward the audience of seven *bashi-bazouks*, who are identified by their elaborate headgear. The dancer stands bare-footed on a casually arranged two-tone striped rug next to her discarded slippers. Her thin, gauzy garment is pulled up to reveal her belly, navel, stomach, nipples, and arms. She wears trousers of pink taffeta, wide and pleated like a

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15 My observations rely on the Gerald Ackerman *catalogue raisonné* of the paintings of Jean Léon Gérôme. While the paintings in the museums are accessible, the lost ones can only be accessed from the information provided in the catalogue. I will indicate the date of each painting during the discussion.

16 Ackerman included the pedestal of the dancer in his measurement and catalogued the height of the earlier, *The Almeh*, as 20 inches (50 cm), and the latter one, *The Sword Dancer* as 25.5 inches (65.2 cm) (308).

17 The *bashi-bazouk* and the *arnaut* were the descendants of the Ottaman irregular mercenary and Albanian soldiers who were imported by Muhammad Ali. They wear an elaborate head wrap that can sometimes be decorated with a variety of tiny colored tassels. They wear white skirt-like bottoms or a pair of *Shirwal* (poofy pants). These soldiers were neutralized years before Gérôme’s first visit to Egypt. They functioned as decorative ornamental figures around mosques and important Egyptian monuments during the second half of the nineteenth century (Edidin 121).

18 This type of rug is really a blanket, which may be used as a rug. Still used in Arab countries and favored for its warmth and durability since it is made of natural wool, it also has traditional colors of brown, beige and white that is arranged in an asymmetrical design.
skirt, which envelop her legs from the hips to the ankle. She wears a striped yellow-gold belt around her hips, a sleeveless yellow satin vest below her breasts, and an off-white veil on her head. She adorns herself with bracelets, earrings, a strand of golden coins on her forehead, and strings of sequins on her long, dark hair.

The audiences of the almeh are all men. The group of the seven men on the left is fashioned from two models. One of them poses variously to represent five of the guests who vary in the color of their pants, footwear, and in one instance, age. Although the colors of their clothes are mostly primary, the combinations of their arrangements are vibrant and, thus, intensify their look. The three musicians on the right side are also based on a single model who, in one instance, stands when playing the flute, and in the second instance, sits cross-legged on the ground, while playing the drum and the violin. The same model also appears bending over the hearth in the background, and sitting on the step smoking a pipe. This group is less colorful but also varies in the earthy colored outfits that represent the native garbs. The two groups contrast with each other in their appearance, activity, behavior, and arrangement. The guests are located near an intricately carved door that reveals the streets and buildings of Cairo, symbolizing an exit from the enclosed café, while the natives are connected more to the inner side of the architecture.

The dancer in the middle is not only bright and shiny but also centralized between the two groups. Her pathway to the back door is blocked by the native smoker in the background, and means of receiving fresh air is blocked by a bird cage that served also as a chair for a costumer who has just left, leaving his shishah (“pipe”) on the left. The
design of this composition implies that the dancer is surrounded by elements from her life that she cannot escape. Her entrapment is echoed by the expression on her face, her uncomfortable dance pose, and the gravity of the weight that fastens her to the ground. She looks sad, detached from her dance movements, and seems dissatisfied with her surroundings. Perhaps the many guns that hang on the wall of the café affected her gloomy mood and jeopardized the spiritual involvement with her dance, or she may have been obliged to perform a dance she did not like. It is conceivable that this dancer does not dance from joy but from duty.

Kuchuk admitted to Flaubert that she disliked dancing one of the dances, called the Bee Dance, which she performed for him, Maxim Du Camp, and their dragoman, Joseph. This dance was presented for their eyes only because she sent away the local guests, closed the door, and blindfolded her musicians with dark veils or turbans. The Bee Dance implied the existence of a bee that was stinging the dancer under her clothes. The dancer stripped her clothes piece by piece in search for the insect (Flaubert 117). Such a performance may be considered an early form of striptease performed especially for Western male tourists.

Performing to satisfy Western men and provide them with what they expected must have been a draining task for the dancers to endure. Therefore, these women must have found it difficult at times to hide their feelings about the obligation to please their customers, a situation very well illustrated in the painting of Gérôme. The pose of the performer in Dance of the Almeh is also described in Flaubert’s notes on Azizeh, the dark-skinned almeh he met in Aswan. She performed in a small earthen hut outside of
the city but distinguished herself by wearing a European-cut dress that highlighted the moves of her neck. Sliding her neck back and forth and sideways on her vertebrae frightened Flaubert because it mimicked “a terrifying effect of decapitation.” Flaubert was not impressed by the Western costume nor the dance movements and considered Azizeh “wild” and “savage” in comparison to the “formal” style of Kuchuk (121).

The dance of Azizeh, however, may well have inspired the position of the neck chosen by Gérôme for his dancer in Dance of the Almeh. Perhaps the artist and his friends saw Azizeh on more than one occasion during the four months they spent traveling between Damietta (north of Cairo) and Philae (Island in Aswan, Upper Egypt) in 1856. Egyptologists John Baines and Jaromir Málek describe the island of Philae as the most romantic tourist attraction in the nineteenth century. The important location, ancient gates and temples, and for example, the Temple of Isis and the Temple of Hathor, attracted Eastern and Western tourists (73). Therefore, the island also attracted the dancers and their families to relocate there and fashion their performances according to the travelers’ tastes.

Paul Lenoir describes another enthusiastic dancer, Hasné, who performed for Gérôme and his friends in Fayoum during their trip in 1868. He writes:

The artist did not wait to be urged; at the first sound of the darabouka, Hasné planted herself boldly in the middle of the tent. […] At first, slow and cadenced in her movements, the danseuse scarcely moved from the spot to which she seemed bound by her feet; then the rhythm of the music accelerating a little, imperceptible and hasty steps succeeded the incredible
inflections of her body and the almost convulsive movements that form the basis of the dance of the Almehs. As the musicians increased the time of the step, her gestures, contortions, and the least movement of the arms and head assumed a more feverish and savage character. (104-5)\(^\text{19}\)

This account, although written to portray the dancer the travelers met four years after the painting *Dance of the Almeh*, describes her accurately. The dancer stands heavy on the ground to enable her to contract the muscles of her midriff, hips and neck. Her dance depends on isolating different parts of the body and controlling the muscles in a rhythmic way. The dancer’s position in the *Dance of the Almeh* may have imitated this contraction of her body where she fixed herself on the ground and allowed her head to move slowly. Gérôme may have favored this pose because he disliked depicting the female with her head straight up. All the nude females had their heads tilted in the paintings that preceded the exhibition of 1864 in which Gérôme’s painting of the almeh appeared for the first time. He also used this style as a technique to direct the gaze of the female away from the spectators, for example, *A Greek Interior* (lost, 1850), *Summer* (Ohio, Cleveland Museum of Art, 1850), *The Idylle* (France, Brest, Musée de Brest, 1852). The body type of the almeh recalls the young girl in *The Cock Fight* with her

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\(^{19}\) “L’artiste ne se fit pas prier; aux premiers accords du darbouka et des violins, Hasné se planta tout d’une pièce aux milieu de la tente. [...] D’abord lente et cadencée dans ses movements, la danseuse se déplaçait à peine de l’endroit où elle semblait attachée par les pieds; puis le rythme de la musique s’accélérait un peu, des pas imperceptibles et pressées vinrent seconder les incroyables inflexions auxquelles tout son corps se livrait, déhanchements presque convulsifs qui forment un peu près tout le fond de la dance des almées. A mesure que les musicians pressaient la cadence du pas, les geste de la danseuse, ses controsions, les moindres mouvements de ses bras, de sa tête prenaient un caractère plus febrile et plus sauvage” (Lenoir 104-5).
alabaster flesh, bodyweight, and diverted eyes. In other words, Gérôme borrowed the stylistic elements applied to the figure in *Dance of the Almeh* from his earlier paintings. Unlike Delacroix, he did not deviate much from his classic poses to fit the Eastern motif and represent his interaction with the exotic dancer, but he painted it by utilizing an already approved form from his existing artworks.

The artist repainted two versions of the dancing *almeh* in 1875 in *Sabre Dance in the Café* (figure 6) and *Sabre Dance before a Pasha* (figure 7). The pose and gesture of the dancer in the two later versions are identical, but they differ in the venue and the occasion of the dance. The dancer of the first painting is set in a local café, where she performs for anyone who drops in, while the second one shows a private entertainment for the pasha and his guests. In the middle of this canvas, the *almeh* stands on her tiptoes with the left leg forward. She balances a sword on her head, carries a similar one pointing down in her right arm and rests her left arm on her waist. A large blue and golden-edged veil wraps around her hips and a small orange vest joins under her breasts. A necklace of golden coins similar to the ones on her forehead covers her chest. The dancer’s face is covered with a gauze green veil that moves behind her in a serpentine shape. Her belly and arms are also enveloped in a white gauze undergarment that allows the details of her body to show through. On the floor, behind the *almeh*, sit three musicians and a male guest stretched on a bed while being served by a local servant. A guest on the top of the back steps enters through the door, which reveals a view of Cairo. A water container is located on the right edge on the frame and an unseen window on the
top left allows rays of light to brighten the arms, breast, golden jewelry, and belly of the dancer.

The second version of the painting *Sabre Dance before a Pasha* takes place in the house of the *pasha*, who appears with his guest of honor on the left. The *pasha* sits crossed-legged on the *mastabah* (“elevated area”) in his *mashrabiyyah* (“carved wood”) chair under a carved arch, smoking his *nargilah*. Six guests position themselves behind him and four *bashi-bazouks*, two on each side, rest on the carpet under the elite group. An attentive monkey watches the dancer next to the group in the front. The size and architecture of the house, the intricate woodwork, the high ceiling, and the big chandeliers reveal the wealth of the *pasha* and his status. The marble walls and the items that are displayed behind his guests reflect the luxury and richness of the owner and the skills of their designers. On a floral carpet on the other side of the room assemble eight musicians playing their instruments: *rababah*, *nay*, *darbakah*, and tambourine. One of them stands up and leans forward in an enthusiastic singing gesture while beating on his *darbakah*. To the right side of this singer, a group of *almehs* gathers, plays music, sings, and claps for the dancer. This group and the musicians seem more enthusiastic and more in tune with the dancer than those of the *Dance of the Almeh*. The dancer in this group of paintings seems more assertive and comfortable. She faces the spectator and seems to use her step to walk around. Although people surround her, she does not look trapped. Indeed, the weapons in her possession boost her confidence, not only to mesmerize the *pasha* and his entourage, but also to gaze at the foreign spectators.
Gérôme’s choice of elevating the body of the dancer on her toes and eliminating her slippers in *Sabre Dance in the Café* and *Sabre Dance before a Pasha* grants another element to her tempting allure. She becomes a chic, mysterious young woman, who seduces not only with her nakedness and dance but also with her elegance. Gérôme also improved her proportionally; she now looks slender and more fashionable in her well designed costume, rich colors, and expensive jewelry. Her femininity tones down the harshness of the weapons she carries, which also become part of her attraction.

*Sabre Dance in the Café* and *Sabre Dance before a Pasha* introduce a version of the dance that is rarely represented in the reportage of women’s dance. The pose of the dancer in these paintings is mistakenly translated in Western interpretations of Eastern dance milieux as a representation of the tough characters of the dancer who defies and diminishes the male by dancing with his weapon. In fact, the dancer with the swords is glorifying her guest by borrowing his possessions and performing with them to draw attention to his status. This opinion is supported in Flaubert’s writing about a similar instance. Kuchuk recognized the writer and singled him out when she improvised a dance routine with his *tarboush* (“fez”) on her head (116).

To the Europeans who were accustomed to strict dances such as ballet, the dance of the East, whether performed by playing the cymbals or balancing the swords, was exotic. The notes of Lenoir and the paintings of Gérôme reveal the painter’s exposure to many performances during his trips. Therefore, Gérôme was one of the early painters who educated the European public visually on the variety of Eastern dance. His descriptive method was one of the first to bring the dances of the East closer to Western
viewers and to familiarize them with it. The French public did not see a live performance of this dance until 1889, when Khedive Tawfiq, Ismail Pasha’s son, sent a corps of dancers to the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris (Edidin 133). Gérôme’s paintings also match the descriptions of travelers, such as Lane, Curtis, and Flaubert, who wrote down their observations before Gérôme’s first trip to Egypt. Some of this information on Eastern exoticism, then, was available to artists who intended to visit the East and to those who needed to argue their own observation about one point or another.

The paintings of Gérôme also informed the public about the occasions and locations of this kind of dance. Both the cymbals dance and sword dance were performed indoors. *Baton Dance* (figure 8) painted in 1885 also depicts an indoor performance. This latter dance took place in a corner of a café similar to the one of the *Dance of the Almeh*. The café has an arch in the middle that divides the space into two parts. The performer dances in the middle, in front of the cropped arch on a dark-colored rug. She turns her back to the three bashi-bazouks and on the left there is a foreign guest who wears a local outfit. They sit on a raised dais, and hang their weapons on the wall behind them. One of guests puts his narghilah aside to play music on a small lute while he watches the dance. The man next to him keeps the rhythm by beating on the ground with his shishah; the third claps, and the fourth utters words of excitement. Beneath this

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20 Muhammad Tawfiq Pasha Ibn Ismail Ibn Ibrahim Ibn Muhammad Ali (1852-1892) was appointed by the Ottoman Sultan in 1879. He replaced his father Ismail (1830-1895), the viceroy of Egypt, from 1863-79, and was known for the grand celebration of the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 (Al-Sayyid Marsot 1-4). Ismail Pasha was also known for commissioning Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901) to compose the Opera *Aida* to inaugurate a new opera house commemorating the opening of the Suez Canal. *Aida* was performed in Cairo in December 1871 (Plantinga 312) but in 1869 Verdi’s *Rigoletto* was performed for the opening of the Khedive Opera House (‘Omar 250).
group, a family member leads with the rhythm of his darbakah while attentively watching the dancer’s moves. Two more guests, one seated and the other reclined, are located in the back room, which shows a water container and a cage-like chair placed on the left. The dancer is dressed in an outfit similar to the almehs of the previous paintings but her gauze underwear is black and she does not wear any jewelry. She covers her face with a veil similar to that of the dancer of Sabre Dance in the Café, and stands sturdy on the ground like the dancer in the Dance of the Almeh. Apparently this dancer has borrowed the baton from one of her guests and made it a part of her exciting performance; or else she grabbed a sugar cane stalk available in the café as a prop for her dance.\footnote{The fellahin of Upper Egypt depended on planting sugar cane as one of the important sources of income. It was common to find stacks of these canes around inhabited areas to use as building material (Flaubert 116; Tucker 21). Sugar cane stalks are still popular in the East as confection treats. It is common to see people chewing the stalk to release the sweet liquid and then suck it. This habit still exists during the sugar cane season in Arab countries.} She supports herself by holding the long stick in both hands as she extends her posterior towards the guests. Her pose is peculiar because the spectator can see her breasts and her belly from an unusual angle. Since her arms are elevated to hold the tip of the stick as she leans forward, the spectator observes her spilling breasts, upper arms, extended posterior, and her belly. This pose is unique to Gérôme because while the body is shown in profile, the dancer’s face is turned to gaze at the spectator. By keeping the green veil that envelops the dancer’s face and hair, Gérôme also retains the mysterious aspect of the Eastern woman that is considered a factor of her otherness.

Although this painting looks as if the artist sketched it quickly, it emphasizes the interaction between the guests and the spectators. The fact that the guests participate in
playing music for the performer draws more attention to the invitation issued by the clapping guest, who looks at the spectators to indicate the fun they may share with him. The emphasis on the sexual aspects of this dance also reduces the sensual aspect of the dance that are revealed in the other paintings, and calls attention to the Eastern dance as a series of sexual movements.

In summary, Gérôme depicted the Eastern dancer in an unprecedented way for the nineteenth century. Perhaps Delacroix’s dancer of the Jewish Wedding in Morocco in 1837 (figure 22) influenced Gérôme’s choice of subject, but not in terms of the setting or occasion of the dance. Delacroix’s entertainer and her group participate in the festivities of their community. Men, women, and young children watch the performer and do not want to miss any of her show. The entertainers are generally dressed in dark skirts and colorful blouses that open to reveal part of their chests. Most of these women are adorned with golden jewelry. Delacroix’s dancer and her group are similar in their physical attraction, apparent sexuality, and their profession. They use the body to entertain and get paid for it. Within the crowd in the Jewish Wedding in Morocco, Delacroix included a man who passes a basket to the guests to pay their share for watching the performance. This gesture indicates that people recognized dancing as a way to earn a living and their willingness to pay for this service. Although the dancer and her group are displayed and available for the viewer, there is no exaggerated gesture supporting the perception of prostitution. Delacroix introduces them as fashionable and distinguished members of their community, because he mixes them with a crowd of all
ages who want them to share in the celebration. The dancers, then, were not only accepted and admired but also instrumental in gathering up members of the community.

On the other hand, Gérôme’s concentration on sexual poses and isolation of the dancer from communal events reveals his own desire. Ironically, he indicated his sexual attraction to Eastern women in the autobiographical notes of his trip to the Egypt, Jerusalem, and Damascus in 1862, a year before he got married. In his book, Moreau-Vauthier included a portion of these notes describing the artist’s sexual attraction to the women he saw at a wedding in Damascus. He wrote:

Many women were seated on rich sofas inside an elegant room smoking the nargileh. Their costumes were opened on the chest and their breasts were covered with thin gauze: this scene would have made it hard to resist even for people who were less desirous than we, who no longer knew to which saint we should worship ….

Gérôme never painted such a scene showing the celebration of these women en famille. The group of women that includes an almeh playing music in the 1886 Terrace of the Seraglio (figure 20) may be the closest interpretation of his glimpse at the attractive women in Damascus. The low cut dress that seemed to inspire the artist for years to come was also depicted in the 1887 painting, The Rose, also known as The Love Token (figure 18), which may represent another almeh; it resembles an unauthorized

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22 Moreau-Vauthier quoted from Gérôme’s notes: “Grand nombre de femmes fumant le narguilé étaient assises sur de riches divans dans des salles d’une architecture très élégante. Leur costume était complètement ouvert sur la poitrine et les seins voilés seulement d’une gaze translucide: spectacle capable d’affriander des gens moins affamés que nous ne l’étions, de sorte que nous ne savions plus à quel saint nous vouer…” (169).
glimpse at a post-lovemaking moment. Such a theme may be a reinterpretation of the aubade ("dawn song"), the song of regret of parting lovers at daybreak, a common motif in world literature (the parting of Romeo and Juliet; or of Troilus and Criseyde).

The Rose depicts a veiled woman on a small wooden balcony in Cairo throwing a red rose to a colorfully dressed bashi-bazouk who carries his rifle on his back as he rides on a red saddle on the back of a light and dark gray horse. Surrounded by two Saluki dogs that witness the interaction, the rider holds the rein with his left arm and extends his right arm up to catch the gift of the woman who leans forward to reveal the roundness of her breasts and low décolleté visible through the opening of the light blue robe. The scene takes place in front of an Islamic façade in an Eastern city. I consider the woman on the balcony an almeh since only ill-reputed woman may initiate such behavior. Also, Gérôme was definitely interested in the institution of prostitution and wanted to present it to other Western male spectators. This Romantic painting, Eastern in its excessive details, reduces the strangeness of the East and familiarizes it because of the recognized iconography and familiar subject matter. In a way it bridges the two cultures and reconstructs the Eastern life style to fit the standards of the Western spectator. In other words, the East and the West were appropriated in a Romantic scene designed to appeal to potential customers.

All the above paintings represent the almeh in motion, dressed in revealing costumes, and posing in a seductive manner. She also has a pleasing complexion and, through her veil, a seductive gaze. In other words, the Eastern dancer of Gérôme not only was exotic and mysterious, but erotic, assertive, and modern as well. Her
appearance, pose, and surroundings assert her sexuality. Gérôme used references to the sexuality of the almeh also in a series of outdoor images where he referred to her as Arab or “Cairene” woman.

Gérôme painted the first of the closeup vertical images of the veiled almeh, which vary between 20” x 16” to 32” x 21.25” in 1872. Cairene Women (figure 12) depicts a standing almeh, a seated one right behind her, and a third one in the shadowy area inside the door. The picture is cropped to frame the opening with a rustic-style stone post and lintel piers, which form the entrance to the house of the almeh. A band of carved rosettes appears at the same level as the breast of the standing almeh. She leans on the right post next to the door and extends her left arm down to support her weight on an adjacent stone. She relaxes in a contrapposto pose, while pushing her left side on the right post and advancing her left foot forward. Her foot pulls a little out of the slippers to reveal her elevated heel. She puts her right arm on her waist and looks straight at the spectator through her veil.

In a like manner, the Arab Girl in Doorway of 1873 (figure 11) depicts the almeh at an entrance similar to that of the Cairene Women. The almeh stands in the same pose, but her left arm circles upward behind her head to cushion it on the stone post. She carries a shishah in her right arm and wears a bracelet. A jug of water and a piece of fabric are placed on the stone bench next to the door. Behind the almeh, and highlighted by another opened area, appears the silhouette of a covered figure, are framed by the architecture and the natural scene in the background. This almeh was painted again in the same year as Souvenir of Cairo (figure 13). She is portrayed in a seated pose on a built-in
bench outside the doorway. The wall she leans on divides the image into her on the bright side and the dark narrow streets on the left where two bashi-bazouks make their way towards her. This almeh wears a couple of bracelets and a hat with a disk-shaped broach on its front. She rests her shishah on her side to pose for the picture. She crosses her right leg over the left one, holds her knee with her clasped hands, and leans her head down and to the side to face the viewer. As in the Cairene Women, the almeh’s heel is also revealed through the relaxed slipper on her foot. This slipper becomes more significant in the Arab Girl with a Waterpipe (figure 9), the last picture in this series.

The almeh in Arab Girl with a Waterpipe sits on a similar bench to that of the Souvenir of Cairo, but the area where she sits is shaded and the streets in the background are lighted. This area shows a man standing behind an almeh who sits on the ground resting her face on her arm while listening to the conversation of another woman at her window with a local man. The almeh in the front appears in a bright light that reveals her pose and her nargilah next to her on the bench. She wears the same pink-red puffy pantaloon, yellow vest, and black gauze as the almeh in Souvenir of Cairo, and adorns her left arm with a few bracelets and a coined necklace on her neck. She holds up her front knee with her clasped hands while the other foot stays down with pointed toes. On the ground sits the almeh’s discarded slipper surrounded by a pink rose and few fallen petals.

The Cairene Women, Arab Girl in Doorway, Souvenir of Cairo, and Arab Girl with Waterpipe represent Gérôme’s impression of Eastern women. He wished the dancers were all available to him like the prostitute he visited. He also placed the same
young model in different poses, reflecting his preferences for the harsh nature of the stone buildings as well as fragile femininity. Also, the contrast between the old architecture and the women’s partial nudity stresses the notoriety associated with them. After all they are the descendant of Cleopatra and the whores of Babylon.

In 1882, Gérôme used another model for Woman of Cairo (figure 10), a similar theme to the previous paintings. This time the veiled almeh poses sideways in front of an arched entranceway and turns her head to face the spectator. She carries a cigarette in her bent left arm, located right under a breast which is revealed, while the other arm rests on her right hip. She stands heavy on the ground in her pointy slippers. On the right of the painting, Gérôme includes a part of the built-in bench and, on the left, a lighted scene in an alley. In the distance, two women lean down over a wall to talk to a man on the lower level street. Behind them and under an archway, a man leads his camel towards the direction of the almeh. The same model will pose again with her veil for Almeh at the Window of her Moucharabieh (figure 14) in 1887. This painting shows a three-quarter pose of the almeh at her intricately carved wooden window. She wears the same red pantaloon, yellow vest, black gauze, and the full coined necklace and bracelet as in the Sabre Dance in the Café. The almeh leans forward on the wooden rail of the window, supporting herself with her right elbow. Her left wrist rests on the rail while her hand extends outside holding a red-pink rose. An earth-colored jug of water stands at the bottom of the right side of the window and a cage with a black bird hangs right above it. This picture can be described as a portrait of the almeh that is less formal than the one that was painted five years earlier. The Oriental, which is listed in the catalogue as An
*Almeh* (figure 15), depicts the *almeh* in a pose that recalls Raphael’s 1515-6 painting of *Baldassare Castiglione* (Paris, Musée de Louvre). The *almeh* in *The Oriental* sits sideways and turns her face, looking straight at the viewer. She wears the same costume of the previous *almeh* and exhibits her richness by adorning herself with a necklace of coins, a bracelet, a pair of looped earrings, and a disk-shaped golden headpiece that has chains with gold coins dangling from it. She crosses her arms to support her breasts. While Castiglione’s aura of dignity contextualizes a gaze that demands respect and connects the nobleman to his spectators, the *almeh* seems to emphasize her otherness, and through her gaze indicates her indifference and lasciviousness.

Another *almeh* was painted as *The Singer*, also known as *The Dancing Girl* (figure 16) in 1880. It represents an *almeh* in a black skirt, red vest, and black gauze dancing on her tiptoes on a colorful carpet. She wears layers of gold coins on her chest, a bracelet on her right arm, a string of golden coins on her head, and a wide golden belt around her hips. This *almeh* carries a tambourine in her right hand and rests the left one on her hip. Her figure divides the picture into two parts. The right side reveals an outdoor scene of a town through the arched windows, and the left is an interior of marble columns and carved double doors. This *almeh* sings and dances to her music. Gérôme attracts attention to her singing by stretching her neck up, emphasizing the muscles of her throat, and opening her mouth. The position of her feet and right hand indicate that the *almeh* is also dancing. This *almeh* is presented as an entertainer who can rely on herself to satisfy her customers. She can come alone to perform in places where owners and customers may pay her fee. Otherwise, one may seek her at her dwelling where she waits
at her door as in Woman of Cairo at her Door of 1897 (figure 17). The almeh poses with both arms on the top of her head on a step in front of a door that has a blue printed curtain. Under a wooden awning that shades her and next to a tall water jug and a pot of red and pink flowers, a light hangs on a nail and a caged black bird sits on the left side of the door. She wears red pantaloons and a vest over her black gauze, a pair of blue slippers, and a bunch of golden chains for a hat. Around her neck, and above her coin necklace, she wears a red choker and has a few bracelets on both hands. This almeh also has a unique large belt wrapped around her hips and over a golden hip scarf. The jewelry and the belt were also used as part of the outfit of Mary Magdalene in the Entry of Christ into Jerusalem (figure 21), which was painted in the same year. This belt may have been purchased in Spain in 1883 during Gérôme’s last trip abroad since it did not appear as part of the almeh’s costume or any of the artist’s earlier paintings. Also it may have been inherited from Adolphe Goupil after his death in 1893, when Marie Gérôme and her sister Blanche Cléry divided the deceased and his wife’s estate between them as the only surviving children. This belt cannot be used for dancing, since it is made of metal and would not allow flexibility for the dancer’s hips.

Gérôme may have manipulated the Eastern fashion but he did not invent the costumes or perceive the Eastern performer different from her identity. Paul Lenoir noted that Gérôme purchased many of the dancer’s and her troupe’s old clothes before they departed. Moreover, Paul Lenoir himself chased one of the young women and bargained with her for her dangling earrings and ended up also with a free pair of her babouchs (“shoes”) as a friendly souvenir (135-7). It seems that the same babouchs
made their way to Gérôme’s paintings of the *almeh*. Painting the exactly detailed costumes was crucial to Gérôme’s method. He presents her wearing a similar outfit to that described by Flaubert of Kuchuk’s: “She squeezes her bare breasts together with her jacket. She puts on a girdle fashioned from a brown shawl with golden stripes […]” (115). Gérôme included many of Flaubert’s descriptions of the clothes, dance movements, and behavior of the *almeh* and the musicians in his paintings. Yet, while Flaubert indicates the change of the costumes for the dance, Gérôme places her in the same garments not only when she entertains but also in her spare time, including any other leisure activity.

*Almeh Playing Chess in a Café* (figure 19) depicts a seated *almeh* and another *fellahah* (“peasant woman”) playing chess in the front room of a café. Here the *almeh* sits across on a cage-like bench and holds her right knee up with her clasped hands. She wears a pair of yellow pantaloons, a red vest, black gauze underwear, and a hat-like kerchief decorated with beads on her head. She covers her neck and chest with a thick coin necklace and carries a *shishah* between the fingers of her left hand. A *bashi-bazouk* officer in red, white, and black outfit stands behind the *fellahah* holding his rifle behind his back with his left arm. He leans further towards the *almeh* on the other side of the chair. The *fellahah* sits at the far end of the chair with her back to the customers in the other room, and turns her body to play with her right hand. She wears a blue dress that is similar to a Roman *chiton* (the female version of a toga) that connects on the shoulders and has a similarly colored veil. Both her arms and a part of her neck are revealed through openings in the dress. She touches the chessboard with her right hand while the
left hand rests on the front of the chair. Behind this group, a dividing arch forms the entrance to the guest room in the back, separating it from the kitchen in the front room. On the left, a local man pours hot water into the sink under the shelves that are stacked with water jugs, teacups, and a nargilah. There is a pot of unused shishahs resting on a small mound of ash. The men in the backroom sit on a raised dais, which runs all around as a bench. The room is lit by a hole in the roof on the left that allows in a stream of diagonal light that reflects off some of the guests. They smoke their shishahs while looking towards the spectator. On the left, a well-defined Western man dressed as a local person directs his gaze both at the game and the viewers.

*Almeh Playing Chess in a Café* differs from the rest of Gérôme’s paintings in its composition. He represents both the almeh and the fellahah with the same model. Therefore, the image maybe read symbolically as a representation of the two sides of the female, similar to Titian’s 1575 *Sacred and Profane Love* (Rome, Galleria Borghese). One side is the fellahah, who reveals the sensual side of femininity because she is wearing a blue chiton (the color of the Virgin) in the fashion of ancient ancestors. On the other is the almeh who is wearing yellow and red, the colors of passion and danger. She exposes her breasts under glittering gold coins, thus revealing the sexual side of femininity. The first is chaste and recognizable, while the second is corrupt and exotic. They both participate in a game that is controlled by the man (represented by the bashi-bazouk) who may also represent the artist. He springs out behind the traditional woman but extends forward in the direction of the curious almeh. He supports the sensual nude but is intrigued by the naked prostitute.
Although *Almeh Playing Chess in a Café* differs in its psychology from the other paintings of the *almeh*, it shares an undertone of desired sexuality. All the paintings of the *almeh* reflect the Western male desire to subjugate women to his sexual needs. The *almeh*, because she is foreign, even if she was modeled after a real prostitute, does not threaten the painter’s character and keeps him away from temptation. He manipulates her to suit his dreams but keeps her away from his ideal life. To Gérôme, the *almeh* constitutes part of the picturesque that enhances his recognition and fame through revealing her femininity.

**The Risk-Free Appropriation of the Almeh**

Shedding the clothes of the feminine body was not a novelty to the artists of the nineteenth century. The nude female had been depicted by many civilizations since the beginning of time. The bulging statuettes of women from Paleolithic caves, the geometric marble dolls of the Cyclades, and the paintings and sculptures of ancient Egypt, among others, reveal a continuous interest in representing the idea of the ideal body. All nudes hint, to some degree, of eroticism, but when they are revealed as an embodiment of other human experience, they become universal and of eternal value. Kenneth Clark notes that “[t]he academic nudes of the nineteenth century are lifeless because they no longer embodied real human needs and experiences” (26). Clark does not consider sexuality as important as spirituality; therefore, the devalued symbolic meaning of the female nude should be considered more as “naked,” to stimulate sexual feelings, rather than nude. To ensure a fair presentation of the nude, the French academy
rejected obscene nudity and did not allow such representations in academic art. To represent the female body as seen in nature and transform it into an ideal body, the narrative had to be located in a world of myth or biblical times. For example, Venus and Salomé were two favored subjects because they could fulfill the requirements of good art. These two subjects are very similar in essence to the *almeh*; they do not exist in Western society but are manipulated for the convenience of the artist. Heather Dawkins explains in her studies of the nude and censorship in nineteenth-century French art that the censorship administration did not follow specific guidelines in the assessment and categorization of the art of the nude and obscene images. Some of the images were labeled as *academies*, to serve as models, a status which allowed their distribution in the École des Beaux-Arts. The artist would have to transform the *academie*, or model into art, hence into an ideal which does not manifest biological processes, body hair, or pubic detail, made evident by skill and inspiration in order to reproduce the images for market distribution (12-13). Moreover, in depicting an obscene subject such as prostitution in a contemporary setting, unsuitable for French morality, an artist risked having his work censored for indecency. In other words, the photograph (truth) of a model must be recreated in opposition to nature in an idealized fashion to become art.

Édouard Manet deviated from the idealization of the academic style and challenged the system by painting an ambiguous presentation in his *Olympia* (Paris, Musée de Louvre) of 1863 (also the same year as *Dance of the Almeh*), which generated a great deal of criticism at the Salon of 1865. *Olympia* depicted an unconventional female nude whose proportions were unflattering and whose complexion was abnormal, in the
style of the reclining Venus of the Renaissance. Charles Bernheimer notes that she might be a *fille publique* (“prostitute”), a dancer or an actress (such professionals were known at the time to sell their sexual favors), or a kept woman (111). The yellow-green skin, the orange-red hair, the dirty-white color of the sheets, and the black ribbon on the neck identified the class and relative value of the female sitter. Linda Nochlin asserts:

“Painters chose as they did because of certain attitudes of mind, stated or unstated, often unconsciously assimilated as though breathed in with the air of the times (Realism 54). Therefore, *Olympia* embodied the fascination of the bourgeois artist and unveiled his secret desire. It implied the truth about the bourgeois male and his sexuality. In other words, the bourgeois spectator discovered a truth about himself that he tried to cover up by holding on to the tradition of a different time. Griselda Pollock adds “*Olympia* was about European modernity figured by anxiety about commercialized sexualities in the modern metropolis” (35). Hollis Clayson also recapitulates that modernizing the nude might cause anxiety to those who associated it with their personal fears of lower-class sexual deviances (86). Such a case was exemplified in the rejection of the 1878 Henri Gervex painting *Rolla* (Bordeaux, Musée des Beaux Arts de Bordeaux) from the Salon. The painting was considered indecent because it included the nude’s red corset in the foreground, which was a recognizable “cheap ready-made” item of clothing, often worn by lower-class prostitutes (79-93). A dealer in Paris who perhaps was exempted from requiring permission to display publicly such a provocative image, however, displayed this image. In fact, galleries, bookstores, and other businesses such as art dealers were considered private establishments until 1880 when the court established such businesses
as public spaces (Stora-Lamarre 194). The spectator was, thus, exposed to a dose of undesired sexual effect embodied in the representation of the “ideal” and “truth” of the nineteenth-century bourgeois artist, who reflected his personal interest. Rolla evoked stimulation rather than sublimation and deviated from the academic convention consistent in the works of art; the narrative should have taken place in a distant, high cultured setting provided by history, literature or antiquity.

In comparison, the paintings of the almeh fulfilled the requirement because the setting was in a distant land that still existed more as a dream than reality in the mind of Western spectators. She also evoked erotic stimulation without reference to obscenity or vulgarity, thereby preventing apprehension. The desirable almeh, whose complexion and exoticism can promise an unusual experience, also revealed a great deal about the painter, who commercialized her globally. Gérôme transformed her into a commodity available to whomever seeks out inspiration in the East or West. He turned her into a prostitute par excellence who suits all tastes and serves all people. She reveals her bosom and invites not whomever she chooses, but whoever is willing to pay the price for her painting to her advocate, (the painter cum pimp) who cashes in on her.

Many nineteenth-century artists enjoyed learning and discovering through experiences with prostitution. Historian Stephen Kern analyses the fascination of writers, such as Charles Baudelaire and Gustave Flaubert, who expressed their excitement and inspiration through the eyes and bodies of the prostitutes they depicted. Kern relates such an attraction to the suppressed sexuality of the bourgeois life and the lack of correct information about sex (129). Manet also explored this frustration and attracted attention
to the unique sexuality of the nineteenth-century male. Consequently, he earned the approval of Émile Zola, who commented on Manet and his unique style in his revue of the artist. Zola noted:

I read in her the personality of the Édouard Manet [...]. Ah, we no longer have the beautiful figures of women, powerful and strong, that the painters of the fifteenth century copied. When our artists give us Venuses, they correct nature. They lie. Édouard Manet questioned why lie? Why not tell the truth? He made us know Olympia, the girl of our days that we meet on the sidewalks and who covers her shoulders with a thin shawl.  

On the other hand, Zola recognized the risk-free trait in Gérôme and taunted him for choosing his themes according to the “demand” and working to satisfy the taste of all the people. He stated:

Evidently, Gérôme works for Goupil, he paints with reproduction by photography and photogravure in mind to be sold in thousands of copies.

Here the subject is everything [...] Gérôme works for all the tastes.  

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23 Émile Zola wrote: “J’ai lu en elle la personnalité d’Édouard Manet [...] Ah! Nous n’avons plus les beaux corps de femme, puissants et forts, que copiaient les peintres du XV siècle, et lorsque nos artistes nous donne des Vénus, ils corrigent la nature, ils mentent. Édouard Manet s’est demandé pourquoi mentir, pourquoi ne pas dire la vérité; il nous a fait connaître Olympia, cette fille de nos jours, que vous rencontrerez sur les trottoirs et qui serre ses maigres épaules dans un mince châle” (97-98).

24 Émile Zola wrote: “Evidemment, M. Gérôme travaille pour la maison Goupil, il fait un tableau pour que ce tableau soit reproduit par la photographie et la gravure et se vende à des milliers d’exemplaires. Ici le sujet est tout, la peinture n’est rien [...] M. Gerôme travaille pour tous les gout” (112).
The popularity of Gérôme’s work was echoed in Gautier’s comment at the Salon of 1864: “There is always a crowd before the almeh of Gérôme, a curious picture which is like a corner of the Orient in a frame (qtd. in Hering 107).

Gautier’s description seduces the reader with a charming and picturesque description of the East. He offered precisely, in Edward Said’s terms, “The Orient [that] was overvalued for its pantheism, its spirituality, its stability, its longevity, its primitivity, and so forth” (150). In other words, Gautier stresses the Western dream of the East and the details included in it. The smooth and detailed photographic approach adopted by Gérôme proposed an “authentic” reality. MaryAnn Stevens analyses this combination of Eastern subject and realism and its effect on nineteenth-century art. She points out:

The advantage of Orientalist painting was that by depicting living scenes in a world sufficiently remote and timeless the artist could make a record according to the principles of Realism and simultaneously intend the result to stand as an example of eternal beauty. (21)

Linda Nochlin challenges the approach of Gérôme and unveils the reason for his meticulous style. She notes in her famous essay, The Imaginary Orient:

A “naturalist” or “authenticist” artist like Gérôme tries to make us forget that his art is really art, both by concealing the evidence of his touch, and, at the same time, by insisting on a plethora of authenticating details, especially on what might be called unnecessary ones. (122)

These details, however, constituted the means of creation that enable a reconstruction of Eastern leisure time to familiarize viewers with its entertainment
aspects. Such exposure allowed the public to observe and absorb its contents and use it in Western entertainment including Western films that I will discuss in chapter three of this dissertation.

Linda Nochlin and Gerald Ackerman opposed each other in validating the art of Gérôme in terms of his agenda in depicting Eastern scenes. While Nochlin insists that Gérôme’s paintings embodied a negative meaning, such as laziness and idleness, Ackerman proposes that the variety of activities represented in the artist’s oeuvres, including scenes of work and industry, proves that he chose proper subject matter according to traditional ideas (Imaginary Orient 123; Oriental Paintings 78). I think that the activity of the Eastern dancer attracted Gérôme because it perfectly corresponded with traditional and popular Western art. Applying Western concepts to depict the East, and changing the physique to satisfy Western masculine taste, however, embodied power and indicated Gérôme’s superiority over the dancer, first as a woman and second as an Easterner. This idea was augmented because of the effect of realness in the style of Gérôme that discriminates in the treatment of the Eastern dancer to acquire the intended message. He not only gave her a Western look but eliminated her essence by replacing her with a Western model manipulated to claim the charm and rights of the Easterner.

To stress the authenticity of his paintings Gérôme also included symbolic references to the East. For example, The Arab Girl with Water Pipe, Almeh at the Window of Her Moucharabieh, and Woman of Cairo at Her Door, paintings in which the almeh posed for effect looking fully aware that she was being watched, included symbolic references known to Western artists, recognized for their sensual meanings and
important to achieving pleasure and ecstasy. As a learned painter, Gérôme knew how to dominate intellectual judgment and induce emotional response. He studied other nineteenth-century Orientalists who used such iconography to represent the exotic female. For example, in the paintings *The Grande Odalisque* (Paris, Musée de Louvre, 1814) and the *Odalisque with a Slave* (Baltimore, The Walters Art Gallery, 1842), Ingres embodied the sense of smell by including a rose, fruit, or pipe; the sense of hearing by a lute, water fountain or bath, jug, or a *nargilah*, which can represent simultaneously the sense of hearing and the sense of smell; and the sense of touch through a variety of fabrics, ointments, feathers, and the nude body.

In addition to these items, Gérôme, uniquely, included a metal belt that wraps around the hips of Eastern women and may refer to a chastity belt. It challenges the seeker of sexual liaisons and lets him come up with imaginative solutions for his interaction. Another symbol is a cage that appears in several of the paintings of the *almeh*. For example, one hangs on the wall in *Almeh at the Window of her Moucharabieh*, while another cage sits on the floor in *Dance of the Almeh*. The cage contains a black bird in some of the paintings when the *almeh* is waiting for customers, but it is empty when she dances. The blackbird of the *almeh* is similar to the black cat of Olympia, which may be petted and domesticated. These pets also indicate the possibility of wild sex and the opportunity to tame and touch the woman after her performance. Such symbolism seems to add to the sexual appeal of the exotic woman whose soul is released through dancing and sex, and therefore there are no restrictions associated with her sexual acts. In other words, she becomes the flying bird that offers her admirer an
exciting experience. On another level, Gérôme infers that Eastern women were caged in an immoral lifestyle and needed rescuing from this environment with the help of a hero. This is especially correct when in some cases a monkey also is seated close to the almeh. According to James Hall, the ape or monkey represents lust as a debased quality of human beings (22) that is triggered by the sexuality of the Eastern dancer. Consequently, since the almeh is linked to this animalistic ingredient, she is dehumanized and more vulnerable to obscene suggestions. In any case, the spectator is invited to be an interloper, not only to experience and enjoy the almeh, but also to feel superior morally and sexually.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to demonstrate that the Eastern dancer was an important aspect of Gérôme’s paintings. She not only helped in shifting the artist’s style away from the Néo-Grec technique and in influencing his realistic approach, but she met the expectations of the Académie’s training and political ideology of the West. Through the motif of the almeh, the artist established his place as a mediator between Romanticism and Realism. He also constructed a language through which he could introduce his bourgeois opinion of women and political inclination. While his details and background were almost photographic in their realistic style, the figure of the dancer is Westernized and idealized in a manner that was accepted in the academy. Therefore, the dancer embodied a visual record that indicated the role of women in serving the sexuality of the male and reinforced the “superiority” of Western morality over the “uncivilized”
lifestyle of the East. The Eastern woman became a symbol of salaciousness through the physical anatomy of a Western model that represented her and claimed her history. While the model acts out the role of the Eastern dancer, she forces her appeal on the viewer because of her familiarity. In this regard, the Eastern woman is stripped of her real femininity that is unknown to the Western public and is replaced by a Western ideal. In other words, Gérôme represented Eastern women through the painting of the prostitute who dances and substituted her with a western beauty who conforms to Western standards. Accordingly, Gérôme introduced the Eastern dancer and familiarized the West with her as a woman from an inferior background who uses sex and dance for living.

The exotic eroticism of the Eastern dancer also contributed to the fame of the painter and his commercial prosperity. Nevertheless, the dancer’s popularity in the West and sexual appeal may also have promoted her as an attraction to Western travelers who wanted to experience what Gérôme had advertised through his paintings. The safe approach of Gérôme’s paintings and his connection to the commercial firm of Goupil further facilitated the spread of her fame around the world and perhaps, was also instrumental in the spread of the appeal of the Eastern dancer even within the Eastern world itself.

A later discussion in this dissertation will show how the East looked to the West for inspiration and how the Eastern dancer transformed her performance and appearance to include some Western influences in her art. In this regard, Gérôme may be considered a pioneer in initiating change in the image of the Eastern dancer.
Chapter Two

The Transformation of the Eastern Dancer into a *Femme fatale*

Good people, belonging as they do to the normal, and so, commonplace, type, are artistically uninteresting. Bad people are, from the point of view of art, fascinating studies. They represent colour, variety and strangeness. Good people exasperate one’s reason; bad people stir one’s imagination. (Wilde, *Letters* 430).

Whether she was a saint or a devil,
I don’t know. With women, never
Can one know where ends the angel
And the devil makes his entrance.


Introduction

The Eastern dancer acquired a special position in *fin de siècle* Western art. Because she differed from Western women in her fashion, movement, and background, she offered a flexible persona that could be charming and repulsive at the same time. Unlike Gérôme, who painted the *almeh* as a representation of her exotic and erotic self, other Western male artists used the Eastern dancer as a motif to address concerns about the transformation of woman in their own culture. They adopted the iconography of the Eastern dancer, used her exoticism and eroticism to legitimize their artworks and camouflage their anxiety about the changes taking place in their own culture without being overtly accusatory. They confronted society and women indirectly by presenting an alien morality unacceptable in Western society, which facilitated their return towards patriarchal ideals and preferable behavior.
The outrageous Eastern dancer also provided the artist of the fin de siècle with a persona suitable for the philosophical ideas and flexible interpretations he was exploring. Her originality allowed the artist to invent and contrive her image according to his vision and to convince the spectator into believing his fictionalized tale.

The Eastern Dancer Salomé

Artists of the fin de siècle such as Gustave Moreau (1826-1898), Aubrey Beardsley (1872-1898), Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), and others, represented the Eastern dancer as a dangerous woman. The most intriguing depiction was Salomé, a play in one act, written in French by Oscar Wilde in 1892. Wilde, an enthusiast of the arts, was exposed to other artists who worked on the subject of Salomé, such as Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), Titian (1490-1576), Dominico Ghirlandaio (1449-1494), Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) and Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640). He was also aware of the novel Herodias (1877) by Flaubert and the poem Hérodiade by Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898), which he started in 1864 and worked on all his life. Wilde admired a wide range of French art and culture. Perhaps the 1876 oil painting, Salomé Dancing Before Herod (Los Angeles, The Armand Hammer Collection at UCLA), and the watercolor, The Apparition (Paris, Musée de Louvre), by Gustave Moreau challenged Wilde. Like the decadent hero Des Esseintes in Joris Karl Huysmans’ novel, who contemplated Moreau’s paintings every night, they affected Wilde’s decision to consider Salomé for his play.

The 56 3/4” x 40 3/4” painting of Salomé Dancing Before Herod (figure 28) that was sold to the Marseillais shipowner, Louis Mante immediately after its exhibition
(Dottin and Grojnowski 52; Lacambre 166), shows a banquet hall that combines Greek, Romanesque, and Islamic architecture, and is decorated with luxurious Eastern paraphernalia. The king is seated in the center on his elevated medieval throne protected from above by the many-breasted ancient goddess Cybele.\(^{25}\) On the right side of the picture, a court executioner stands at the bottom of the steps next to a pot of burning incense. On the left, Herodias watches her daughter from a lower throne elevated above a female musician, who is located on the floor, while a large, seated Egyptian cat decorates the right front of the painting. Salomé emerges dancing in profile from the left, tiptoeing on the red carpet that is strewn with a variety of roses. Salomé wears a long brocaded multi-colored dress and white veil fastened to a golden turban on her head. She is adorned with many bracelets, necklaces, and rings, and she carries a lotus blossom in her right hand, while her left extends towards the king in a dancing gesture.

This Salomé resembles the priestess Salammbô of Flaubert’s 1862 novel by the same name, which he wrote when he came back from his trip to Tunis and Carthage in 1858 (Sheldon xv). The historian Pierre Louis Mathieu points out that Moreau favored the novels of Flaubert for their splendid form and rich content (122). He describes the heroine as follows:

\(^{25}\) According to Mireille Dottin and Daniel Grojnowski, an anonymous reviewer (possibly Fromentin) identified the multi-breasted idol above the head of Herod as Cybele in the description published in the *Bibliothèque universelle de Lausanne* of *Salomé Dancing Before Herod.* “Est-ce-la Cybèle aux nombreuses mamelles, la déesse phrygienne par laquelle les creations monstreuses de l’imagination phénicienne se rattachent aux radieux habitants de l’Olympe? Est-ce une des innombrables divinités du Panthéon indou?” (50). “Is it the many-breasted Cybele, the Phrygian goddess through whom the monstrous creations of the Phoenician imagination were connected to the radiant inhabitants of Olympus? Is it one of the countless divinities of the Hindu pantheon?” (Lacambre 166).
Pearls of various colors fell in long clusters from her ears over her shoulders, dangling down as far as her elbows; her hair was crimped in a mode to simulate a cloud. Around her neck she wore small quadrangular gold plaques representing a woman between two lions rampant, and her costume reproduced completely the accoutrements of the Goddess Tanit. Her hyacinth robe with flowing sleeves, drawn tightly in at the waist, widened out at the bottom. The vermillion of her lips made her pearly teeth appear even whiter than they actually were; the antimony of her eyelids caused her eyes to assume an almond shape. Her sandals of a bird’s plumage, with very high heels, gave her a more imposing height (167-8).

The Salomé of Moreau’s painting appears like Salammbô, but her personality seems to come across like that of Gérôme’s almeh of 1863 in Dance of the Almeh. Salomé does not direct her gaze at the king nor at her spectators. Totally absorbed in her dance, and still ill at ease and unsure about her confidence, she casts her gaze downward.

On the other hand, the Salomé in the 41 3/8” x 28 3/8” The Apparition (figure 29) looks straight at the bleeding, haloed head of John the Baptist, located in the center of the image. The decapitated head stares, in turn, at the profiled Herod whose throne is now located in front of a wall carved similarly to the walls of the Alhambra Mosque in Granada, Spain, on the left side of the picture. This Salomé, whose body twists in a similar fashion to the fourteenth-century mosaic Dancing Salomé at the Baptistery of San
Marco in Venice, Italy, has completed her dancing but is still on her toes as her veils still whirl around her. Her brocaded draperies have come undone to expose more of her flesh and reveal a jeweled breastplate and sparkling belt. With her back to the king and her left hand pointing towards the floating head, the dancer seems to command the executioner to bring her reward.

Huysmans described Moreau’s two paintings by applying skillful language and phrasing his sentences eloquently. Yet, according to Geneviève Lacambre, Huysmans did not see *The Apparition* because the Belgian dealer Léon Gauchez (1825-1907) acquired it directly from the Salon of 1876. The writer saw the black and white etching of it by Eugène Gaujean in *L’Art*, the magazine that was edited by the dealer under the pseudonym Leroi (167). Dottin and Grojnowski note that the writer obtained a “*très grande et très belle*” (“big and beautiful”) version of Goupil’s photogravure of *Salomé Dancing Before Herod* and an etching printed on *Chine of The Apparition* (52-3). The imagination of Huysmans, granted Salomé sumptuous colors. He writes:

> Her breasts rise and fall, their nipples hardening under the friction of her whirling necklaces; the diamonds adhering to her moist skin glitter; her bracelets, her belts, her rings, flash and sparkle; on her triumphal gown—pearl-seamed, silver-flowered, gold-spangled—the breastplate of jewelry, each of its links a precious stone, bursts into flame, sending out sinuous, intersecting jets of fire, moving over the lustreless flesh, the tea-rose skin, like a swarm of splendid insects whose dazzling wing-sheaths are marbled
with carmine, spotted with saffron yellow, dappled with steely blue,
striped with peacock green. (45)

There is no doubt that Huysmans’ glowing report promoted the present Salomé
and appealed to the sensitivities of the creative Wilde who may have related to the dandy,
Des Esseintes, whose lifestyle and searching spirit was somewhat similar to his own. The
hero admired Moreau for the “unsettled” and “sharpened” sensitivity that allowed him to
perceive the mysterious charm, the subtle majesty, and the disturbing exaltation that no
other artist revealed (46).

The subject matter of Moreau’s paintings comes originally from the Bible. The
Gospel of Mark narrates the story of Salomé:

And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birth-day made a
supper to his lords, high captains, and chief *estates* of Galilee; And when
the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod
and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me
whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he swore unto her,
whatever thou shall ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my
kingdom. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, what shall I ask?
And she said, the head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway
with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and
by, in a charger, the head of John the Baptist. (6:21-25)

The self-indulging protagonist, Des Esseintes, in Huysmans’ book tries to
understand the haunting images of Salomé and looks more carefully for the symbols and
details Moreau provided in various ways in his paintings. He notices the differences in personality between the dancer in the first and the second image. For example, the disappearance of the lotus and the goddess from the later painting relates to a change in the dancer’s attitude that exhibits a more confident and commanding aspect of her personality. Also, she is transformed to a more exquisite and dangerously irresistible and charming woman. Her determination replaces the lotus that represents the scepter of Isis intended to introduce her carnality (47).

Des Esseintes reflects also on the general alteration that changed the Eastern dancer from a sex symbol to a destructive and dangerous creature:

No longer was she just the dancer who by the shameless gyration of her hips wrests a lustful, ruttish cry from an old man, who destroys the resoluteness and breaks the will of a king with thrusts of her breasts, undulation of her belly, and quivering of her thighs; there she became, in a sense, the symbolic deity of indestructible Lechery, the goddess of immortal Hysteria, the accursed Beauty singled out from among all others by a cataleptic paroxysm that stiffens her flesh and hardens her muscles; the monstrous, indiscriminate, irresponsible, unfeeling Beast who, like the Helen of Antiquity, poisons everything that comes near her, everything that sees her, everything that she touches. (46)

Huysmans’ love for words attracted attention to the Moreau’s Eastern dancer. His account of Salomé reflects the fin de siècle opinion of the feminine element in the paintings of Moreau. Linda A. Saladin notes that the artist saw woman as a beautiful
animal. She lacked intellect and spirituality and therefore did not possess an inner sensibility. Her vegetal and bestial characteristics rendered her fatal. Therefore, woman’s “vulgarity” can be dangerous to the talented and divine artist who becomes like her if he is satisfied with her superficial sensuality (107). In other words, the superficiality of the Eastern dancer tricks the artist into preventing an investigation of her hidden aspects, which could make his artistic interpretation more meaningful. Her feminine sensuality should be merely the decorative aspect of the concepts imagined about her real truth.

Moreau emphasized the dancer’s sensuality in undermining Herod’s power through her materialistic luxury, symbolic aspects of feminine power, and other artistic elements applied in the paintings. The lotus scepter in the dancer’s hand, the dazzling white light that bathes her figure, the moving veil that renders her mobile, a stance that forces attention to her naked figure, and the goddess with many breasts that diminishes the power of the king are elements included to caution or warn the spectator against a dangerous femininity. Salomé resembles the almeh who attracted men by her seductive dance and fashion, but unlike her, she challenges the dandy artist with her wicked intuition and snaps him out of his ennui. She opens up more avenues for creativity and tempts each artist to rival his predecessor by recreating her image more dangerous than ever before. Oscar Wilde sums up the incentive which affected the attitude of the artist by telling Robert Ross: “when I see a monstrous tulip with four petals in someone else’s garden, I am impelled to grow a monstrous tulip with five wonderful petals, but that is no reason why someone should grow a tulip with only three petals” (Ross 21; Ellmann 339).
Wilde, influenced by Moreau’s depiction of Salomé and Huysmans’ description of her, transforms Salomé from a girl who lacked her own personality in the Bible to a determined woman who has a complicated psychology. In the Bible the daughter of Herodias, who danced for Herod on his birthday, was not named. Neither mother nor daughter lusted after John the Baptist. Herodias wanted John the Baptist dead because he was against Herodias leaving her husband Philip, the brother of Herod, and living with his brother in sin (Matthew 14:3; Mark 6:17). She wanted him to stop cursing her and her family. The alteration of the Biblical story in the nineteenth century apparently started by making Herodias, not Salomé, afflicted with lust for John the Baptist in the poem *Atta Troll* by the German poet Heinrich Heine (1797-1865), who wrote the poem in Paris in 1841. His Kaput 19 is rich in evocative details on Herodias:

In her hands she holds forever
That bright charger with the head of
John the Baptist, which she kisses–
Yes, she kisses it with ardor.
For she loved him once, this prophet:
[.................................]
Would a woman ask the head of
Any man she does not love? (23-25)

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26 Herod Antipas (the Herod of Wilde’s play) and his half-brother, Herod Philip, were the sons of Herod the Great. Antipas’ first wife was the daughter of Aretas, king of the Nabathæans, but he left her to marry Herodias, daughter of Aristobulus and wife of Herod Philip. Secular history recognized Salomé as the daughter of Herodias and Philip (Gilman 17-9).
Such interpretation secularized and sexualized the story in the Bible to augment its incriminating message against women and fictionalize it according to the taste of the nineteenth-century Western male. It presented the passionate woman as a bloody murderer who was especially dangerous when her lover opposed her. Heine introduced this idea, explaining: “maybe John, her lover, had somewhat, [v]exed her, so she had him shortened, [b]y the head; […]” (26).

Wilde’s play switches the role of the characters assigned by Heine and concentrates on the young dancer who is crossing the age of innocent child to become a seductive woman dangerous to her society. Her transformation starts when she falls in love and becomes aware of her sexuality. She openly lusts for Jokanaan (John the Baptist) and reveals her feelings to him. She asks him to share her love and reciprocate her emotional and sexual feelings. The play directs attention to Salomé’s acknowledgement of her sexual desire and her attempt to satisfy it. It also warns about the seductive physicality that she uses as a tool to achieve her intention.

Wilde utilized the *Dance of the Seven Veils* for Salomé to emphasize her power and contrast her lust to that of Herod’s. He conceived the Eastern dancer as responsible, lustful, and perverse. The famous French actress Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923) was interested in this complex role of the protagonist and she wanted to perform the Eastern dance herself. Bernhardt created her own plan for the dance and the costume in 1892 (Ellmann 372, Sato 67). Oscar Wilde claimed that he did not write the role of Salomé specifically for Sarah Bernhardt: “Such work is for the artisan in literature, not for the artist” (*Letters* 559). He wanted the drama performed by eminent actors who could
reflect the psychology of their roles. Wilde was not particularly interested in “jeunes artistes” (“young artists”) for the role of Salomé. In his letter to Leonard Smithers in September 1900, he indicated that age has nothing to do with acting and that Sarah Bernhardt, “the ‘serpent of old Nile’ older than the pyramids” was the only person in the world who could act his heroine, Salomé (Letters 1196). Wilde’s admiration and enthusiasm came not only from the fame of Bernhardt at the time but from her excellent rendition of Cleopatra and other emotionally volatile roles of femme fatale such as Fedora and Theodora. The writer may have found in the “supple body, inflexible soul,” “physically fluid,” “undulous, evasive waist,” and “coiling hips” of Bernhardt, as she was described by the contemporary writers Gustave Kahn and Claude-Roger Marx, a perfect candidate for his dancing heroine (qtd. in Roberts 191).

Marlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis, the editors of The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde explain in a footnote that the rehearsal for this production at the Palace Theatre in London was already in progress with Sarah Bernhardt as Salomé, Albert Darmon as Herod and Graham Robertson engaged as a costume designer and Charles Ricketts as a set designer in 1892, when The Lord Chamberlain censored the play because of its religious content (529, n1). According to Wilde, Bernhardt was also supposed to produce Salomé in Paris (Letters 559). Many scholars of Oscar Wilde assumed that the writer knew about the “old English law” which did not allow religious characters on stage, but because it was written in French he expected it to be exempt from censorship. The playwrights of the 1890s were aware that French plays had a better chance of being passed by the censor (Powell 34-5; Sato 68). Wilde wrote Salomé in
French to show off his ability in a foreign language and to relate to the “more sophisticated” culture. He was insulted by the decision resulting in a ban by a “commonplace official” who censored Salomé, possibly without reading it (Letters 531; 534), and insisted later that “the interest and value of Salomé is not that it was suppressed by a foolish official, but that it was written by an artist. It is the tragic beauty of the work that makes it valuable and of interest, not a gross act of ignorance and impertinence on the part of the censor” (Letters 547).

Salomé, however, was not staged till 1896. Luigne Poë produced it, and actress Lina Munte performed The Dance of the Seven Veils for the first time at the Théâtre Libre in Paris (Ross 19). Then, in 1902 Gertrude Eysoldt played Salomé in Berlin under the direction of Max Reinhardt. Salome, another operatic version of Wilde’s play composed by Richard Strauss and translated into German by Hedwig Lachmann, was performed in Dresden in 1905, with Marie Wittich as Salomé, Irene von Chavanne as Herodias, and Karl Burian as Herod. This Wagnerian style opera that emphasized the emotions of the characters by designating a musical leitmotif for each of them, such as Salomé’s Desire motif, appealed to the audience. According to Lawrence Gilman, the performance was deemed a great success and after the show, the singers, musicians, and Strauss, himself, were recalled thirty-eight times (13-4). The opera was also appreciated with the same excitement in about fifty other opera houses throughout Germany during the next two

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27 Edward F. Smyth-Pigott (1826-95) was Examiner of Plays for The Lord Chamberlain from 1875 to 1895. Bernard Shaw described him as “a walking compendium of vulgar insular prejudice” (Letters 98 n1).
years (Brener 196). The opera was not produced in America till 1907 at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York (Hartmann 34).

The drama, *Salomé* was published in France a few months after the English ban. The Librairie de l’Art Indépendant in Paris and Elkin Mathews and John Lane in London published the original French edition of *Salomé* on 22 February 1893 (*Letters* 541; 545). John Lane also published an English translation of *Salomé* by Lord Alfred Douglas with illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley in London in 1894 (Tambling 168). These performances and the published editions allowed for the distribution of the play, thereby circulating the theatrical version of Eastern dancing in the West.

**The Dance of the Seven Veils**

Rodney Shewan notes that the original Salomé manuscripts omitted the name of the dance. When Wilde received the proofs of his play, he realized the need for a hint in order to introduce the stage directions necessary for the dance he envisioned. Therefore the dance of the seven veils was included in the play (124). There is no doubt that Wilde envisioned a dance for his heroine. Not to include the precise choreography of the dance in the play indicates that the writer assumed that his readers and stage directors were familiar with Eastern dancing. Wilde may also be unsettled as to how to use the Eastern dancer to advance his creative talent. He indicates the dance in one bracketed and italicized line “[Salomé dances the dance of the seven veils]” (*Salome* 102). This

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28 The name of both firms appeared on the title page of the 600 standard copies and the fifty copies limited edition printed on Dutch hand-made paper. It was bound in Tyrian purple and faded silver with a dedication: “A mon ami Pierre Louÿs” (*Letters* 541-57).
ambiguous designation reveals that Wilde had in mind a specific image of femininity and assumed common until he was ready to send it to the readers. He inserted the ingenious dance to incorporate a creative exotic choreography that reflected an Eastern mood. Wilde did not restrict the imagination of his readers and allowed room for the choreographers to marvel. The movements may have been derived from the writings of ethnographers or artists, such as Lane, Curtis, and Flaubert, who included detailed descriptions of Eastern dances in their writings or from the paintings, photographs, and reproductions of Gérôme and Goupil. Andrea Deagon notes that the story of Salomé had been performed in a theatrical setting only once before Wilde’s. The 1881 opera *Hérodiade* by Jules Massenet excluded Salomé’s dance before Herod (17). The steps for the dance of Wilde’s Salomé were fashioned from contemporary performances, especially those at the Moulin Rouge. André Salmon recounts that when Wilde accompanied the American poet, Stuart Merrill to the Moulin Rouge and saw an acrobat dancing on her hands, he thought the heroine in the play he was writing at the time would “dance on her hands, as in Flaubert’s story” (qtd in Ellmann 343). Of course, the Salomé of Flaubert’s *Herodias*, who dances on her hands, was inspired by the “savage,” “black and glistening” Nubian dancer Azizah, whom he met in Aswan, Egypt, in 1850. Flaubert kept this pose in mind because he had seen it before carved over the left (west) portal of the Rouen Cathedral (*Herodias* 123; *Flaubert in Egypt* 155). This fourteenth-century carved Gothic Salomé shows off her acrobatic skills in front of the banquet table. She bends backward on her hands and curves her back all the way until her feet rest on her head.
The illustrations of Aubrey Beardsley provide a different account of the dance of Salomé. Wilde dedicated to Beardsley an original edition of *Salomé*, which is now in the Sterling Library in the University of London. It reads “for the only artist, who, besides, me, knows what the dance of the Seven Veils is, and can see that invisible dance” (*Letters* 578 n. 3). Beardsley includes three pictures related to the dance of the seven veils. The artist prepared them for printing by using a fine Gillot nib and Chinese ink on Whatman paper, a combination that reflects the artist’s awareness of the printing process and the materials available to produce designs ready-made for quick reproduction (Frankel 68). *The Toilette of Salomé* (figure 30), *The Stomach Dance* (figure 31), and *The Climax* (figure 32) revealed symbolically what Wilde did not describe in words. Beardsley’s drawings suggest influence from Japanese wood cuts, Greek vases, eighteenth-century satirical and pornographic French prints, and the shadow theatre of the East that eliminate the sensuality of color, a factor that may distract from psychological aspects of the characters. The simplified lines and the black and white areas kept the message simple and clear.

Like the *almehs* of Gérôme, the voluptuous Eastern dancer of Beardsley in *The Stomach Dance* exposes her breasts and navel. She stands large and tall in her knee-length pantaloons on the right side of the picture, towering above the horizon at the top edge of the frame. She is crowned in lilies and adorned with roses on her nipples, stomach, and ankles. Roses also trail the steps of her feet. Her left is with one shoe, while the other is depicted bare. The dancer, surrounded by the whiteness of the atmosphere, gazes straight at the viewer and spreads roses with her veils. She dances to
the melody of a long stringed instrument that has a crooked head directed towards her
vagina by a grotesque figure. The musician is confined to a small area in the lower left
corner surrounded by the blackness of the earth. He is consumed by desire and his
demeanor is intensified by his unkept hair and dangling tongue. He turns his face away
from the dancer because his excitement is generated by his own erotic imagination.

Critics have argued over Wilde’s intention for the dance. Christopher Nassar
insists on the intended physical aspect: “[T]he thrust of the play is to strip veil after veil
from Salomé until she emerges as deathly pale terror feeding on the blood-soaked head of
a dead persona” (82). Other critics reveal that the dance is meant to be an “inward” act,
more for the imagination than a physical display. For example, Katherine Worth calls
“misleading” any “idea of the dance as totally sensual and seductive” (66). Rodeny
Shewan states, “Wilde surely envisaged a dance that would have been spectacular in its
aesthetic effect rather than in the amount of flesh bared, an evocation not a striptease”
(“Salomés” 124). Peter Raby argues that a dance that was “merely erotic” would clearly
be “both inadequate and inappropriate” (112). The dance of the seven veils introduced
by Beardsley depicts a quite revealing dancer who is not shy of her erotic femininity and
in fact, is proud of her “immoral parts.”

It may well be that the mystic quality of the Eastern dancer can also be derived
from her eroticism as well as her exoticism. A mystical quality of erotica can be
achieved through the manipulation of light, music, and set design. For example, the
spectacular illusionistic dance style of the contemporary dancer Loie Fuller (1862-1928),
who manipulated veils that changed their colors, could be successful for Salomé only if it
is embedded in the idea of “stripping.” Even if the dancer does not actually remove the veils, she gives the illusion by illuminating her naked body beneath the fabric (Kermode 24). Thus, the dance of the seven veils must be staged to match the setting, the ambiance, and the intensity of the acting. All of these factors are critical in building up the level of eroticism that precedes the dance. This eroticism, coupled with the thrill of the exotic experience promised to the viewer, elicits a keen response necessary to complete the charismatic sexuality of the Eastern dancer. Indeed, Wilde’s original dance, embedded in Eastern lasciviousness, should be provocative but may be adjusted according to the sensibility of the spectators. According to Wilde’s philosophy, this dance can function as “a mirror in which everyone could see himself. The artist, art; the dull, dullness; the vulgar, vulgarity” (Ross 18).

The ambiguous representation of the Eastern dance allows room for misrepresentations and misinterpretations. Such a notion corresponds accurately, as Said puts it, to a “nineteenth century predilection for the rebuilding of the world according to an imaginative vision” (Orientalism 114). Wilde, in his essay “The Decay of Lying,” recognizes such ideology and explains that a work of art represents the exotic civilization as “a mode of style, an exquisite fancy of art.” He exemplifies his argument by pointing out how the Japanese were depicted by Western artists. Wilde argues that this representation of the Japanese people does not accurately depict them, and he adds: “In fact the whole Japan is a pure invention. There is no such country, there are no such people” (988). Similarly, the erotica of the Eastern dancers is invented by romanticizing the experience of a few people who encountered dancing prostitutes in the East and
described the unfamiliar dance as they understood it, or invented a new choreography manifested as “Eastern” to fit a specific need.

The Eastern dancer implied in the drawings of Beardsley launches her eroticism not necessarily through her movements but through the fantasy of Western man. The eroticism of the *almeh* of Gérôme and the Salomé of Beardsley is fashioned individually in the mind of the viewer according to his own erotic fantasy. As a result, the revealing aspect of the Eastern dance and the erotic mood of the play transform the man into a grotesque. What is invoked through looking at the dancer does not support the spirituality of Western society but rather prompts the suppressed feelings that are considered sinful.

According to the Guatemalan poet and diplomat Enrique Gomez Carrillo (1873-1927), who became Wilde’s confidant, the artist became obsessed with Salomé. He contemplated Salomé in “green like a curious and poisonous lizard” (Ellmann 372), or, naked, draped with heavy and jangling necklaces made of colorful jewels. Her “tall and pale” body that “undulates like a lily” should reflect “nothing sensual” but must be totally “magnificent” (342). This feminine power coming from her splendor is what makes her domineering and wicked, regardless of how erotic her dance may appear. In other words, the naked female in *fin de siècle* Europe stopped being erotic enough for male tastes; therefore, she had to be adorned with luxurious items suitable to the liking of the dandy artist. The angry Salomé of Rubens, the spiritual one of Leonardo, the gypsy one of Regnault, and the hesitant ones of Dürer, Ghirlandaio, and van Thulden failed to express the traits Wilde wanted for his Salomé. As a homosexual, Wilde could not perceive the
sex appeal of women, but as a sophisticated Irishman he liked women’s luxurious appearance. Carrillo notes Wilde’s objection to his comment on the beauty of women replying:

How can you say that? Women aren’t beautiful at all. They are something else, I may allow: magnificent, when dressed with taste and covered with jewels, but beautiful, no. Beauty reflects the mind and soul that illuminate the rest.29

Wilde, apparently then wanted to reveal the dancer through the “magnificent” fashion of the East. For example, he implied his satisfaction with Eastern fashion when he himself, posed as Salomé (figure 33), dressed in a costume consisting of a beaded bra, a hip belt over a long skirt, bracelets, and rings with a long haired wig adorned with a jeweled headpiece. Wilde may have ultimately taken the idea for the dance of the seven veils from the legend of Ishtar, the ancient goddess of Babylon, which combined eroticism with mysticism.

The myth of Ishtar recounts that when Tammouz, her lover, died, the goddess decided to save him and bring him back to life.30 She dressed in her jewels and veils and traveled to the underworld where she had to pass through seven gates before she found her mate. Ishtar had to relinquish her garments to the seven gates until she was

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29 “Cómo puede usted decir eso!... Las mujeres no son nunca hermosas... Son otra cosa: son bonitas, si usted quiere; son magníficas, cuando están ataviadas con gusto y cubiertas de joyas; pero hermosas, no... La hermosura es un reflejo del pensamiento y del alma, que ilumina el restro...” (Carrillo 189).

30 The Lebanese writer and Poet Khalil Gibran (1883-1931) noted that Tammouz, the god of beauty and youth was born in Lebanon. Like many of the Syrian gods, he was taken away by the Greeks and named Adonis. He left Mt. Olympus every spring and returned to the hills of his native land (21-2).
completely naked in the presence of Death. According to the myth, Ishtar found Tammouz and was able to restore him to life (Walker 452; 885). The goddess willingly sacrificed all that she owned in order to bring her lover back to life. All material items that adorned and pleased her were insignificant in comparison to the partner she desired. Her nakedness, humility, and treasures were the price paid for the sake of the lover who shared intimate moments with her and fulfilled her emotional and biological needs. She considered him the source of her happiness and sacrificed herself to maintain the blissful reunion.\(^ {31} \)

Salomé’s graceful appearance, age and virginal innocence provide a natural, intuitive eroticism that renders her mysterious, like Ishtar. Wilde considered Salomé “a mystic, the sister of Salammbô, a Sainte Thérèse who worships the moon” (Ricketts 51-2; Ellmann 376). Her love is also as powerful as Ishtar’s, because similarly, she worships love and is willing to sacrifice all for the man who responds to her emotional and sexual advances. Although sexual desire is a new type of emotion for the inexperienced Salomé, she seeks satisfaction. This emotion allows the young woman to know the urgency of that feeling and informs her about the desperation experienced when overwhelmed with such desire.

Salomé recognizes the same symptoms in Herod’s desire for her when he begs her to dance for him. Herod repeats his request three times, just like Salomé did when she expresses her infatuation to Jokanaan. The king begs her:

\(^ {31} \) According to the legend, Ishtar spent three days underground and came out on the Day of Joy, which inaugurated a new year. On New Year’s Day, the goddess and Tammouz consummated their union (Walker 452).
Salomé, Salomé, dance for me. I pray thee dance for me. Dance for me, Salomé, I beseech you. If you dance for me you may ask of me what you will, and I will give it to you, even unto the half of my kingdom. (Salome 92)

Herodias interferes to stop such a request and also urges her daughter not to respond to the proposition. She insists on stopping both of them, and three times Herodias tries to stop the king’s request, and three times she asks her daughter not to dance. Instead of rejecting the king and denying him the pleasure he wants, as she was denied herself by Jokanaan, Salomé asks him: “Will you indeed give me whatsoever I shall ask, Tetrarch? You swear it, Tetrarch? By what will you swear, Tetrarch?” (95).

Unlike the almeh who knows that her dancing is what fulfills her needs, Salomé is still learning about peoples’ reactions. To seal the deal after questioning Herod three times, Salomé reminds him once more: “You have sworn, Tetrarch,” and after he swore again and before she tells him that she would dance for him, she restates: “All this I ask, even the half of your kingdom” (96). Salomé is thus transformed by her desire into becoming a businesswoman. Like the almeh, dancing is her trade, allowing exchanges with her admirer. She will dance but first she must be sure of her client’s intention before accepting the deal. Moreover, she wants to perform her end of the deal as well as possible to satisfy her desperate partner. She will give him an experience that exceeds his expectations of both dance performance and reward.

To Herod, Salomé is a young woman, who probably would dance for gold, jewelry, or other material things. He proposes to pay the huge price of half of his
kingdom to reward her because he thinks she will not be interested in managing such a responsibility. He thinks that a woman could be easily satisfied because her capability, needs, and happiness did not extend outside of serving and pleasing the man in her life. Herod represents the typical masculine view of the nineteenth century, as the male who cannot calculate the potential of a woman’s power and her ability to oppose societal restrictions. He is unaware of the intensity of the woman’s feelings and her unwillingness to deny herself the rights that stimulate her vision, promote her self-esteem, and unlock her creative mind.

Unlike Ishtar, whose power comes from destroying her appeal, Salomé builds up her allure. Thus, after sealing her deal with the king, Salomé asks her servants to prepare her for the dance and to prepare her to unlock her power. When she dances, Salomé assumes her power by attracting the male gaze, but also by looking at the man who gazes upon her, and adapting herself to manipulate him. “The visibility of the gazing eye,” as Lawrence Kramer puts it, “is also its vulnerability” (132). Salomé recognizes the susceptibility of Herod when he declares his anticipation for her dancing. He is fascinated by her naked feet and fantasizes about them as “white doves” and “little white flowers that dance upon the tree” (Salome 98). Their bareness also reminds him of all the delight and the hidden ecstasy under the seven veils.

**The Politics of the Veil**

The veil may symbolize chastity, vulnerable virginity, restriction, limitation, and regulation. A woman veils herself in a cloth sheet to block direct perception of another
person and vice versa. She shields herself from temptation by using the veil as a barrier between her and the object of her desire. She also protects herself with a thin fabric against the curious gaze of the males in her society and uses it to give an impression of unavailability and disinterest in sexual liaisons.

Ajume H. Wingo notes that the veil may also serve to idealize or simplify a complex object or figure. It blurs details and obscures possible points of conflict (8). The veil, then, prevents direct and clear contact and manipulates the gaze of both the subject and the object that attempts to be attractive. Without the sense of seeing, the veil loses its importance because temptation ceases to come through looking and needs to find another sense, such as hearing, to allow its sensation. Therefore, Herodias asks Herod several times to stop looking at her daughter “Why are you always gazing at her?” (Salome 69). Gazing at Salomé not only means greater temptation for Herod, but also since Salomé is “unveiled,” she can clearly see his gaze without distraction and react to it. Salomé can also sense Herod’s psychology as revealed through his gaze. He projects simultaneously his desire and Salomé’s effect on him. Herodias is concerned about Herod’s gaze, not only in terms of losing her husband to her daughter, as her ex-husband lost her to his brother, but also having her daughter’s seeing herself through the gaze of her stepfather. In this regard, her daughter will be “veiled” or controlled because she would recognize herself only through masculine desire.

The cloth as a veil can also substitute for powerful mental renunciation that prevents temptation. Thus, Salomé desires Jokanaan but he combats her temptation by not looking at her. To him, this Eastern woman is evil, profane, dangerous, and sinful.
He proclaims: “The daughter of Babylon with her golden eyes and her gilded eyelids” must be stoned, pierced with swords, and crushed beneath the war captains’ shields (82). When Salomé looks at him, she falls in love with Jokanaan “white” body. She gazes at the body that reminds her of the pure white of tangible creation in nature: “the lilies of the field,” “the snows that lie on the mountain” and “the roses of the garden” (55-6). She examines his hair, which resembles “the clusters of black grapes,” and “the cedar of Lebanon” (57). Salomé’s gaze affects her imagination and allows her to perceive what she sees in relation to the pleasure of smelling and tasting.

This imagery of natural beauty, however, disappears and contradicts her images when Jokanaan patronizes her and asks her to withdraw. Yet, his beauty has already ignited her desire and she finds him attractive. Salomé expresses her sexual attraction and wants to act out her desires, but Jokanaan rejects her and admonishes her to seek help. She should neglect her physical needs and divert her thoughts to Christian (Western) spirituality. She should repent and employ herself as a servant to the Son of God. He commands her to: “Kneel down on the shore of the sea, and call unto Him by His name. When he cometh to thee (and to all who call on Him He cometh), bow thyself at His feet and ask of Him the remission of thy sins” (62). Jokanaan receives Salomé as a sinner who should seek forgiveness and “cover thy face with a veil” (52). In other words, Jokanaan, who represents an ideal Christian man, reduces the woman who does not obey Christian morality or deny her sexuality to the status of a fallen one. She must repent by humiliating herself, acknowledging her mistakes and rejecting her sexuality, as well as protect others from her danger by “veiling.” Under the “veil,” she would be unseen,
unheard, and restricted to the limited space that is permitted for her through the “veil.” The “veil” constrains a woman and convinces her that she is weaker than man. Her distorted fragility shifts her tendency to advance herself and designates fewer options for her talent. Without a doubt, a “veiled” woman may be easily controlled by the masculine power and spirituality of society.

On the other hand, Salomé utilizes the veil’s thin barrier not to prevent but to heighten the imagination and provide more pleasure for her admirer. Salomé has gained knowledge from her experience with Jokanaan and uses her skills to please Herod. She decides to excite the curiosity of the king by concealing some aspects of her personality.

In *A Treatise of Human Nature*, David Hume (1711-1776) focuses on how the mind is tempted to reveal what is obscured and explains:

> Tis certain nothing more powerfully animates any affection, than to conceal some part of its object by throwing it into a kind of shade, which at the same time that it shews enough to pre-possess us in favour of the object, leaves still some work for the imagination. Besides that obscurity is always attended with a kind of uncertainty; the effort, which the fancy makes to compleat the idea, rouzes the spirits, and gives an additional force to the passion. (422)

When the imagination is fired up through concealment, the physical or internal imperfection of the object ceases to exist. Only the perfect aspects and the charm of the veiled object of desire reveal themselves through the power of suggestions, for to hint at the object rather than to reveal it, not only excites the imagination of the spectator and
elevates the value of the concealed object, but also adopts the passion and boosts the desire of the spectator. In other words, a woman can manipulate the veil to suit her feminine agenda through the aesthetic of concealing and revealing. Thus, a modest and chaste woman is able to excite the imagination and intensify the sexual desire of the male, who can also satisfy his ego. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) addressed this effect of veiling as an instrument for enhancing the visual by concealing the physical. He notes:

Visual impressions remain the most frequent pathway along which libidinal excitation is aroused [...]. The progressive concealment of the body which goes along with civilization keeps sexual curiosity awake. This curiosity seeks to complete the sexual object by revealing its hidden parts. (22)

In this vein, Herod desires Salomé, who covers herself like the almeh of Gérôme, not only to challenge him with an unfamiliar mystery but also to provoke his masculine enthusiasm to possess and conquer. Oscar Wilde may have been familiar with Hume’s popular analysis of human passions and, undoubtedly, like Freud, knew the power of the suggested ecstasy when he assigned the dance of the seven veils to his heroine.\(^\text{32}\)

Although Wilde did not specify his “seven veils” and did not indicate clothing and props for the dance of the seven veils, his deliberate choice of a dance that may release the artistic body from restrictions, or clothe it with untailored pieces of fabric indicates his particular awareness of the effect of fashion on society. Only a man who

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\(^{32}\) Sigmund Freud submitted his essays on the theory of sexuality in a succession of editions over a period of twenty years. The book *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* (Three Contributions to the Sexual Theory) was first published in German in 1905 (Strachey x). This was five years after the death of Oscar Wilde.
amused himself to get away from the potential *ennui* of life could visualize the possible impact of simple veils on the audience. In *De Profundis*, Wilde indicated that he was a man who “amused [himself] by being a *flâneur*, a dandy, a man of fashion” (*Works* 913). Such a man realizes the modern effect of fashioning the body by adding color and texture to manipulate it. Kevin O’Brien notes in his *Oscar Wilde in Canada*, that Wilde also discussed the important value of artistic costume in his lecture “The House Beautiful,” and emphasized his preference of the loosely corseted figure that allowed freer movements in his 1882 lectures (178; Blanchard 43). Therefore, Wilde may have chosen the dance of the seven veils to apply his aesthetic by revealing the dancer’s magnificence and keeping her effect mystical.

The dancer under the “veils” realizes her beauty and her power. Disguising herself in veils or Eastern style released her from the Western trap of femininity imposed on her. “Femininity” according to Luce Irigaray “is a role, an image, a value, imposed upon women by male systems of representation. In this masquerade of femininity, the woman loses herself, and loses herself by playing her femininity” (84). The Western woman who is determined to change her fate, demand her equality, and claim her rights respected Salomé’s assertion of satisfaction and recognized her strength. Such a woman understands that Salomé as a *femme fatale* represents a symptom of “male fears about feminism” (Doane 3). Therefore, when camouflaged as an Eastern dancer who does not

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33 Kevin O’Brien indicates that Wilde delivered his lecture “The House Beautiful” first in Chicago on 11 March 1882 under the title of “Interior and Exterior House Decoration.” He changed the title in April when he presented it in California. Wilde changed the first two paragraphs and presented it under the new title also in England, Scotland, and Ireland between 1883-1885 (147-8).
have to confine herself to Western femininity, the Western woman neutralizes the masculine codes and relieves herself from restrictions, which enables her to conceive her own version of femininity.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, Western feminists were increasingly negotiating their roles as wives, mothers, contributing members to their societies, and as free women. The improvement in education for women allowed the aspiring women to earn their economic independence through work. They became governesses, saleswomen, teachers, writers, or other professionals. They also owned and published magazines with reviews and articles that dealt with women’s issues. For example *La Fronde*, the French newspaper founded in 1897 was directed and operated entirely by women (LeGates 207). After the revolution of 1848, some Western women were able to change their social statuses and started to quarrel with public officials for the right to vote.34

Many Western feminists organized groups and took direct action to attain their rights. For example, Hubertine Auclert (1848-1914), France’s leading suffragette organized the *Suffrage des Femmes* society and refused to pay taxes because she was not allowed to vote (Branca 180). Other women were pushing to improve the status of women by allowing them more opportunities, equal rights, and freedom. For example, Josephine Butler (1828-1906), the wife of the Protestant principal of a college in Liverpool, and other feminists requested the abolishment of regulated prostitution, not

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34 Liberal ideals and nationalistic goals were driving forces of the European revolutions in 1848. The riots and demonstrations started in Paris and spread throughout Europe. This inspired feminists to press their own concerns and demand equality and freedom (LeGates 188).
only to insure European morality, but also to preserve the dignity and freedom of woman. Butler’s campaign was brought to France, Italy, and Switzerland, where it became an international concern and received the support of many feminist organizations (Corbin 215). Furthermore, the Western woman was also exposed to sex education and used birth control to preserve her own health and to provide more attention to her smaller sized family. An historian of women, Patricia Branca, points out that using birth control allowed the middle class woman the time to preserve her own self-interest, exercise full control of her body, and freed her to explore sexual pleasure (128).

Some of these women, especially those of Bohemian artistic inclination, were attracted to the Eastern dancer who had loose hair, wore comfortable clothes, and danced barefoot. They saw the paintings of the almeh, read about Cléopatra and Salammbô, and watched Salomé on stage. Like Salomé, who achieved what she wanted by concealing herself under her veils to come out as a different woman, the Western woman disguised herself as Salomé to become a new woman. This woman recognizes the power of her femininity and understands her sexuality. Dance historian, Toni Bentley explains the transformation of the dancer who played the role of Salomé in the first years of the twentieth century. She writes: “When a woman put on Salome’s veils for herself, a magical transformation occurred for she then contained in her being both misogyny and feminism, thereby embodying, literally, the cultural debate of the time” (34). To put it in

35 Sexual activities in the late eighteenth century resulted in an increase in the birth of both legitimate and illegitimate children. The introduction of a variety of birth control techniques, such as the sponge in 1820, the douche in 1840, an assortment of early forms of diaphragms and contraceptive suppositories were enhanced and improved by the end of the century. Such techniques reduced the fear of unwanted pregnancies and allowed women to increase their sexual activity and sexual enjoyment (Branca 130).
Oscar Wilde’s words in *The Critics as Artist*: “Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth” (*Works* 1045). Certainly, the dancer used Salomé, a male creation, to delay her emancipation and to impede her sexual freedom, to speak up and promote new standards for her femininity. Therefore, the Eastern dancer became an icon of freedom adopted by the Western woman who is determined to struggle and sacrifice herself for her rights.

The meaning of the veil can also go beyond the piece of fabric to refer to a sensitive part of the female body. Art historian, Ewa Kuryluk analyzes Wilde’s play and considers the artist’s inscription to Aubrey Beardsley an “obscene joke,” referring to the veil as the hymen (221). In this regard, Salomé can satisfy the king by deflowering herself not once but seven times. This interpretation is helped by the reference to blood spilt on the ground where the young virgin dances (*Salome* 101). The allusion of deflowering the young woman also stimulates male desire, enhances sexual attraction, and satisfies the masculine ego. It is not surprising then, that by the end of the dance the king was in ecstasy. The “sweet fair” Eastern dancer pleases Herod so much that he wants to give her “whatsoever thy soul desireth” (103). She surprises him with an extraordinary demand for the head of Jokanaan to be offered to her on a silver charger. Only then do the differences between Salomé and Herodias melt away and the two women unite in one group. The serious decision requires firmness and support from all the women who are denied their pleasure. “Do not yield my daughter,” Herodias says (107). All the precious material items mean nothing next to realizing one’s desire. Herodias was cursed over and over for her choice to leave her husband and Salomé for
wanting to be loved. Salomé, with the support of her mother, gets what she wanted. Finally, she kisses the bloody decapitated head to celebrate her triumph, which could not be realized without shedding the blood of her partner.

Salomé herself suffered bleeding as part of her introduction to womanhood and sexuality. Her knowledge about sexuality comes to her through the spilling of her own blood, which empowered her. She is now completely free to “veil” herself or discard the restrictive expectation and uses her seductiveness to achieve her own satisfaction. The young woman dances to celebrate her sexuality, which simultaneously causes her misery and empowerment. Her body is her personal instrument, that attracts the gaze which manipulates the viewer to realize her wishes. As long as she is in sole command of her body, and able to control the gaze of the admirer, she will succeed. Therefore, Salomé’s revealing costume, or even her nakedness at the end of the dance of the seven veils, does not demoralize her. Her naked body symbolizes an aggressiveness that forces the male to consider his weakness. She reveals her body, not to conform to the male’s idealism, but to inspire accurate perception of her own reality.

**Ambushing the Eastern Dancer**

The contrast between the idealistic yearning of man and the realistic passion of woman in *Salome* challenges spectators. She is young, powerful, shameless, and disobedient. She confronts the masculine authority with her aggressiveness and defies society with her demands. She insists on the contract with Herod and wants him to fulfill his end of the agreement. The king tries to reason with her and offers things that he and
the rest of the powerful men consider more valuable and more beautiful. She can acquire, for example, a special power when she obtains a large emerald, a hundred rare white peacocks, four rows of pearls, topazes of different colors, dark onyxes, blue sapphires, reflective moonstones, chrysolites, beryls, chrysoprases, rubies, sardonyx, hyacinths, chalcedony stones, four fans made of the feathers of parrots, garments made of ostrich feathers, mystical rare crystals and turquoises, two magical cups of amber, sandals incrusted with glass, rare mantles, inlaid bracelets with jades, the mantle of the high priest, and the veil of the sanctuary (111-2). Yet, Salomé wants the head of Jokanaan. Finally the king gives up and orders his men to bring her what she wishes. In other words, the power of eroticism reveals itself stronger than sheltered spirituality, and Adam once more loses his battle with Eve.

Therefore, Western society must eliminate Salomé to stop her threat and purge the community of such danger. Susan McClary discusses the traditional presentation of women’s eroticism and points out the reason that necessitates the violent closure of women like Salomé. She writes:

[T]he erotic continues so often to be framed as a manifestation of feminine evil, while masculine high culture is regarded as transcendent. The pervasive cultural anxiety over women as obstacles to transcendence justifies over and over again narratives of the victimized male and the necessary purging or containment of the female. (Feminine Endings 68)

Of course, Salomé must die. She shakes the masculine establishment not only because she is erotic, but also since she can convince others to believe in her. She must
be feared and vanquished and vanished like the poet of Plato’s “ideal State.” Unlike Kuchuk and the *almeh*, Salomé, is personified to communicate her thoughts to the Western spectator. The actress who plays Salomé adds her appeal and strength to the psychological dialogue that affects the spectator. Although a male artist invented the personality of Salomé, the intensity of the play may propose an unintended interpretation. She convinces the spectators and entices them to sympathize with her cause and imitate her actions. Therefore, Salomé must be punished immediately, not only because she found her own way to experience sexuality, but also because she is not obedient, passive, submissive, or the devoted daughter of masculine authority. She must die to cancel her power and her threat to male dominance, and to purge the spectator of her behavior.

Another reason determining Salomé’s death is her ability to have her desire realized and to decapitate Jokanaan through what she possesses naturally, and by using the same conventions imposed on her by her society. Linda Gertner Zatlin describes the young dancer [Salomé] as “a woman who clearly understands the reliance of male sexuality on female sexuality for its definition” (94). Only when a man desires her does her sexuality become significant. Her virtue, then, manipulates the male as much as her corrupt sexuality. Author Bram Dijkstra also discusses female sexuality and notes that “in her chastity, the female [Salomé] maintains her self-sufficiency, and hence her power to ‘decapitate’ the male by making him [Herod] wait in impotent longing for her compliance to his wishes” (385). He can regain his masculinity only when she submits to his wishes and acknowledges his right to conquer her. Ignoring his desires and defying him leads to her destruction. McClary points out that a woman like Salomé must die not
only because she is stripping the male of his privilege, but also because she still is the
invention of the male, and that is why she is doomed before she begins (Carmen 60).
Thus, the creative artist cannot permit the Eastern dancer to mingle in society after her
triump. The power of woman may be recognized, but her fate is decided by the male.
She cannot surpass his control because when she kills his masculine spirit, she condemns
herself to death. Although she wins due to her erotic appeal, Herod purges her of it. He
repositions himself as a gentle and kind man trying to restore the life of Jokanaan because
he fears the Christian God. The king offers Salomé many unique and powerful items
saying: “I will give thee all that is mine, save one life” (Salomé 112). This scene
heightens the cruelty of Salomé and reinforces the kindness of Herod, who ultimately
agrees and stresses the patriarchal opinion of women saying: “Let her be given what she
asks! Of a truth she is her mother child” (113). In this regard, Herod cleanses the
masculine power because he admits his physical attraction and understands his spiritual
responsibility. The power of the Eastern dancer at the fin de siècle did not come from her
dancing per se, but from the anxiety of the male over his possible infatuation with her in
respect to the control she maintains of her own body. His spirituality could not compete
with the tempting eroticism that she used to explore and advance her own sexuality. He
wanted to shield himself from his own weakness by destroying the source of his
fascination.

Salomé’s success comes with a price that requires adjusting to an unconventional
mode of reaction. Her aggressiveness and her unfamiliar behavior may be faced with an
unexpected reaction from members of her society; therefore, this competitive interacting
energy could disappoint her too. She had to pay for her actions by suffering failure and rejection before preparing herself to challenge, compete, and win. Salomé paid the price of her awakening by being rejected by the young man who resisted her transformation. Jokannan knew what Herod realized too late: that “only in mirrors should one look, for mirrors do but show us masks” (Salome 108). Temptation does not come from an inward vision but from an external experience. He refused to be compassionate with the feminine struggle and looked inwardly at himself. The dancer, then, acted alone and her experience allowed her to look back at the power that restricted and subordinated her.

In The Climax by Beardsley (figure 32), Salomé regains her spirituality when she gazes at the decapitated head with the closed eyes of the man who rejected her, and rises above the world that did not understand her struggle. In the middle and upper half of the picture, Salomé wears a modest loose dress and kneels in front of the head that she holds in both hands. Her triumph is illustrated by the white space behind her and the big tulip that blooms beneath her. Although other interpretations may differ from what I have stated, I maintain that Beardsley’s ambiguity may be part of his unique aesthetic, which did not reflect mainstream contemporary thought. Nicholas Frankel warns against looking for meaning in Beardsley’s images of Salomé. He writes: “if we look for meaning “in” Beardsley’s drawings, and still more if we expect those drawings to supply the key for the meaning “of” Wilde’s play, we misunderstand the aestheticism of both” (73). In any case, Salomé, in both textual and visual depiction, celebrates an achievement that she acquired through her observation. Her triumph ultimately caused her death, not because of her own deficiency, but due to the limitation of the patriarchal rules of
Western society. Destroying the conviction of Western men to recreate women’s authority brought about her death.

**The Eastern Dancer as a Prototype of Immorality**

Salomé appeared on the Western stage in the first years of the twentieth century when most middle class women were conforming to the conduct designed for them by their society. The female sex was widely considered physiologically and biologically inferior to the male. A woman was considered irrational, emotional, and superficial. She tended to imitate, adapt, and obey (Broude 152). For the most part, women dedicated themselves to domestic chores and learned how to become good wives and mothers.

Moreover, some of them suffered “real” or “psychosomatic” illnesses caused by the corset that squeezed them and prevent them from breathing properly. Related to this, the fashion historian Leigh Summers discusses the many illnesses inflicted on nineteenth-century women by the corset and points out that nineteenth-century Western societies still privileged “cultural expectations above the physical causes of female complaints” (119). This extreme garment helped keep women fragile, weak, and hence inferior to nineteenth-century men. Jacqueline Bel asserts that a powerless and dependent woman assured a stable home for her family because she was dedicated to her duties as wife and mother (64).

Therefore, although the Western male was interested in the sexual appeal of the Eastern dancer, her attire, which has “little support for her flagging breast,” would alarm
him (qtd. in Rionnet 51). Corseting the body was crucial in maintaining the ideal picture of fragile and vulnerable femininity necessary for the equilibrium of Western culture.

Nevertheless, physical beauty was critical for the self-image of Western women. They followed the aesthetic of nineteenth-century Western femininity by stiffening their bodies and sartorially restraining their flesh. Their corsets became an indispensable tool that was fashioned in many different styles to eliminate evidence of the rib cage and reduce the size of the waist to a tiny circle. Historian Valerie Steel traces the modern corset back to the aristocratic society of the first half of the sixteenth century. Aristocratic women dressed in “whalebone bodies,” a rigid material placed under the breasts, to keep their bodies straight and tall. These rigid materials originated in Spain and Italy and were introduced to France by Catherine de Medici (1519-89) (7). This early corset evolved, became exaggerated, and spread to all levels of Western society and continues to be in vogue during the nineteenth century. A woman chose her corsets according to her status and the occasion she was attending. For example, a formal evening dance required a tighter corset than a morning stroll, and a bourgeois woman would order it custom-made especially to fit her shape and sartorial taste, while a working-class woman could only buy less expensive, ready-made quality garments.37

36 A representation of an early type of corset can be observed in the Fiend of Fashion, a demon in “an ancient manuscript.” There is an erect winged body in a laced bodice and a long skirt and carries a knotted veil on its out-streched arms. The figure has two horns, short curly hair, and a long pointy nose (W. B. L. 43; Steele 6).

37 The production of corsets reached its zenith during the nineteenth century. Ten thousand workers were hired in Paris alone for the production of corsets in 1855. The cheapest corset for workers and peasants was three to twenty francs each; a silk one from twenty-five to sixty francs; and around two hundred francs for the ones decorated with handmade lace or made of more luxurious material (Perrot 159).
While many French women preferred custom-made corsets, the English and Americans were able to purchase the mass produced variety of styles and standardized sizes available in the local nineteenth-century markets (44).

The corset functioned also as a tool to heighten the sexual appeal of the feminine body. The British sexologist Havelock Ellis remarks on the effect of the corset and its sexual function by describing its purpose as to “furnish woman with a method of heightening at once her two chief secondary sexual characteristics, the bosom above and the hips and buttocks under” (172). This phenomenon is especially apparent in the artistic renditions of the feminine body of the nineteenth century. The corseted body is depicted in many paintings and literature that represent this era. For example, the 1877 *Nana* (Hamburg, Humburger Kunthalle) by Edward Manet and the 1889-90 *Woman Powdering Herself* (London, The Courtauld Institute Gallery) by Georges Seurat exemplify the attitude of the painter towards the corset as part of every day necessity. Also the dialogue of Scarlet O’Hara with the servant who laces her into her corset, in Margaret Mitchell’s novel *Gone with the Wind* (1936) which was set in the nineteenth century, indicates the importance of the corset in manipulating the size of the waist, chest, and hips of nineteenth-century women:

Scarlet had Lou lace her into her stays as tightly as the strings would pull. Then she passed the tape measure about her waist. Twenty Inches! She groaned aloud. That was what having babies did to your figure! Her waist was as large as Aunt Pitty’s, as large as Mammy’s. “Pull them
tighter, Lou. See if you can’t make it eighteen and half inches or I can’t get into any of my dresses.” (892)

O’Hara prioritizes her charming looks over having children. She is determined to keep a valuable small figure that grants her power in spite of her discomfort. Fashion historians C. Willet and Phillis Cunnington have noted that around the end of the nineteenth century, a considerable degree of tight lacing underlined the fashion and influenced a woman’s “ambition to have at marriage, a waist measurement not exceeding the numbers of years of her age” (126). In other words, a smaller waist suggested the woman was younger, more fragile, sexier, and, paradoxically, more desirable. It also indicated her social status, self-discipline, endurance and other features that could earn the woman respectability. Not surprisingly then, the effect of the corset was also considered in fashioning the costumes of stage performers, such as the ballet dancer, to contain her flesh, sexualize her body, and make her appear weightless.

Many nineteenth-century lithographs, drawings, photographs, and paintings show the Western dancers in costumes that accentuated the same body parts as corsets. Unlike the natural body of the Eastern dancer, the Western torso in costume is elongated, the waist is slim, the breasts are pushed up, and the hips are exaggerated by the gauzy, billowing skirt. The slimming effect, however, is highlighted further by the leaps and jumps of the ballerina. These movements call attention to the light airy quality of her body and present a flying effect throughout the dance routine. In contrast to the physical properties attributed to Eastern dancing, the buoyancy of the ballerina and the corset-like costume kept her flesh in place and thereby enabling a spiritual aspiration. Abigail
Solomon-Godeau states: “This spiritualized representation of the ballerina as the incarnation of an idealized femininity is, of course, ballet’s own representation to itself and of itself” (85). This idealized femininity became not only a factor in the male’s satisfaction but also in the ideology of ballet and the apparition of sublimity. It became part of the language of ballet dancing that contrasted with Eastern dancing. The ballerina’s ethereal image was admired by the bourgeois male who was infatuated by the visual beauty of the dancer, and as will be discussed in this chapter, was willing to supplement her low salary. By doing so, the bourgeois male satisfied his ego as the protector or provider for the dependent female and, consequently, granted himself a passage to the off-limit back-stage area. A male’s association with a young dancer allowed him to mingle with the other wealthy sponsors and the corps de ballet during their breaks and allowed him to enjoy watching them closely during dance rehearsals (Jowitt 45-7).

The paintings of Edgar Degas dealing with this relationship of the ballerina and her bourgeois protector and showing his access to the rehearsal area indicate, however, the ways the perception of the dancer, regardless of her nationality, served as an object for male desire. For example, in The Rehearsal on the Stage (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1874), Degas includes two bourgeois male figures seated casually on the chairs on the right side of the room. They watch the dancers practicing with their trainer, resting, adjusting their clothes or fixing their shoes. Other paintings, such as the Two Dancers Entering the Stage (Fogg Art Museum, Harvard Art Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1877-78), The Green Dancer (Thyssen-Bornmisza Collection, Lugano, Switzerland,
1880), and The Entrance of the Masked Dancers (Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts, 1879-82), denote the presence of the bourgeois male by showing part of him or his attire, such as his hat or cane, some place on the canvas. To differentiate the Western dancer from the *almeh* and to avoid the implication of sexual favors given by her, Degas often presented the ballerina as busy, perfecting her steps, adjusting her costume, or involved in other aspects of her performance. This presentation directed the spectator away from thinking about the ballerina as a prostitute even if she was exchanging the corporeal satisfaction of her admirer for money.

Jill De Vonyar and Richard Kendall discuss Degas’s paintings of ballet dancers and note that many of the Opéra recruits came from poor families or were orphans, who by offering sexual favors to *abonnés* (“season ticket holders that also have a permit to go back stage”), establishing liaisons with wealthy “protectors,” or resorting to “occasional prostitution” were able to supplement their income to help their families and achieve advancement in the Opéra (120). In other words, the ballerina had to develop her skills in attracting the attention of the bourgeois males, not only for their wealth, but also for their influence in promoting her as a dancer. This meant that the ballerina had to keep the protector excited and entertained while keeping her options open to attract the attention of other males for more support.

Many of Degas’s contemporary artists also depicted the closeness of the ballerinas and their bourgeois customers. For example, the 1889 painting *Backstage at the Opera* by Jean Beraud (Musée Carnavalet, Paris) shows the interaction of old bourgeois men with the young dancers and shows them embracing while the young
dancers accept their affection and encourage their hugs and kisses. A bourgeois man in Beraud’s painting is in some instances surrounded by more than one dancer, or vice versa. Such depictions may also suggest the idea of sexual orgies between the dancers and their bourgeois customers. In other words, the ballerina, like the *almeh* and Salomé, relied on her youth and sexuality to earn her living, provide for her family, achieve her dreams, and promote her career. The ballerina’s charming physique and Western identity protected her, however, from representing any dangerous or destructive character regardless of her behavior. She was part of the artists’ society and reflected their ideals and morality; therefore, even in her desperate situation, the Western dancer was far removed from immorality or evil behavior. As long as the dancer conformed to the masculine ideal in terms of male control over her life, she was safe, accepted, supported, and protected.

Conclusions

This chapter has shown how the Western male artist of the *fin de siècle* contributed significantly to the invention and popular conception of the Eastern dancer and her dance. He fashioned her from his observation of prior art and his determinations to rival the ideas of previous artists. He also aimed to depict his heroine according to the socio-artistic ideals of his time and modified her in order to deal with genuine issues of concern significant to his era and to critique the feminine behavior of his own society.

He presented the Eastern dancer as a heartless and merciless woman who was ready to risk everything to satisfy herself. Although she was depicted as more physical
than intellectual, she learned from her own experience. Her beauty and seductiveness bewitched the viewers and revealed them to her. In other words, she learned from life how to deal with people. She looked at the looker, observed his reaction, and responded accordingly. To the dancer, dance became a tool to educate her, while it was considered an instrument of destruction by the male viewer.

Through their works, male artists also warned that the Eastern dancer understood the power of her sexuality and could use it to accomplish her needs. Her pleasing and disgusting acts strengthened the stereotype of the East and classified her behavior as “exotic,” imported from other, lesser societies. Her unrestrained body, which differed from the Western dancer’s symbolized her degraded background, while her seductive dance signified danger. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Eastern dancer had come to embody both wickedness and ill behavior.

The Eastern dancer implied also a courageous aspect of womanhood that was not considered by the dandy artist. She became an undeniable role model to Western women who were calling for change in women’s lives. Her determination and independence taught Western women how to focus their demands and insist on satisfaction. This conflicted response attracted the attention of the motion picture industry that led to the creation of films that regulated Eastern dancing. If a Western woman decided to adopt the dances of the almeḥ or Salomé, she had to follow the rules that prevented her from becoming dangerous. The following chapter discusses the portrayal of the Eastern dancer in motion pictures and the message intended based on her representation in films.
Chapter Three

The Eastern Dancer in Western Cinema

East is East and West is West
And never the twain shall meet.
(Rudyard Kipling, The Ballad of East and West 596).

To be given in free exchange, to be willingly kept in ocular circulation, to serve as object for readerly and visual reception, not to hold out on the viewer, is surely an act of generosity, if not forced.
(Mary Ann Caws, Ladies Shot and Painted 284).

Introduction

The persona of the exotic woman fostered the recognition and fame of many Western actresses. Female artists in early cinema acquired the roles of Eastern women in many films based on religious or secular plots. Aspiring Western actresses acquired the exotic roles as a result of their excellent acting reputations, or in some cases, their exotic looks. Lilian Gish, Theda Bara, Vilma Banky, Pola Negri, Mata Hari, Alla Nazimova, Claudette Colbert, Greta Garbo, and others, also gained or enhanced their values as actresses by playing the roles of Eastern women. Figures such as Attarea, Salomé, Judith, Cleopatra, Yasmin, and Morgana, promoted beauty and prestige through the use of elaborate, colorful costumes and the extravagant, luxurious atmosphere evoked through scenic design. The actresses, of course with the help of the cinematic crew, went beyond the existing idea of the Eastern dancer from paintings, sculptures, novels, plays, dances, and other works of art by adding new creative aspects, such as costumes, make-
up, attitude, and dance movements. Other actresses, such as Agnes Ayres, Bebe Daniels, Gloria Swanson, and Maria Montez were involved in many films involving Eastern life, utilizing Eastern fashion or attitude, or featuring one or more dancing scenes. Many early Western actresses performed or experienced Eastern dance in one or more of their films. Western studios found the Eastern dancer to be entertaining, appealing, and pleasing to the audiences. Producers recognized her as a box office hit able to attract cinemagoers of both sexes, not only for her beauty and the romantic persona that allow individual interpretation, but also for her appearance, which could be sexualized without offending Western sensibility. The exotic origin of the Eastern dancer allowed looseness and flexibility, characteristics which were needed in many creative aspects in the film industry.

**Dancing Her Way to Hollywood**

The Eastern dancer appeared in many of the early experimentations in motion pictures. Thomas Alva Edison was perhaps the first to record her on film in his *Fatima's Dance du Ventre*, which was shot in June or July of 1896 (Phillips 147). Fatima appears from the left side of the stage, which is backed with a scenic view of nature. She wears a long dark skirt striped horizontally with light colors. A short bolero style top embellished with light colored bands left free along the shoulders covers the puffed short sleeves. The front of the bolero is connected together with strands of shimmering sequins that dangle over the stomach of Fatima with a matching shimmering, scarf with strands, wrapped around her hips. Fatima’s torso is covered with a light color, fitted undergarment that
reveals the shape of her bosom, stomach, and belly and makes these areas appear nude. The dancer decorates her long dark hair with a light color ornament that starts on the top of her head and drapes from her left ear to the back of her hair. As the dancer spins, she exposes the light colored knee-length pantaloon, revealing the garters of her dark stockings just under her knees, which matches her medium-heeled shoes. She shimmies her shoulders while making her way across the center of the stage before starting to spin around several times to the music of her finger-cymbals. She alternates between hip and shoulder shimmies, then hops one step to the front and resumes the same movements. Fatima crosses the stage from left to right and right to left, thrusting her hips forward as she undulates, and lifting her arms in front of her as she makes her way to the right of the stage. There, Fatima thrusts her hips again, making her way back while she positions her left arm behind her waist and right arm in the front. Fatima appears attractive, contented, confident in her motion, and at ease with the camera. She also shows skill in isolating each part of her body and stirring it to the rhythm of her cymbals.

Recording the feminine body in continuous motion started with Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904), the first credited inventor of “motion pictures.” He depicted the movements of the body as a subject for many of his early experimentation. He used the stop-action method for a sequential act, such as bathing, jumping, or dancing as a topic for his pictures. In the 1880’s, Muybridge photographed these movements by using several cameras and arranged the separate photographs consecutively on a circular disk to project in a Zoöpraxiscope, the motion-picture projector. A few years later, the female
body became an attraction recorded in the world’s first motion-picture studio known as the “Black Maria”\textsuperscript{38} of Thomas Alva Edison in West Orange, New Jersey.

Black Maria was the name given by Thomas Edison’s employees to the motion-picture studio they built in early 1893. It was built on the grounds of Edison’s laboratory to further the experimentation of the motion pictures of the inventor and his assistant, William Kennedy Laurie Dickson. The 15’ wide and 50’ long structure, built of lumber and protected by tar paper, has an opening on the roof to light the stage which could be hand pushed to rotate with the sun for maximum light for the Kinetograph that was mounted on a trolley inside the room. Films such as the \textit{Serpentine dance, Ella Lola’s Turkish Dance, Sun dance, Fire dance, Carmencita, Butterfly dance, and Fatima’s Belly Dance}, were shot by the bulky camera inside the Black Maria, through the open door of the studio, and on location between 1894 and 1898. The films then were introduced to the public as peep shows for a small price through the many kinetoscopes that were installed in penny arcades or kinetoscope shops (Karney 14-5). Janet Staiger remarks that the less than one-minute dance films succeeded not only because they maintained the current fad of depicting oriental and exotic cultures, but also because the gyration of these dancers suited the limitations of the film technology (56). The slow speed of this technology, stressed the gyration of each isolated part as a stand-alone segment that can be effective without the need for the full composition. Therefore, early film technology,\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{38} Edison enlarged the Black Maria in 1894-5 to accommodate a bigger stage for better performances and more equipment. He demolished the structure and moved it to a bigger and more accessible studio in New York on 21\textsuperscript{st} Street in 1903, then to a bigger building in the Bronx in 1907. The current Black Maria is not the actual building in which many dances were recorded, but is a close replica built from visual documentations in 1953 (Phillips 40-3).
like the paintings of Gérôme and the play of Oscar Wilde, detailed the contrast that stressed the strangeness of Eastern dance without exploring the artistic differences. Gyrating one part of the body not only emphasizes that part but also introduces a new way to use it.

Many of these early films that depicted women performing exotic dance routines became part of Eastern dance choreography in the West. They were popular among the customers who considered them a convincing vision of authenticity, a visual record of exceptional choreography, and a record of historical truth. Some recent Western dancers who would like to perform “ethnic” and “traditional” Eastern dance or introduce innovative ways of performing Eastern dancing in the West also used these films for inspiration for their choreography and as a source of innovative costumes. For example, a modified version of the Butterfly dance costume has recently been adopted by Shakira, a dancer in Columbus, Ohio, for one of her Eastern dance presentations in the late 1990’s. Similarly, the dancers of what is known as American Tribal dance have adopted a longer version of Ella Lola’s full skirt as part of their costumes. The skirt offers these dancers a greater variety of movements which rely on the slow repetition of single movements from the Eastern dance choreography.

Other inventors such as the German, Max Skladanowsky and the French, Auguste and Louis Lumière also included dance scenes in the early public issuance of their films. In 1895, Skladanowsky presented nine short films in his Bioskop to the audience in the Wintergarten in Berlin. For the first time the customers paid to watch motion pictures.
Several of these cinematic series depicted exotic dance sequences at least two of which women were performed (16).

Around the same time, the Lumière Brothers produced an animated picture show for the Society for Industrial Advancement in Paris. Louis Lumière gave a lecture titled the “Photography Industry” followed by a short film entitled *Leaving the Lumière Factory* (*la sortie des usines Lumière*) to an audience of two hundred photographers (17). The first films that were shot by the Lumières did not include dancing, but early dance scenes were recorded by hired photographers who advertised the brothers’ *Cinematograph*, the machine they invented that recorded, developed, and projected the films. These photographers were instructed to document local scenes around the world and project them for potential customers. One of them, Félix Mesguish, was thrown out of Russia in 1898 because he offended the public when he projected a dance scene he recorded (29).

The reaction of the audience to the projected dance scenes varied from one setting to another. In most cases, the audiences accepted dance scenes that did not differ much from their own or did not incorporate suggestive movements, and when they entertained them. For example, the audience in London reacted favorably to the dance of *The Three Burlesque Dancers*, when Birt Acres of the Royal Photographic Society projected it. The crowd supported and applauded warmly for the dancers depicted on the screen (20). In contrast, many versions of Edison’s Eastern dancer were censored, and her “offensive
parts” were covered with bars that hid her bosom and hips. This type of censoring is undoubtedly derived from the Western fear of primitive dance and the sexuality associated with it. Although Fatima, the dancer in Edison’s film, was fully dressed, the shimmy of the shoulders that wobbles her breasts, the pelvic thrust and hip gyration can communicate sexual language that threatens Western morality.

The Eastern dancer continued to appear iconographically in Western films about the East. For example, she would emerge as a worshiper at the temple of a goddess, a beauty in a harem, a participant in a festival, an attraction in a circus, an entertainer, a femme fatale, and in similar roles. The silent motion pictures *Intolerance* (1916), *The Sheik* (1921), and *The Son of the Sheik* (1926), and the talkies *Hoopla* (1933), and *Salome, Where She Danced* (1945) exemplify this depiction of the Eastern dancer in Western cinema. I chose these films for my discussion because their time period spanned the first half of the twentieth century when many Eastern countries were still governed by the colonial West, and because they reveal a great deal about unique interpretations of Eastern dance, variety of costumes, and the dancer’s role in the plot.

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39 Wendy Buonaventura remarks that some of the *Fatima’s Dance* versions recorded at Coney Island were so heavily censored that only the head of Fatima is clearly visible (105). Donna Carleton describes a version of *Fatima’s Dance* from 1897 taken at Coney Island as censored by black bars that hid the dancer’s bosom and hips (62). The censored version I studied in the Museum of Modern Art, which was filmed in the Black Maria in 1896, is censored with white bars placed on the same parts. The viewer can still see the shimmies and gyrations but the intensity and the beauty of these movements are distorted.
The Eastern dancer appears many times in the fourth episode of *Intolerance* by Director David Wark Griffith. The film presents four stories from different historical periods divided into two acts: *The Mother and the Law* set in recent times, *The Nazarene* describing the crucifixion of Christ, *The Medieval Story* recounting the massacre of Protestants on St. Bartholomew’s Day, and *The Fall of Babylon*, which narrates the betrayal of King Belshazzar to the Persians in 539 B.C. The four episodes are linked by the symbolic image of a mother (Lillian Gish) rocking a cradle. According to film historian Robert B. Connolly, the episode currently available of *The Fall of Babylon* is not the original version released in 1916. The Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art has reconstructed the extant film from a combination of negatives and film stocks and kept it true to its initial version (120).

*The Fall of Babylon* incorporates dance as part of the imagined way of life, religion, and leadership of the ancient exotic Eastern culture of Babylon. The many dance segments scattered through the story emphasize the feminine body as an indispensable element intended as a means of satisfying the spiritual and corporeal components of the Babylonian culture. It also relates the Eastern dance to a variety of conditions that stereotype the East, such as salacious love, excessive luxury, and extreme violence.

The introduction of *The Fall of Babylon* in Act One, presents the Babylonian dancers as the main figures engaged in the splendid celebration of their goddess, Ishtar. The crowd gathers on both sides and on the parapet of the great wall of Imgur Bel, the
main gate of Babylon, to watch the procession of Ishtar and her dancing girls entering the city. The statue of Ishtar is installed under a canopy and enthroned on a gigantic float pulled by a number of male worshipers. Her priestesses dance around and in front of the sacred float dressed in light, airy knee-length dresses with flimsy turbans, veils, and flowers crowning their heads. They leap up and down, making their way towards the city as the magnificently carved double doors open wide for their entrance. The dancers proceed inside the city hopping and rotating in the air and then landing lightly on their tiptoes. Sometimes the dancers raise their arms high above their heads, extend them out at the shoulder level, or flutter them in the air. Other times the hands join together in front of the abdomen while the back slightly arches, before the dancer flutters her arms and leaps freely from this position. The dancers also balance on their tiptoes for a moment with their arms in the air, then flex them down, bend their knees and flutter their arms again. They also use the light veil behind their heads to form an arch above the head when they jump up and down in a fashion similar to the ritual dance of the 50 B.C. Pompeian fresco of the Villa of Mysteries. In general, these dancing steps seem natural and present a theme of happiness, freedom, and individuality.

The dancers of Ishtar, however, do not shimmy and gyrate any part of their bodies; they seem to reconstruct the steps of the maenads on Greek vases. Lilian B. Lawler’s extensive study of the dance scenes on Greek vases notes that the “instinctive bodily movements of joy” that constitute Greek dance has its origin in religion (73). Such dance combines ritual aspects and joy, which renders an excellent choreography for the procession of Ishtar. The dancers of the goddess in this film, on the other hand,
reflect contemporary influence from the “barefoot” dancers who started to appear around the fin de siècle, such as Loie Fuller, Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, Maud Allan, and Mata Hari. Dance historian Deborah Jowitt explains that these dancers who became the leaders of modern dance used Eastern motifs as a “landscape where the refinement of a human soul could be played out, without denying the human body” its own expression (127). Griffith included contemporary dance recognizable as Eastern for his narrative about the East. This combination of both the story and the dance sets forth a non-fictional episode. As in Gérôme’s painting style, the excessive visual details promote the director’s version of “truth” about the East and its dancers as an illusory depiction of “reality.”

To emphasize the erotic aspect of the dancing girls, D. W. Griffith crosscuts his shots to allow a visual comparison between robust, natural masculinity and a soft, artificial femininity. The sequence starts by showing the naïve woman (Constance Talmadge), a stranger, who has come down to the city from the mountain of Suisana, fighting with Rhapsode (Elmer Clifton), the warrior singer who gestures his infatuation with her. After several attempts to attract the woman, Rhapsode kisses her on the shoulder while she watches the procession of Ishtar and he runs away while praying for the goddess to infuse the girl with love in order to return his affection. Constance, not knowing who kissed her, attacks a man on her left believing he had harassed her. Then, Griffith changes the shot to a long aerial one that divides the screen vertically with the wall of Babylon. The right side of the screen shows the upper side of the great wall and Belshazzar (Alfred Paget), son of Nabonidus, in all his glory, advancing in his splendid
two-horse carriage. In his presence, the citizens of Babylon stop all activities, extend their arms to the front, with heads bowed to the supreme authority. A few closeup shots focus on Belshazzar watching the dancing girls and also on his guard, the valorous bare-chested man of two swords who pulls one out of its case to show its sharp edge. The camera also profiles the bearded, jealous priest of Bel-Marduk, the supreme god of Babylon, who looks at the advancing dancers and their goddess suspiciously because their appeal threatens his power. These masculine features, static poses, and location on the high wall contrast with the feminine aspect and fluttering movements of the dancers below in the street.

Another comparison to the delightful dancers is introduced in the next medium-shot of the gate and its sophisticated wheels. A few belabored slaves push two huge mechanical devices located on both sides of the carved gate. The relief sculptures on the entrance are figures of strong, local male warriors dressed in battle gear and assembled in groups as if to defend their city. The double doors open up for the butterfly-like movements of the joyful dancers who burst in hastily, whirling through the city.

Griffith is considered a pioneer for including woman-in-motion in early narrative films. The frequent appearances of the dancer that often seem out of place in his cinematic scenes in The Fall of Babylon point to of the director as a man of his age. No doubt, he acquired his ideas from nineteenth-century performances and the visual arts. Orson Wells introduces Griffith’s Intolerance on the DVD and points out that the theatre and the ideas of the nineteenth century influenced Griffith, who constructed his
masterpiece accordingly (“Special Features”). The director also used nineteenth-century paintings as a visual reference for many of his cinematic scenes.

For example, the incident of the marriage market reminds us of Gérôme’s painting *A Roman Slave Market* (Baltimore, The Walter Art Gallery, 1884). The painting depicts the woman positioned on a stage awaiting bids from the men. The viewer of the painting is presented with the extraordinary backside of the woman. The expression on the men’s faces and their raised hands encourage the viewers to anticipate about her frontal beauty. To reach the same level of excitement, Griffith zooms in on the back of the female while the auctioneer uncovers her for the viewers who are left to meditate on this naked woman for a few seconds. Later, a frontal shot of this Eastern beauty shows her dressed in a similar fashion to that of the exotic dancers of the *fin de siècle*. The next closeup pan-shot of a seated group of women in the marriage market is also reminiscent of Gérôme’s *Terrace of the Seraglio*. Like Gérôme’s painting, *Intolerance* depicts one woman of the group combing the hair of another one who may be exhibited next on the stage of marriage. Although the two incidents differ in their location and purpose, both presentations show Eastern women, dancing around the pool on the terrace of the harem or in the marriage market, preparing themselves and waiting for the sole purpose of being selected by a man for sexual gratification and procreation. Griffith worked within the contemporary sphere of Western thought to depict the East. To use Said’s words, Griffith, like Gerôme and Wilde, “makes the Orient speak, describes the Orient, renders its mysteries plain for and to the West” (*Orientalism* 20-1). However, I will show in
Chapter Four of this dissertation that Eastern cinema also speaks the language of the West not only for cinemagoers in Eastern countries but for Western audiences as well.

The director, D. W. Griffith also knew how to appeal to modern taste and recognized the effect of the feminine body on the spectator. Film historian Miriam Hansen’s discussion of silent films before Hollywood alludes to the fact that the number of dancers and dance scenes in early films defined early modernist spectatorship (38). Like the women in contemporary paintings and art, Griffith’s depiction of women was modernized to appeal and attract the spectator. The body of the female was indispensable to such a director as Griffith. Elizabeth Coffman points out that this appropriation resulted also from the impact of the contemporary physical culture that incorporated “health sciences” in school systems (79). The French theorist François Delsarte (1811-1871), the founder of the physical culture movement, attracted attention to the body in motion because he emphasized the relationship between the body and spirit as a means of power. His methods, which combined gestures, emotional and symbolic meaning, and tableaux-like poses, emphasized the interaction and reciprocity of both the physical and spiritual entities of the dancer (Stebbins 67). In like manner and perhaps consequently, Griffith attracted the attention of the spectator with the exotic allure of the female body and the contemporary emphasis on her physical fitness. Therefore, the dancing-steps in The Fall of Babylon become more gymnastic-like in the later scene of the temple of the goddess.

Dressed in costumes made of thin light fabric, gathered sometimes on the hip with a belt, the priestesses of Ishtar take turns dancing for their goddess. While the holy water
is spraying from the mouth of the sculptured lion, some dancers lie or stand, suggestively adorned with flowers and smooth fabric. Cinematically, they are spotlighted, vignetted, and faded-in individually or in groups. A few dancers stand across from each other, jump towards each other, follow each other, and run from one side of the screen to the other. More dancers display themselves provocatively next to the holy fountain, in the sacred garden, and on the steps of Ishtar’s temple. The body of the dancing priestesses signifies an actual or implied mobilization, which reflects both exhilarating Eastern spirituality and logical Western physicality.

The next dance takes place in the interior of the Royal Palace of Belshazzar, in the harem section of Attera (Seena Owen), the beloved princess of Belshazzar and “the very dearest of the dancing girls” (Intolerance I). Owen appears magnificent in her beaded dress, elaborate hairstyle, and ornamented headpiece, while the jewels, bracelets, and feathers that complement her make-up of black kohl, white powder, and dark lipstick. The curtains on the intricate back wall of her splendid room pull back to reveal a dance scene on the steps of the adjacent courtyard. Dressed in a variety of silky layered clothes, the dancers climb up and down the steps or in a circle with their arms held up or fluttering up and down in positions inspired by ancient Egyptian paintings. Located on the top of the stairs, one of them twirls around with her hands up towards the sky then makes her way down to join another dancer. Another dancer rotates while holding up a veil connected to her head. Some women musicians play the harp and other stringed instruments to accompany a dancer who is covered with a long thin veil. Her dance routine combines the veiled dance style of Loie Fuller and the twirling style of the
Eastern dervishes. She spins around holding her arms in the air while her palms face upward, next to her head. The direct spotlight reveals the naked body of the dancer and shows the belt that covers her hips. While enchanted by the music and dance, Belshazzar tells his beloved words of love and fascination: “the fragrant mystery of [her] body” that is “greater than the mystery of life” (Intolerance I). This fantastic entertainment seems to set the mood for lovemaking while it puts the robust guard of the harem at ease, so he dozes off sitting on the floor next to the door. That such an event does not strike his curiosity indicates the frequency of lovemaking in the palace.

The sexual mood of the palace is also emphasized by the shots of the foreign mountain woman who begs the king to liberate her and prevent her from being sold to the men who do not appreciate her rustic appearance and rough attitude. None of them has bid on her after a long wait in the marriage market. Belshazzar grants the mountain woman her wish and gives her his permission to decide her destiny. She responds to his generosity by dedicating herself to fight for him. She prepares ready to bare arms against the Persian Cyrus and his army of Persians, Medes, Ethiopians, and barbarian men who invade Babylon.

In contrast, Attera stays in the palace, crying and assuring Belshazzar:

My Lord, like white pearls I shall keep my tears in an ark of silver for your return. I bite my thumb! I strike my girdle! If you return not, I go to the death halls of Allat. (Intolerance I)

This comparison introduces the disfunctionality of the dancer and her dependant personality. She is incapable of participating in serious situations and her role is to please
her mate and support him emotionally inside the palace. The camera alternates between the local and “foreign” woman and demonstrates their different reactions. Only the woman who does not belong to this society can become functional and her deeds and sacrifice benefits everyone.

The roles of both women continue to develop in Act Two of *The Fall of Babylon*. This section starts with the hospitality of Belshazzar and the grand festivities inside the walls of Babylon, which includes rejoicing about the Babylonian triumph against the enemies. This occasion presents the last dance segment in this episode and the greatest in length. The dancers now are dressed in a variety of costumes that may indicate the different background of the worshippers who participate in the celebration. They appear in Roman stola, Indian sari, loose dress, or skirt and top with a scarf around the hip. They move up and down the steps in the center of the city where the statue of Ishtar is installed, holding their arms up in an ancient Egyptian style in praise of their goddess. They thank Ishtar for her support during the war and celebrate the memory of the resurrection of Tammouz, the god of beauty and youth.

The Denishawn group of Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn performs the longest and the most choreographed dance piece in *The Fall of Babylon*. A large group of dancers wears thin skirts with decorated belts around their hips. Then they form a circle and twirl around with their hands, supporting each side of their heads above the ears. They stand still with their hands crossing and holding their necks. In the middle of the circle, the main duo, (Ruth St. Denis and her partner) personifying an Egyptian couple, lift their legs and take big steps forward. Their left hands are behind their heads and their right ones
are extended to the front. They circle together at the bottom of the steps, then separate and face each other while bowing. Each partner then spins around, crosses in front of each other, and stands opposite the other dancer with the hands forward as if carrying an offering. Meanwhile, the chorus of dancers extend their arms to one side, then to the other, and lower their bodies down and then up. These dancers then extend their arms toward the inner side of the circle and then to the outside. They pivot with their arms up while the couple poses, facing each other, and moves toward each other.

The camera focuses now on a solo dancer performing on the altar of love, surrounded by an orgy of men and women intoxicated by the fire of love and filling the whole area with their bodies. The performer lifts her right arm above her head and leans back, then extends both arms on her side, and bows forward. She then extends her right hand down and bends her body forward. She repeats the same sequence with the other hand while a man beneath her reaches up to hold her. The dancer ignores the touches of the extended man and continues her performance.

At the other end, the couple and the chorus group continue dancing. The male dancer moves forward, extending his right arm forward until the upward-facing palms of the two chorus dancers in the front frame his head. Once in this position, the dancer lifts himself on his toes, and while the dancers shift their position to turn away from him, he turns his back, retreating toward his partner. There, he pivots and stands in front of his partner while the chorus faces them. In general, this sequence routine presents Babylonians of different ethnicities dancing to celebrate, serve, and please the goddess. They also enjoy themselves, attract attention to their beauty, and seek sexual pleasure.
Many of the dance scenes demonstrate the influence of ballet, fantasize on the Eastern theme, and draw inspiration from choreographed steps of contemporary theatrical performances.

The camera shifts to another dance scene that celebrates the sacred female. It shows a veiled woman representing Ishtar, seated with hands placed on open knees. A slow brilliant flash focuses on her genitalia and reveals its shape, as if to restrict the female to her sexuality and acknowledge her only for her organ. Two women sit down at her feet while two pairs of women dressed in veils and turbans in Middle Eastern style, bracelets and necklaces, hug each other behind her. Other women who are dressed in brocaded abayas or caftans with veils and turbans on their heads take off their abayas, revealing short thin dresses. They dance and lift cups, leaning forward to their right side to drink their liquor in preparation for the orgy. Griffith also includes exotic animals to enhance the erotic message of the scenery. The camera zooms in to show the hand of a man caressing a tiger while another one carries a monkey on his back. The closeup of the monkey shows him also looking around for some excitement. The reference to a suggestion of immoral sexual practices and an oulandish way of life give the viewer a reason to sympathize with the patriarchal priest who conspires against the believers of Ishtar.

Meanwhile, the emphasis on the sexual role of the dancers continues by means of contrast with the alien mountain woman. The guard prevents her from entering the city to participate in the celebration, because she was not a citizen and does not have the secret password known by the Babylonians. Like Salomé, only when she uses her
femininity does she acquire her power. The foreign woman flirts with Rhapsode, who opens up and confides the secret password and relates the conspiracy of the priests against Babylon. The priests of Bel seek outside help to secure their powerful position against Ishtar. While the dancers of the goddess entertain men, the foreign woman spies on the camp of the enemy and rushes back to warn the king. She fights for him and dies heroically defending the city. In contrast, Attera kills herself and dies romantically with Belshazzar.

The deaths of Attera and the naïve woman emphasize the sad condition of Eastern women and highlight causes for the ruin of the exotic civilization. Griffith’s Babylon was ruined not only because of the jealousy of men and their thirst for power and conspiracy, but also because of the recklessness of its women who distracted men away from civic matters. The preoccupation with dance and sex provided by the dancers during the celebration diverted the warriors and, therefore, caused the end of Babylon and its great culture. The dancer was instrumental in the downfall of Babylon, the cradle of civilization, which was stripped of power. As a remedy, the dancer must forget her vanity and sexuality, dedicate herself to serving her country, and concern herself with “rocking the cradle.” A woman may also be useful when she serves the male authority in her life. In other words, through the use of the dancer and her unsophisticated opposite, Intolerance, while undermining the exotic culture, holds women responsible for the success of their country, and they must sacrifice themselves for its survival.

The Eastern dancer continues to reveal bad behavior in the 1921 silent film The Sheik, a classic of Western cinema.
Edith Maude Hull wrote her novel *The Sheik* in 1919 in accordance with the mood of her time. The West looked at the East as a place of chaos that needed its Western authority. In pursuit of this necessary control, Britain and France convinced the Arab countries to help them defeat the Ottoman Empire. The war resulted in signing the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916 that divided the Arab world among England, France, and Russia and assigned them protectorates of the various territories (Goldschmidt 191). Movies and literature supported such political decisions by creating the images of Arabs as backward savages thereby justifying colonial invasions. Concisely, the East was constructed as an inferior that must be controlled and guided to save it from its own destruction and secure its prosperity. For instance, *The Sheik* presents the Easterner people as irrational and dangerous and ultimately in need of foreign leadership. They are treated like a sensual and irrational “female” that needed to be monitored by the potent and rational “masculine” authority. The Western elements that prevail in portraying the Eastern cultures, such as irrationality, weakness, and subordination represent these societies approximate to the depiction of women. Ella Shohat echoes Said’s point of Western feminization of the East (*Orientalism* 207) and argues that: “Hollywood’s view of the Orient is not simply symptomatic of colonialist imagination but also a product of (Western) male gaze” (40). Accordingly, Monte M. Katterjohn adapted Hull’s novel in 1921 for the director George Melford, who put together the elements that established *The Sheik*’s success. The romantic story, the rescue theme, an Italian actor, a sweet actress,
the mixture of violence and exotic dancing that appealed to both men and women were factors in making the film a success.

The Eastern dancer in *The Sheik* first appears practicing her routine in the hallway of a club reserved for Eastern men only who have gathered to purchase women for their harem. Lady Diana Mayo (Agnes Ayres), a cultivated young British woman who is shockingly determined to take a trip alone without a male escort, cannot accept the decision of the “savage” Sheik Ahmed Ben Hassan (Rudolf Valentino) to exclude Westerners from attending the bazaar. She is curious to learn the reason for the ban and wants to go to this private event.

In order to make her way in, Diana decides to disguise herself as a dancer when she notices a performer entertaining customers in a private section of the club. Diana bargains with the native performer, who gives her a full dancing costume, which consists of a dark colored pantaloon, a white long sleeve blouse, a short vest, veil, turban, bracelets, and necklaces. Diana puts the dancer’s outfit on, wraps herself in an *abaya*, covers her face with a *burqa*, and sits on the floor with the native women who wait their turn to be sold.

As a Western woman, she appears courageous and confident. She defies the sheik, snoops around, and refuses to accept the patriarchal authority of the East. Diana represents the civilized “new woman” who decides on her own actions and challenges the restrictions imposed on her. She disguises herself and sits with the Eastern women,

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40 The term “new woman” first appeared in the 1890s in publications like *North American Review* and *Outlook*, which dealt with issues of concern to women. They portrayed the new woman as independent, educated, and an active participant in her family. She was also the woman who chose social activism and a career instead of marriage (Higashi 87).
not out of compassion and support, but to defy, experience, and learn about the “other” without their permission. She also assumes a masculine-like position through her Western gaze, which is now granted to her because she is in the East. Ella Shohat points out: “[T]he Western woman character, largely the passive object of the male gaze in Hollywood cinema, is granted in the East an active (colonial) gaze, insofar as she represents Western civilization (41). In other words, the hierarchy of power grants the Western woman a unique position in the East. She gazes on others not to understand but to compare and satisfy her ego. She feels superior to the barbarous rituals of the East and, therefore, the Eastern women who participate in them.

In contrast, the Eastern dancers in the club try to increase their purchase value by advertising their flexible bodies, physical skills, and ability to entertain, all of which are presented through the dances performed by each of them. One of these dancers whirls like a dervish and swings from side to side with her arms up. She skillfully exhibits her mastery in shimmying her hips, leaping in the air, balancing on her tiptoes, twirling around while twisting the body from side to side, lifting her foot to her head, and isolating her hips; these are movements that may or may not have originated in the East. Her decorated costume complements her choreography and emphasizes her body.

The costume of this dancer is more sophisticated than that of Gérôme’s almeh, which does not have beads, and the top consists of a simple small vest. Although the gauze over the midriff is still worn by the dancer in The Sheik, its effect is lost by the decorative strings of beads that hang from the bra and the hip-belt. They hide the gauze under them and accentuate the movement of the body. The dancer also wears a flared
skirt that forms a circle around her legs when she twirls and a headpiece similar to a crown that makes her look taller than her actual height. As a result, she attracts the attention of the buyers who rush to gamble on a game of roulette to win her.

Diana’s attire is somewhat similar to the dancer on the stage but her background and skin-color differ from the local women’s. She reveals herself when the guard chooses her to go on stage to present her skills. Diana hesitates because she wants to observe the event without following the rules of “the slave mart of the barbarous past” (The Sheik). She considers herself a free and independent individual who does not belong to this crowd of women, nor does she believe in their customs. Diana also contrasts her curiosity and critical thinking to the idleness of Eastern women and compares her good fortune to their misery. Her Western background, of course, did not include shimmying the hips, lifting the arms, twirling, or exhibiting dance skills as a means of marrying the highest bidder. In addition, if she dances, she will forfeit her cover and be recognized as an intruder who may be punished or even sold. Her refusal to go on stage attracts the attention of the sheik who notices her pale skin. He removes her burqa. When he discovers her “golden” hair he announces the news cheerfully to the rest of the men. She surprises him with a gun in her hand as he continues to remove her abaya. Realizing she is a Westerner who only aims to defy his masculine Eastern authority, the sheik treats her as such and escorts her politely to the exit door of the club. Diana is respected, protected, and allowed to execute her intention without being punished in the presence of Eastern men.
Diana’s attitude challenged Sheik Ahmed, so he decides to abduct her and teach her a lesson on obedience. He sets the mood of his intention by singing under her window: “Pale hands I love, Beside the Shalimar. Where are you now? Who lies beneath your spell?” (The Sheik). Ahmed chases Diana into the desert, sweeps her off her horse, and carries her to his camp. There, the sheik justifies his behavior by informing the English woman that he abducted her because she is beautiful; therefore, he encourages the gaze of the spectator to look closely at her features and admire her as an ideal. The sheik also tells her that she must change her ways and learn to obey his orders. Diana, alone and vulnerable, tries to escape when she realized that no one is going to come to her rescue because she suppose to be traveling alone in the desert. She threatens her abductor that she will kill herself before giving him her love. At this point, Diana prays on her knees while the camera zooms in on her face to show the cross she wears on her neck as a contrast to the Eastern paraphernalia inside the tent. This shot highlights an important aspect of Diana’s spirituality; while adding the beauty of her soul to her physical beauty, she attracts sympathy from the spectators. Only then does the sheik realize her helplessness and soon when she convinces him of her submissiveness and tamed attitude, he becomes affectionate. When Sheik Ahmad realizes that she loves him and vice versa, he feels ashamed of the way he has treated her and decides to let her go back to Biskra. Unfortunately, the bandit Omair (Walter Long) abducts Diana and takes her to his camp for his sexual pleasure.

The film next presents the dancing women again at the camp of Omair. The dancers take turn in entertaining the crowd in a khan similar to the one where the almeh
of Gérôme danced. Many of these dancers wear long dresses gathered on the waist with a belt. They adorn themselves with veils and wear bands of coin jewelry on their foreheads and necks. Some of them also cover their faces with burqas. They swing to the front and back, from side to side, and lift their bodies up and then down to the rhythm of the musicians who sit on the floor. Many of the seated, crouched, and standing guests sip their coffee and eat while enchanted by the music and dancing. The camera alternates among shots of Diana’s room and her guard who is similar to Gérôme’s in the painting of *The Guard of the Harem* (the Wallace Collection in London) of 1859,\(^{41}\) as well as the dancing girls.

The performers continue their entertainment while Omair instructs his guard to bring him “the white gazelle”\(^{42}\) and keep his eye on his “jealous” wife (*The Sheik*). The crosscutting switches between the dancing girls, the attack on Diana in Omair’s bedroom, and Ahmed’s leading his men to rescue his beloved. Omair is surprised by his wife; he kills her with the same knife she brought to attack him and continues his attempt to rape his unwilling captive. The visual fragments of dancing, killing, raping, and the sheik’s followers merge together through the crosscutting between the different actions. By switching from one scene to another, the camera creates a sequence that establishes a link between these activities. It translates as an acceptance of killing and raping which are

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\(^{41}\) According to Ackerman, this 9.25 x 6 inches painting is a replica, copy, or imitation of the lost *Eunuch Guarding the Door* (208). This work is autographed by the artist and therefore considered his work (*Orientalists* 12).

\(^{42}\) It is common in Arabic cultures to associate the gazelle with a beautiful woman. Many poems from the *Jahilia* era, before Islam, until the present day, use the gazelle metaphorically to refer to the beautiful eyes, long neck, gracefulness, and buoyancy of woman.
ignored and tolerated—if not celebrated—in the original countries where the Eastern dancers perform. The Eastern dance is included in this film not only to indicate the indifference to and acceptance by Eastern women of violence and rape, but also to relate it to the physical brutality of both offenses.

_The Sheik’s_ depiction of Eastern women and their environment differ from that of contemporary Western women who after the First World War became an undeniable force as consumers. Such women attracted the attention of the film industry, which acknowledged their powerful role and started catering to their interests. Romantic plots, fantasized settings, and handsome actors, attracted women to picture shows. Miriam Hansen points out that “women’s increased importance as consumers” generated male stars such as Valentino (248). Jeanine Basinger notes that “[h]is filmed image was directed at women who wanted to escape the bounds of a constricting society that gave only men sexual freedom” (308). In this regard, women as consumers enticed the motion picture industry to produce films that appealed to their sexual fantasies. They supported _The Sheik_ because they could admire the beauty of the famous Italian-American actor and realize a romantic dream by imagining themselves in Diana’s place. Dancer Lori Anne Salem also discusses the role of Rudolph Valentino in attracting Western women and relates the film’s appeal to Western men because it expresses “enough patriarchy to satisfy” them. Men connected with Valentino given his superiority, authority, and eloquent ways in dealing with women (225). Of course, some men could learn from Valentino in the way that he appealed, seduced, and pleased women while others might be threatened by his attraction. According to _Motion Picture Magazine_, each woman
measured her husband according to the “standard” she found in Rudolph Valentino, who was considered the competitor of every husband (27-8; qtd. in Basinger 287). Dick Dorgan, one of the men who felt threatened by the charm of the hero, responded to the Valentino craze in his poem “A Song of Hate.” The poem was published in *Photoplay* with two caricatures of the star showing the star from a male and a female perspective. It begins:

> I hate Valentino! All men hate Valentino. I hate his oriental optics; I hate his classic nose; I hate his Roman face […]. The Women are all dizzy over him […]. What! Me jealous?–Oh, no–I just Hate Him. (26; qtd. in Hansen 258)

Other men, attracted to the new effeminate look, mesmerizing gaze, and chic vanity, imitated the famous star. Fashion designers such as Natasha Rambova (née Winifred Hudnut), Georges Barbier, and Adrian influenced Valentino’s fans by their extraordinary designs that complemented the actor’s look. Fashion historian Sandy Schreier points out Valentino’s effect on fashion, referring to the tall astrakhan hat designed by Adrian, which established a fashion trend in 1925 when the star wore it in *The Eagle* (35). Both sexes may have seen Valentino as a hero whose actions and behaviors created a fashion trend popularized through movies.

The most significant factor in establishing the refined taste and “Western” background of the sheik was his relationship to the dancers. He went to the marriage market either to solve the dispute of the Eastern men over a woman or witness the financial transaction. He did not bid or purchase any dancer to accumulate them in his
camp. Only one modest woman is introduced in his camp to serve and ease Diana’s desperation. She speaks French, appears sympathetic, and provides a shoulder for Diana to cry on. She is useful because she was trained by Westerners. Ahmed’s habits are not degraded, and his attraction is based on Western ideals. He may enjoy the dancer, but would not choose her as his bride because she does not challenge him and her beauty does not appeal to him. His desire is provoked by visual aesthetics; for example, Diana is white, therefore beautiful, and worthy of the power-challenging relationship provided by her Western background. Accordingly, the fans sympathize with the hero because of his choice of women and the type of interplay he demands from his partner. Also, as it will be revealed later, the sheik was actually a Westerner by birth and educated in the West; therefore, his ideals and thoughts are of the West. Consequently, the Western sheik was not only a signifier of strength and authority, but also a focal point for the evaluation of the two cultures. His character signifies the West and attached to the immediate present in comparison to the dancer, who signifies the East and belongs to the exotic. To use Said’s words: the East is “a world elsewhere, apart from the ordinary attachments, sentiments, and values of our world in the West” (*Orientalism* 190). The visual contrast in silent cinema then, created a silent dialogue between the hero and the spectators, and encouraged them to form a bond between each other. The message of Valentino’s character and his actions in the movie strengthen the audience’s support and appreciation of their culture, and thereby, reinforce the “civilized” modes of their society. Now, in *The Sheik*, they discover the “true” East, and as Said notes, “Knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so on” (36), then the Western spectator
depends on films to provide himself or herself with more information about the East. Nevertheless, this romantic view of reality limits people’s interest in furthering serious investigation to comprehend Eastern cultures. The Silent films, like the paintings of Gérôme, satisfy the emotion and discourage intellectual responses simultaneously because it leaves no place for a positive reception of the East.

Also, the immediate visual disparity between Eastern and Western women accessible to the audience instructs Western women that there is no need to rebel; not only are their lives better than Eastern women’s lives but they do not have to place their physical skills on exhibition to shape their destiny. They attract the romantic lover because of their devotion and fine behavior. As a group then, the spectators’ feeling of superiority and solidarity regenerate dedication and power that eliminate undesirable influences, restores the masculine authority, and proclaims hierarchy over other cultures.

Of course, in The Sheik the hero rescues the “Lady” from the Eastern murderer and rapist who entertains his gang with the dancers. The film has a happy ending of love and prosperity for the Western woman, and degradation and ruin for the Eastern woman whose city was ruined and the men were killed. The sequel of the film, The Son of the Sheik, as I will show, continues to highlight the role of the dancer and her effect on the male actor and the female spectator.

**The Son of the Sheik**

*The Son of the Sheik* (1926) is a film based on the novel *The Sons of the Sheik* by Edith Maude Hull published in 1925. The story was adapted by Frances Marion and Fred
De Gresac, and directed by George Fitzmaurice. It tells about Ahmed (Rudolph Valentino) who falls in love with Yasmin (Vilma Banky), an Eastern dancer. The companions of her father André (George Fawcett) are instructed by Ghaba (Montagu Love), the leader of the gang to capture Ahmed when the young lovers are having a rendezvous and hold him for ransom. Ahmed considers Yasmin responsible and when he escapes he decides to take revenge. Ahmed brings Yasmin to his camp to teach her a lesson, but releases her when his father the Sheik (Rudolph Valentino) intervenes, and Ahmed discovers that Yasmin did not betray him. Ahmed follows Yasmin to a café, kills the thugs, rescues Yasmin and marries her.

*The Son of the Sheik* complements *The Sheik* and continues the “Sheik mania” of romantic melodramas and exotic themes in Western cinema in the first half of the twentieth century. Directors included dance scenes to portray or emphasize an exotic mood, or to exaggerate a contrasting action. Film historian Arthur Lenning considers the swirls and veil routines of the exotic dance in *The Son of the Sheik* as factors for the delightfulness and success of one of the “most passionate and romantic” films of the silent era (174-6).

Yasmin introduces her first dance as a flashback through Ahmed’s gaze. He looks at her legs moving on and off the ground. It is this part of the body that amazed Herod and caught the attention of Manet’s critics. Her sandals are topped with a thick pair of coined anklets that are supposed to give a rhythmic tinkle to her movement. Wearing a two-piece outfit she twirls and swings her body on the steps of the marketplace in Touggourt. The top is a plain bra-like piece while the bottom consists of
a pair of shorts layered with a feathered skirt made of plain and checkered strands of fabric that flares around the dancer when she swirls. On her hair, a fringed striped turban gathers near her left ear with a string of beads. She also wears bracelets and a big hoop earring dangling with coins. Yasmin also accepts a splendid ring from Ahmed as a symbol of friendship and wears it on her index finger. He offers her this gift after they decide on a meeting place in the desert. Now lovers, the two youths have been seeing each other in the same place with no problem, but this is the time when they seal their love with their first kiss that the thieves capture Ahmed. Accordingly, the sexual liaison of the couple follows Western morality, since the development of the plot prevents the youths from acting out their sexual desire and restores their pureness.

Ahmed’s capture punishes the young lovers in different ways. Ahmed suffers physical abuse by being bound, beaten, and pinched by the antagonists. His clothes are ripped off, his chest is exposed and his hands are tied above his head to a bar over a window in the ruins of a building located in the desert. Yasmin, innocent of the wrongdoing of her father’s group, suffers abuse by them and her lover. Ghaba confines her to her tent without any attention to her feelings and poisons her lover’s thoughts against her. This evil man tells Ahmed that she was involved in his capture. Ahmed believes that Yasmin conspired against him because she asked him to remove his gun, which she claimed hurt her hip when they were embracing. In other words, once again the dancer is thought of as a soulless trickster who is incapable of love.

The physical and emotional exploitation of the actors in their present situation elicits different reactions from the audience. The dancer’s interaction with Valentino sets
a mood in which the spectator thinks of him as a sexual being. The attractive Valentino, now is half-naked, bound, and displayed to pleasure the women through their gaze. This pose reverses the gender role momentarily and gives women an imaginary power that counterbalances the masculinity and svelte body of the actor on the screen. This setting in the East, then, gave Western women the power to assume the advantage of the masculine gaze. This gaze had established the superiority of the Western women over her Eastern counterpart in the earlier film, *The Sheik*, in the scene of the harem market. In *The Son of the Sheik*, the gaze also provides Western women power over the bound masculine actor on the screen.

Such films also took women on a personal voyage of fantasy through the plot and the actual theatre itself. Their mobility was internal as well as physical. They dressed up, walked down the streets, purchased their tickets, entered the theatre of pleasure, observed the other people around them, and watched the film. Thus the cinema influenced their activities in assuming the position of the *flâneuse*. Like Gérôme, Oscar Wilde and other *flâneurs* described by Baudelaire as “passionate spectator[s]” of “the flickering grace of all the elements of life” (9-10), women cinemagoers demonstrated similar behavior. Guiliana Bruno considers the cinema as an extension of *flânerie* that is founded on “the physical/emotional experience of both intimacy and collectivity, and on the dialectics of imaginary absorption” (49). Catherine Russell argues that the cinema inverted “spatial mobility, rendering the interior of the theatre as exterior space in which to wander” and modernized its “temporality” to constitute an allegorical flickering (561). The concept of the *flâneuse* as Anke Gleber suggests, offered “an alternative to woman’s
status as an image” (78-9) by tolerating her glance, stare, and look as “gaze.” Accordingly, the romantic plot of *The Son of the Sheik* mobilized and offered the modern woman an outlet for her sexual fantasy, realized in the exotic East, and manifested through the love and desire of the Eastern dancer. It also introduced Western men to the masculine side of Valentino, which fascinated the dancer.

Some critics commented on Valentino’s effeminate look and dubbed him with the name of “the pink powder puff.” They blamed Natacha Rambova, who started dating him before shooting *The Sheik* and became his wife in 1922 for “feminizing” the star (Basinger 286; Karney 184). His sexual ambiguity, however, made the actor a famous international star. Even in the East Valentino was a household name and similar to the West, women found him charismatic, while men thought of him as effeminate. For example, my grandmother and her Arab women friends use to revel over the physical beauty of Valentino and made romantic gestures whenever an occasion arose or used him as a point of comparison to another man. My grandfather, on the other hand, used to jokingly present her with bigger muscles and his hairier chest. Women’s adoration of Valentino was also strengthened by the sudden death of the young actor a few months after finishing *The Son of the Sheik*. When the film went into general release a few months after the funeral, it immortalized the actor as a romantic star.

The attraction of Valentino, who enhanced the exotic appeal of Ahmed did not distract the audience from sympathizing with the role of the stunning Vilma Banky. The character cannot be fully accepted, because she is an exotic dancer. Her appeal is immediately offset by the statement from Ahmed’s assistant, Ramadan (Karl Dane),
explaining to the doctor who takes care of Ahmed after he is rescued and brought back to his camp: “Like all youths, he loved a dancing girl. Like all dancing girls, she tricked him” (*The Son of the Sheik*). This text-card, which comes soon after the close up shots of Banky’s face, snaps the audience from their infatuation with the character of Yasmin and warns them of dancers. Exotic dancers in particular are dangerous because they infatuate, seduce, and trick inexperienced men.

The youth and innocence of Yasmin are emphasized most of all when she dances at the Café Maure. She tries to get herself in the mood for dancing at the insistence of Ghaba on a step on the side of the stage, while the other dancers sit on the stage. They are dressed in a full skirt or a pair of harem pants, a top made of light fabric and a vest, and jewelry. They eat, smoke, check their appearance in a hand-held mirror, talk to each other, and flirt with the musicians by gesturing with their eyes, mouths and hands while waiting for the beginning of the performance.

As soon as the music starts, Yasmin leaps down to the stage swinging the two small veils she holds in her hands. She lifts her body on her toes and pivots around with her arms up. The swirling veils complement the circle formed by the full twirling skirt. Yasmin kicks the bottom of the skirt away, lifts her leg up, swings her hips, then rests one arm on her waist and makes her way down on the steps towards the space between the customers of the café. Yasmin pivots, flares her skirt, works up her veils, moves around the space according to the rhythmic beat of the music, and excites the viewers. The leader of the gang interrupts her to accept a precious chain as a gift from an admirer. This customer wants to put his necklace on her but she refuses to let him touch her.
Ahmed comes in and carries her away to take revenge on her for tricking him but he also seems as if he is protecting her from Arab men.

The other dancers on stage would have accepted the present and perhaps spent time with the customer after the performance. The way they were introduced in the shot indicates their willingness and preparation for such a proposal. Yasmin, in contrast, was introduced as innocent and pure, not only because she is young but also because she is a Westerner. Yasmin, as Edith Maude Hull recounts is Isabeau de Chailles, the lost daughter of the French Réné de Chailles, and old friend of Raoul de Saint Hubert, the Sheik’s best friend (306). As such she is the heiress of wealth, property, and prestige of the rich and well-known family of de Chaille. Although this information was absent in the movie, the appearance of André with the thieves points to her Western origin.

Yasmin must not be touched by Arab men and must be restored to her culture. The audience must remember that Ahmed is also a Westerner. Agnes Ayres’s role as his mother in this movie reminds the audience of her son’s English origins. Even his father, the Sheik, is not an Arab, but was adopted by an Arab. In other words, the dancer Yasmin does not represent the authentic dancers of Eastern origin. She adopts their dances because she is forced to earn money for he father’s group. Her sensibility and good manners are those of the West and thus she may be accused of treachery, but she refuses to cheat, lie, accept presents from customers, and behave cheaply. When she dances, she forgoes displaying herself like the other dancers; on the contrary, she lets the music guide her and becomes absorbed in the rhythm.
In rescuing Yasmin from her ill fate, the Western hero displays his ability to save his partner and offers her the good life she deserves. The dancer herself was also rescued from the fate of a life time of dancing, and her femininity is restored as she becomes cherished as a respected member of her original society. This Western way of life, of course, is also governed by patriarchy, but in comparison to the Eastern ways, it is highly preferable. The Western hero would lose his attraction as a savior of women because soon women would be presented as being capable of shaping their own destiny while still needing male support to justify their choices. The Eastern dancer, conversely, would continue her voyage as a central cinematic character.

**Hoopla**

*Hoopla* (1933) is a film that also includes the motif of the Eastern dancer as a major character in its plot. Here the dancer is also a Westerner, but from the lower class. She dances out of necessity to earn her living but hoping that eventually she can change her life. Clara Bow (Lou) dances as Fatima in a small carnival. Chris (Richard Cromwell), the son of the manager Nifty (Preston Foster), visits the carnival and falls in love with Lou. Nifty urges his son to leave Lou but the lovers get married and move to Chicago. Lou dances in a Chicago midway to support Chris while he studies law. Nifty realizes the girl’s love and sincerity and helps her in touting her dancing to sell more tickets for her performances.

The theme of *Hoopla* is somewhat similar to *The Son of the Sheik*. It introduces the Eastern dancer as a thief and a liar who is pursued by law enforcement. Lou (Clara
Bow) tricks a young man and steals a diamond ring from him. She lies to the police and tells the two inspectors that the young man gave her the ring. She also agrees to a deal with another dancer, Carrie (Minna Combell), who pays her to trick Chris (Richard Cromwell), the son of their manager Nifty (Preston Foster). Carrie wants to take revenge on Nifty because he rejected her for his son’s sake. Carrie offers to pay Lou a substantial amount of money if she makes tricks Chris. Lou has to make him fall in love with her. The unexpected complication happens when Lou also falls in love with Chris, an event that changes her. Only then does Lou become honest and sincere. She confesses her love to the young man and tells Chris about the deal with the other dancer. He forgives Lou, stands by her against his father, weds her, and takes her away to Chicago.

As the plot develops, the dancer is seen as inherently wicked but becomes more sympathetic when she finds love. The young man causes her to change her habits and attitudes towards life. He also affects her dancing, which develops into a temporary job to help her partner. Her Eastern dancing is no longer a way to seduce and trick people, but a step forward towards a better life for her family. She dances in the Snake Hips show at The Chicago Midway with the intention of supporting her husband; in other words, her femininity casts away the element of danger prevailing in the Western films of the thirties because she uses it in a decent cause.

Lou appears on stage accompanied by a drummer and a flute player. She sparkles in her seductive costume that consists of a bra with one strap above her right shoulder. Her skirt has four long slits up to her upper leg, which from the front expose the sparkly shorts that she wears underneath. The top part of the costume and the skirt are connected
with a thin strap zigzagged over the dancer’s bare stomach. As the Snake Hip dancer, Lou wears a matching cuff on her right wrist and an anklet of the same material on the left leg. Her coiffure is short and curly, decorated with a shimmering headband that falls to her jaws. She wears a pair of high heels on her feet.

This costume differs from the outfits of the dancers in *The Sheik*, *The Son of the Sheik*, the paintings of Gérôme, and the one that is worn by Oscar Wilde as Salomé, in its glittery appearance, creative fashion and Hollywood-like sophistication. This attire is as elegant as the dress of Salomé in the painting of Moreau. The costume designer of the film, Rita Kaufman, must have designed this garment specifically to complement Bow’s figure and emphasize her body movements. The outfit appeals to the senses because of its novelty, beauty, tight fitting, and the way it harmonizes with the serpentine moves of the performance. In other words, the Hollywood designers adopted creative ways to reveal more of the feminine body, while using more sophisticated props to enhance its sexuality. The visual statement of the Eastern dancer depends now not only on her movements and choreography but also on her stylish figure, which is enhanced by the couture designed to fit the dancer and her step arrangement.

The Hip Snake dance starts with the swinging of the hips following the rhythm of the drum and the melody of the flute, as performed by the musicians to the right of the dancer. Soon after, the arms extend to the front, and the weight shifts from one leg to another. The dancer claps twice and puts one hand on her forehead, then claps again and touches her forehead with the other hand. She claps again and holds her right elbow while the right arm goes up and the wrist circles around, then claps and repeats the same
move with the other arm. This move, although it was performed before the stardom of Carmen Miranda (1909-1955), is similar to her dance. Now, the dancer bends her knees and swivels downward, then stands up and poses with her right arm above her head. This dance routine emphasizes the flexibility of the dancer because it does not include jumping and twirling like the earlier films. The choreography emphasizes the hips and arms as the primary elements to accomplish the dance. The dancer’s shimmery costume, her elongated figure that is helped by the high heels, and her contemporary hairstyle adds a theatrical elegance to her performance and presents her as a star. Her revealing costume, which also draws attention to its beauty, elevates the sexuality advertised by the revealed parts of the body to a fantasy.

The clothes designed for a specific theatrical act integrate the action and the material in the mind of the viewer as one entity. For example, a light organza dress with long sleeves and a décolleté may indicate a romantic mood; a long sleeved neutral cotton dress may show a lesser status. The costume of the Snake Hip dancer tells the audience that revealing parts of the body through the shimmering or beaded fabric is essential for the allure of the Eastern dancer. Without the specially designed costume, jewelry, coiffure, and high heels, the dance routine cannot evoke such a dream-like appeal.

This costume enhances the femininity of the dancer, fixes the gaze on her, and renders her a fetish of desire. Laura Mulvey explains that “the eroticized form of the female star” produces “a perfect, streamlined image of femininity” that encourages fetishism” (Fetishism 8). Only through sophisticated fashion and delicate choreography is the Eastern dancer able to project a stylish image of a star. Basinger points out that the
women in the movies of the first half of the twentieth-century were largely defined by what they wore. The fashion of a star was designed to stir longing, passion, envy, and shopping (116). Elegance or couture functioned as a vehicle to attract people to the movie theatre where they fulfilled their desires in style and a more elevated way. It became chic to go the movies to share the fantasy of the plot and fashionable to imitate the look and fashion of the moviestars.

Jessy Lasky, Adolph Zukor, Samuel Goldwyn, Cecil B. DeMille, and Albert Kaufman, the founding fathers of the film industry, emphasized beautiful clothes in films because of their interest in costuming. Lasky, a vaudeville performer; Zukor, a Chicago furrier; Mayer, a New York button dealer; Goldwyn, an East Coast glove manufacturer, Carl Laemmle, a haberdasher; and William Fox, a garment manufacturer, all made fashion a major component of a movie’s success (Schreier 27). They certainly knew the effect of fashion on the audience and the ability of film to advertise their interests. Women liked to imitate the dress of their heroines in order to live out their dream, while men liked to see attainable women in the fanciful attire of their fantasy. Moviegoers elevated their status by imitating the behavior and donning the clothing of the stars and learned new visions of life, beauty, and sexuality from the cinematic characters.

Eroticizing the Eastern dancer of Hoopla was a step toward eroticizing Western woman in general. The Eastern dancer as a glamorized heroine is not a Salomé anymore, because she earns enough money to sustain herself and maybe her partner too. She is a role model who learns fast and adopts exotic dancing to her advantage without jeopardizing her status because she performs on stage and fashions herself luxuriously.
Mulvey points out that the richness of a setting disguises the fetishised object in the scene and disavows its effect (*Fetishism* 12). Therefore, the dancer’s wealthy appearance reduces the vulgarity of the erotic and harnesses aesthetic pleasure and formal delight.

The dancer must be *in love* to operate within the correct limits of her society and maintain acceptable conduct. This is a circumstance that manifests itself in most films with a female heroine. It seems that no matter where the story is set, who stars in it, what other genre it is mixed with, or what happens in its plot, films of the first half of the twentieth century reminded women that they have a biological function related to their role as women. To become an effective heroine a female character had to acknowledge the purpose of her existence and behave accordingly. Countess de Lave (Mary Boland) sings in *The Women* (1939): “Oh, a man can ride a horse to the range above, but a woman has to ride on the wings of love.” This line sums up the difference between men and women and indicates the only way to justify a woman’s success. Likewise, the dancer in *Hoopla* is justified because she is married to the man she loves and works to help her family. Although she adopted an exotic form of dance, the Eastern dancer has become a role model as a result of sophistication, passion, and sacrifice.

Shaping the Eastern dancer by Western artists in Western cinema not only disconnected her from ritual and tradition but also made her conform to a Western code of femininity that trapped her in a masculine system of representation. The true Eastern dancer uses the trap to her advantage. She utilizes her seductive power to become a celebrity, to acquire the status of an important person. Also, by revealing her beauty and style, she acquires the charisma necessary to maintain her influence. In other words, the
Eastern dancer finds a way out of her entrapment by being “fashionably correct” and irresistibly feminine. These two elements coupled with skillful choreography allow her to establish herself as a powerful businesswoman who has the ability to be professionally and economically secure as shown in the next film.

*Salome Where She Danced*[^43]

*Salome Where She Danced* keeps the dancer within the chic style of Hollywood but introduces her as an independent woman who knows how to use her skills to satisfy herself. Anna Maria (Yvonne De Carlo), the Viennese dancer known as Salome, is presented as a multi-talented woman who performs both Western and Eastern dances.

Anna Maria’s performance at the Berlin Opera in 1866 includes a dance to the music of the *Blue Danube* of Johann Strauss followed by her special rendition of *Salome*.[^44] Jim Steed (Rod Cameron), an American war correspondent, overhears the Count Von Bismarck (Kurt Katch) in his box at the opera, complimenting the beauty of the dancer, pointing out her connection to the royal family of Austria, and urging his guest, Count Von Bohlen (Albert Dekker), to win over the dancer by giving her flowers and champagne. Jim meets the dancer in her room and convinces her that if she extracts Prussia’s plan of the war against Austria from Von Bohlen, he will warn Vienna about it. Salome accepts the invitation of Von Bohlen, obtains from him the plan of the war, and

[^43]: The writer will use Salome instead of Salomé because it is spelled this way in the film.
[^44]: Johann Strauss Jr. (1825-99) composed *An der schönen blauen Donau (On the Beautiful Blue Danube)* in 1866. Richard Strauss (1864-1949) composed *Salomé* in 1905. The film of *Salome Where She Danced* confuses the dates of the two compositions and places *Salomé* in the much earlier time of the earlier composer.
passes it to her accomplice. While watching a battle, Jim falls next to the body of the
Prince of Hapsburg, Salome’s lover. Jim recognizes the royal man from the locket that
contains Salome’s picture and the packet of letters in his jacket. The letters include a
declaration that can reveal her as a spy. Jim secures the letters and convinces Salome and
her piano professor Max (J. Edward Bromberg) to escape from Vienna and come with
him to America. Salome dances her way to California and on the way she attracts many
men, including Cleve Blunt (David Bruce), an American bandit.

Anna Maria’s performance at the opera in Berlin introduces her as an innocent,
fragile, and pure mermaid-like dancer. She emerges from a huge seashell wearing a
white Romantic tutu and a silken bustier strapped around her shoulders and decorated
with little white flowers. The camera zooms in to reveal the detailed beauty of the
dancer’s face. Red lipstick emphasizes her full lips, the big innocent blue eyes stare
angelically at the spectators, and small white flowers accent the long, dark hair that
gathers behind the dancer’s long neck. Count Von Bismarck passes the binoculars to
Count Von Bohlen just in time as the dancer is pirouetting with her arms up and skirt
flowing to expose her upper legs and her ruffled bloomers.

Anna Maria’s femininity projects the image of an innocent prima ballerina when,
in fact, she is a Mata Hari or a Lola Montez type of dancer. She knows her powerful
effect on the spectators and knows how to attract their gaze. Anna Maria notices the
aristocracy of Europe looking at her from their boxes, examining every muscle on her
body, and feels their intense gazes on her flesh. She reveals her disgust when she
complains to Sophie, her maid, backstage during the entr’acte, thinking that they are
alone in the room: “Every man disrobes me.” Like many female characters in narrative films set in the mid-nineteenth century, the dancer seems to rebel against her position as an object of desire, as marginal, and as other. This notion relates to E. Ann Kaplan’s analysis of the psychology of prostitution:

[W]hich involves split subjectivity, the woman becoming at once object of the male look, but also aware of presenting herself for the male look. She deliberately uses her body as spectacle, as object-to-be-looked-at, and manipulates the structures that privilege the male gaze for her own ends.

(39)

This attitude is confirmed in the film by the statement of Jim who hears the dancer’s complaint about the masculine gaze and replies to the astonished dancer who was not aware of his presence: “I’d say ma’am, there is not much to disrobe” (Salome Where She Danced). This expression marks the first of many instances in the film that unite Western men, regardless of their nationality or status, in their opinion about dancers and their attire. Both the German aristocracy and the American middle class see her, in this instance, as a sexual object for their gratification and think that she should be available for them physically as well.

Through the binoculars of the aristocracy, the film introduces the ballerina as a sexual object for the entertainment and satisfaction of men. Her role is emphasized in contrast to the counts, as authoritative officers who move the narrative forward through their discussion. They not only undress her with their gaze but also their actions introduce her femininity as a static aspect in the plot. Thus, the male assumes the active
role while the woman is passive. Laura Mulvey notes that this role re-designates woman as exhibitionist, to be looked at and displayed for the male who projects his fantasy onto her figure (309). Anna Maria is isolated, glamorous, and on display in a style appealing to the viewers. The camera deliberately emphasizes Anna Maria as an object of desire by zooming in on her face and body, in accordance with the taste and requirements of the audience.

Anna Maria changes her costume in order to transform herself into Salome and dance her often-requested famous piece. Her black hair falls down loosely and a drop-shaped pearl hangs down from a strand of pearls in the middle of her forehead. Her fitted, two-piece, sequined, flesh-color appliqué costume reveals an intricate design. The golden sequined epaulettes support strings of fine clear beads that shimmer with every tiny movement. A group of golden beaded strands are also suspended under the dancer’s breasts in a rectangular shape. The design of the dancer’s upper costume emphasizes the bare stomach and allows extra shimmer to attract attention to her breasts. The bottom part of the costume consists of a long fitted beaded skirt that reveals the slender shape of the belly and flares down to give an elongated and more flattering appearance of her legs. The hip area of the garment is also appliquéd and beaded to form a hip-scarf effect. This costume and coiffure transforms the dancer into a sexy, mature, and challenging femme fatale.

The dialogue in the film also emphasizes the character of Salome as a femme fatale in view of her agreement to spy. Although she hated the masculine gaze when she was a ballerina, she uses it to her advantage when she becomes an Eastern dancer. As
Salome, Anna Maria decides to extract the military information from her escort not to avenge her wounded offended femininity that was so scrutinized under his gaze, but to serve her country. She must leave because her partner has been killed and his enemies will come after her as well.

On the way to California, Salome and her group meet Madame Europe, an aging performer and the owner of a boarding house in Drinkman Wells, Virginia. She had arrived in this Appalachian town ten years ago with her manager and a group of performers. Madame Europe asks the newcomers what performance they intend to produce for the town and is alarmed when Professor Max suggests a pantomime of *Sleeping Beauty*. Madame Europe reacts: “Ah, ah, not here, they don’t like them sleeping.” Jim immediately replies, “I know something to wake them up,” pointing at Anna Maria; he continues, “Salome.” Jim knows her ability to satisfy the crowd and Max assures Madame Europe that Salome will “give Drinkman Wells something to remember forever” (*Salome Where She Danced*)

The audience of this small town consists of poor men who drink beer, talk loudly, and climb up the rafters of the theatre for a better view. The show starts with the group of Madame Europe dancing to her singing. The dancers wear the costumes of Bohemian peasants, Spanish Flamenco dancers, gypsy women, Turkish Harem girls, Eastern dancers, and other eclectic folkloric garments. The crowd boos the group because the song is not to their liking and the dancers do not excite them.

Salome learns from Jim that the men of Drinkman Wells have purchased enough beer to generate enough money for Anna Maria, Max, and Jim to travel, but she doubts
her ability to please them with her dancing. Jim responds: “They’ll eat out of your hand, the same way I did” (*Salome Where She Danced*). He explains: “When you dance, a man is a man, in a checker shirt and chewing tobacco or a gentleman in white tie and tail” (*Salome Where She Danced*). In other words, as in the paintings of Degas, the ballerina connotes sexual tendencies and appeals to the aristocratic taste for her apparent innocence; the Eastern dancer, in contrast, evokes the same feelings in middle class and poor people because of her primitiveness.

The crowd calls for Salome and two dancers dressed in the Eastern fashion of the harem, lift the stage’s curtains for her to make her way to the front part of the platform. Salome emerges in a skin color sequined bra, a full matching skirt, and a beaded turquoise belt around her hips. A band of beads and sequins runs across the bottom of the skirt and a matching bell-like cuff is worn on her left hand. Salome wears a golden crown that links sequined braids along the back of her head. She wears a pair of golden slippers on her feet. Although this costume is not as glamorous as the one she wore in her last performance at the opera in Berlin, it reflects a Hollywood style in its luminous effect and attention to details and colors. Her routine however, includes twirling, flaring the bottom of the skirt with her leg, arching her back slowly, framing the head with her hands, sliding the hips from side to side, kneeling and arching the back, retreating on tiptoes, and—to close—kneeling on one leg and sliding her right hand across so her fingers frame her right eye.

When Cleve, the Scottish-American bandit, barges in and asks for the cash the group earned, Salome insists on allowing her to finish her dance for the men who paid for
her performance. She not only wants him to feel remorse through her representation of the poor but also to seduce him through the language of her body. After seeing him gazing at her, which gives her an assurance of his infatuation, she assumes the role of a commander, expresses her opinion about his lowliness, and slaps him. Indeed, Salome emerges as a potential power able to recognize justice, distinguish right from wrong, and defend the helpless. Despite her seductiveness and courage she is unable to regain the stolen money from the bandit.

Cleve leaves, only to surprise the group on their way home as he snatches Salome and hastens away on his horse. The couple fall in love, Cleve returns the money, and the lovers join the group on their trip. Salome, then, becomes a hero for the men of Drinkman Wells, who in gratitude change the name of their city to Salome, Where She Danced. Salome captures the heart of everyone when she uses love as her method to correct a wrongdoing and establish peace. Only then can she change men, bend them to her will, and become an immortalized heroine.

This scenario continues in California when the group, including Madame Europe and Cleve, meet the Russian millionaire Ivan Dimitrioff (Walter Slezak) and his Chinese assistant Dr. Ling (Abner Biberman.) Dimitrioff showers Salome with expensive gifts and gives her a theatre where she can perform. She leaves all the fame and grandeur for the sake of love. She stops dancing and marries Cleve, who is pardoned thanks to the high position of Dimitrioff. By rejecting dancing all together, Salome adopts the role expected from her and becomes the property of her lover alone. She is now a dependent woman who has sacrificed her potential for the sake of love.
Conclusion

The Eastern dancer attracted the attention of early cinema directors and producers. They perceived her as a flexible subject to suit their creativity and their ideas. Her sexuality, costume, and movements also fascinated consumers who turned to the cinema to investigate her on the screen. The films *Intolerance*, *The Sheik*, *The Son of the Sheik*, *Hoopla*, and *Salome, Where She Danced* have exemplified the representation of the Eastern dancer in Western films of the first half of the twentieth century. The dancer starts out as a signifier of the debased morality of the East, where sex and dance constitute the rituality of the exotic cultures of the East. She also becomes a signifier of the savagery of Eastern cultures, where a woman, as indicated, depends on her physical skills and must dance for a potential buyer, who may purchase her for his harem. Of course, the life of a Western woman is immediately identified in the mind of the spectator as much respected and valued; therefore, Western women should be content and consider themselves privileged.

The Eastern dancer came to be represented in a different way during the second quarter of the twentieth century. She ceased to be an extension of the East and became an eroticized Western woman who performed Eastern dance for specific reasons. The representation of the Eastern dancer changed when Hollywood became a prominent and sophisticated entity for film production. At this time, women were seeking jobs to sustain their household members. Accordingly, Western society had to accept the dancer
of any dance style, not only because she was a member of society, but also because she danced to support her family.

The Eastern dancer in film was also considered an effective member of society when she danced to help her community. As a woman who was capable of bewitching the male spectator, she was used as a political agent for her people. The dancer performed and used her charm as a cover to spy and extract political information for the political sake of her country.

The social status of the Eastern dancer changed according to the circumstances of the dance. She was perceived as part of the elite society when she danced to serve her country and as middle class when she danced to support her family, yet she was identified with the lower class when she danced for her personal satisfaction. Western society acknowledged the effect of the Eastern dancer and her power on Western men; therefore, they allowed her existence without penalty only in such “authorized” circumstances. She was accepted whenever the masculine authority benefited from her dancing. When she dances, in Hoopla as an independent woman, then her status changes to that of lower class. She exists to help the authority figure in her life, and whenever she steps beyond these boundaries, the male appears to rescue her. Such a strategy reveals male preferences in patriarchal Western societies.

The dancer in the above films gradually became glamorized and more fashionable. Salomé’s costumes differed from those of the worshipers of Ishtar or those worn by Yasmine. The beaded and fitted costumes reflect a more sensitivity to the role of cinema in presenting extraordinary pleasing fashion that enhanced the charm of the
dancer and her irresistible sexuality. This allure also captivated Eastern artists who adopted Hollywood elements in presenting the Eastern dancer in their movies.
Chapter Four

The Eastern Dancer in the Early Movies of Farid al-Atrash

Al-fann ma loush watan al-fann milk al-khuloud
Qoum nimshi wayya al-zaman wu nihiz qalb al-wujoud
Fannak da khayaluh hazin wana fanni khayaluh sa’yid
Yala nidum al-itnin wu n’alif fann jadid
Wu yabqa li-al-fannin ‘id.
Art does not have a country; it is immortal
It goes along with time and moves the core of existence.
Your art is sad; my art is blissful.
Let’s merge the two in a new art.
To both arts, it would be a feast.
(Saleh Jawdat and Farid al-Atrash, Operette Al-Sharq wu al-Gharb).

Introduction

The Eastern dancer depicted in the Egyptian cinema of the first half of the twentieth century looks young, pretty, and sophisticated. In most films, she dresses in modern, fashionable Western clothes, stylish, and fancy high heels. Even when she appears in locally made or traditional dress, it is modified to complement her appearance and augment her charm. The dancer on the big screen does not look shy like the 1863 almeh of Gérôme, or advertise herself around the old alleys, balconies, terraces and windows of Cairo, or smoke a water pipe (nargilah or shishah), or perform in khans in the countryside of Egypt. She is usually urbanized, and if she performs in the country, it is for a special occasion connected with the upper class.
Urbanizing the Dancer in the East

Western travelers and artists found the dancer of the East mostly in the rural areas of Egypt. Many of them wrote about and painted such dancers, who also provided sex for them. The thin line between public dancing and prostitution and the need to control the activities of women caused Muhammad Ali to ban these dancers from Cairo in 1834 (Tucker 151). Karin van Nieuwkerk explains that the Ottoman leader wanted to satisfy the religious authorities, who were against female dancers and wanted to keep them away from Western eyes (31). Of course, Western enthusiasts followed the dancer to the rural parts of Egypt and found Kuchuk, Xenobie, and Safia in Esna, Hasna al-Tawila in Luxor, Azizeh in Aswan and others along the Nile. R. F. Burton observed in his travels to the East that some dancers resisted the ban and continued performing secretly in Cairo, disguised as poor women when they went to the private parties given by Westerners (134). The death of Muhammad Ali in 1866 ended his attempt to “clean up” Cairo, so the female dancers started to appear again during special public occasions, such as weddings and national celebrations (Graham-Brown 175). Eventually, and especially after the British occupation of Egypt in 1882, female singers and dancers were recognized as taxpayers and a separation between religious and secular performances was established (Nieuwkerk 37). Solo and group dancers were performed in the salat (music halls), masareh (theatres), casinos, cafés, hotels, restaurants, and nightclubs.

Local magazines and newspapers of the day discussed performances and addressed issues pertaining to Egyptian entertainment at the turn of the nineteenth century. The mere tolerant view demanded governmental support for the entertainers and
asked for fair treatment similar to the imported Western artists, since the government supported foreign artists, based on a need to satisfy the tastes of the foreign tourists and enlightened local customers who could afford their performances (Awad 134). At that time, some people voiced their concern against Eastern dancing, also known in Egypt as *raqs baladi* (“dance of my country or country dancing”). Because of the dangerous influence of this dance, they urged the government to prohibit it and shut down the clubs that featured it (10).

Later, the famous Egyptian singer Um Kulthoum (d. 1975) commented on the Egyptian reactions to Eastern dancing in the first half of the twentieth century in her *Memoirs*, translated and edited by Elizabeth Warnock Fernea and Basima Qattan Bezirgan. She writes:

> Cairenes became worried over the bad influence on youth and a Committee of Honour was formed to spread virtue and fight vice and corruption. But the Committee of Honour had a difficult time with the cabarets and other pleasure palaces which lined the streets bounded by Mydan al-Opera, Shari’ Imad al-Din, and al-Fajjalah. Drinking, dancing, music, entertainment of all kinds was to be found in this area. Along both sides of Muhammad ‘Ali Street stood the little shops, with musical instruments hanging from their walls and signs, “al-Usta Hamidah, Oud Player”; or “al-Usta Zubah, belly-dancer”; or “Na‘imah al-Misriyah, artiste”. (155)
The existence of such a Committee of Honour reveals that the Eastern dancer, who attracted artists and writers, suffered discrimination from some Easterners as well as some Westerners. She resisted, however, because of the demand for her entertainment and the support of the entrepreneurs.

Like the phenomenon of the French salons that were mostly hosted by women, owning a sala attracted women entertainers in Egypt. Many of these women, Egyptians and foreigners, started as star performers, and managed to own the places where they worked or when they invested in similar buildings. For example, the following entertainers owned their social establishments: Tawhida (d. 1932) from Syria, cabaret Alf Leila wu Leila; Naʿima al-Masriyya (“Naʿima the Egyptian”), casino, the Alhambra; Munira al-Mahdiyya (“Munira the gifted”) (d.1965), a masrah in her name; Shafiʿa al-Qubtiyya (“Shafiʿa the Copt”) nightclub Alf Leila; Badiʿa Masabni (nicknamed Badaʿa‘) but originally Wadiʿa Masabni [d. 1974] (from my neighborhood in Damascus, Syria) Sala Badiʿa. (Danielson, Artists and Entrepreneurs 295-7; Nieuwkerk 43). Badiʿa Masabni is considered the most celebrated and best remembered of all women sala owners because of her innovative contribution to Eastern entertainment and her role in discovering and training new artists who later became successful cinematic stars.

Badiʿa learned her early lessons in dancing and singing from the nuns of her school in Argentina, where she spent six years of her childhood with her mother and siblings (Basila 75). Like many other Syrians at the time, the family immigrated to America seeking a better life. Badiʿa and her mother came back to Syria, then went to Egypt looking for a job to get away from her Damascene neighbors and family who never
forgot the tragedy of her rape by a drunken khan owner when she was seven years old (9-10). There, in Egypt, she met with the lead actor, George Abiad, who used her as a backup performer and gave her small parts in his plays. Her interaction with Abiad’s professional entertainers enabled the budding talent to learn from prominent actresses, such as Nazli Mizrahi, Esther Shattah, and Fatma al-Yousef (93). This exposure landed her a role with the touring group of Ahmad al-Shami in which she quickly became the acting, singing and dancing “prima donna” (101). The young Syrian observed other entertainers, memorized their popular songs and dances, and traveled to Beirut to perform her version of them at the Cabaret of Madam Janette, who hired her as the only Arab female “artiste” (112). 45 Badi’a also performed in other cities, such as Damascus and Aleppo, where she expanded her show, fashioned her own costumes, and included props suitable for each song and dance (161). At times, she transformed her house, especially in Aleppo, into a private theatre where important figures gathered during World War I (178). In the early 1920s, Badi’a joined the group of the comedian Najib al-Rihani (1892-1949), known as the “Eastern Molière,” who refined her acts, helped establish her as an Egyptian star, and married her in 1924. After the wedding, the couple went to Argentina where they formed an entertainment group and performed in major cities, including San Paolo, Rio di Janero, and Buenos Aires, and toured Latin America. Two years later, the couple separated and Badi‘a opened her first sala in Imad al-Din Street in Cairo (296; Dougherty 251). Badi’a brought many singers and dancers from Syria,

45 In Arabic the word artiste carries a negative meaning. It associates the person with loose behavior and sexual availability. Respectable words to identify an “artist” are the Arabic words m. fanan, pl. fananin and f. fananeh, pl. fananat.
including Mary Gibran, known as Mary al-Gamilah (“the Beautiful Mary”); Malakeh Jajati, called Malaket Gamal (“Beauty Queen”); Afraz (of Turkish origin) who became Afranz; and Fatima, known as Beba (300). Badi’a also hired Tahia Carioca, and Samia Gamal as well as the al-Atrash siblings, Amal and her brother, Farid.

The Background and Influence of Farid al-Atrash

Farid al-Atrash and his sister Amal (known as Asmahan)\textsuperscript{46} worked first at sala al-Biliardo of Mary Mansour (al-Bakri 37). According to ‘Abdallah Ahmad ‘Abdallah, a friend told Badi’a about Farid’s “unprecedented” voice and unusual excellence on the ‘oud (lute) (16). She also heard about his beautiful sister whose voice is described rightly by Badi’a’s friend as “the most beautiful voice he ever heard in his life.” Badi’a urged her nephew, Antoine, who knew Farid, to arrange a meeting, and then accompanied him to al-Atrash’s house where she met his sister and the rest of the al-Atrash family, consisting of the mother and three children in their simple house (306).

Farid’s mother, ‘Alia, and her children, Fuad, Farid, and Amal, escaped to Egypt to save their lives when her husband Fahd joined the Druze under the leadership of Sultan Pasha al-Atrash in the fight against the French in 1923 (Labib, Lahn 6). None of the children were born in Egypt, but they came to Cairo at a very young age, somewhere between five and ten years old. Farid, himself, was born in Jabal al-Druze (the Druze mountains) in the southern part of Syria, around 1915 to a Syrian father, from the Druze

\textsuperscript{46} Asmahan was a name given to Amal al-Atrash by Daoud Husni, who discovered her. It was the name of a beautiful ancient Persian enchantress (Labib, Asmahan 62-3; Zuhur, Asmahan 46).
The Druze group is a small sect of Islam, which got its name from Muhammad al-Darazi (b.1019/20). He was an Isma‘ili preacher who proclaimed the divinity of the Fatimid caliph, Imam al-Hakim bi Amr Allah (“The ruler by god’s command”) (996-1021), the sixth Fatimid caliph, who was in charge of the Isma‘ili branch of Islam, in the main mosque in Cairo in the early eleventh century. The Druze sect left Cairo to Syria after the execution of al-Darazi, the disappearance of the caliph, and the hiding of Hamza ibn Ali al-Zuzani, who among others created the theology for the new religion. The Druze religion adopted some ideas common to Shi‘ah Muslim sects at the time, which derived their theologies from other Eastern religions, and included aspects of Neoplatonism and Messianism (Firro 8).

The al-Atrash family rose to power while becoming intermediaries between the Ottoman government and the Druze around the middle of the nineteenth century. They established Jabal al-Druze as the main Druze center and maintained peace in the area of southwest Syria, which attracted the Druze from various other provinces of the Ottoman Empire (148). Unlike other Muslim sects, polygamy, zawaj mut‘ah (“temporary

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47 There are many speculations about the date of Farid’s birth. According to the journalist Sa‘d al-Bakri, who cites many articles on Farid al-Atrash in a variety of Arabic newspapers and magazines, the star was born in 1915 (23). Sherifa Zuhur considers the same date in her article “Building a Man on Stage” (281).

48 At the beginning of the Ummayad period (661-750), the Shiites believed that Ali, Muhammad’s son-in-law, was meant to be the caliph (leader of Islam) and broke off from the main stream Sunni Muslims. The Isma‘ili did not agree with the Shiites on the choice of the sixth imam and believed that Isma‘il was supposed to be the imam instead of his younger brother Musa ibn Ja‘ffar al-Sadiq. Isma‘il’s son Muhammad led the believers and established the Isma‘ili sect.
marriage”), circumcision, and divorce although allowed, were not very common for Druzes. The Druze women were also considered equal to men and were allowed to appear in public, preferably with their traditional white mandil (“veil”) on their head, to own a property, to dispose of it, to become a head of the household, and to initiate a divorce (Betts 18). In other words, Farid came from a notorious family that was rooted in tradition, but not very restrictive.

When ‘Alia, Farid’s mother left for Egypt, she was still married to Fahd and did not have the proper papers or much money. She sought help from Sa’d Zaghloul, the leader of the Wafd Party, who was elected prime minister of Egypt in 1924, to enter Egypt (Labib, Lahn 11; Jawadi 19).49 Zaghloul had special connections with the rebels of Jabal al-Druze and gave an order to let ‘Alia and her children enter Egypt. The family settled in a poor area in Cairo and the children went to the neighboring French school. They used the last name Kousa (“squash”) to hide their rich and political background (Labib, Lahn 13; Zuhur, Asmahan 41). ‘Alia supported her family by embroidering, selling her jewelry, and entertaining—playing her ‘oud and singing for the weekly evening meeting of the Syrian ladies in Cairo. She also accepted the generosity of some people who recognized the family background, who admired the role of the Druze in the fight to

49 The Wafd Party (delegation) was a group of nationalist men, who, led by Sa’d Zaghloul, protested in 1919 and called for independence from British occupation. They appealed to the British Consul General for permission to travel to Paris to address the League of Nations. Their appeal was denied and the members of the Wafd Party were exiled to Malta. Zaghloul and his group were allowed to proceed to Paris because of the large-scale demonstrations in many Egyptian cities to protest against the English decision to banish the eminent men. Al-Hadidi and Imam Ali, historians on the Egyptian cinema, note that Orfenelli, a cinematographer from an Italian origin, recorded Zaghloul’s trip to France which is regarded as the first Egyptian production of documentary films (87).
decide Syria’s political future, and who wanted to help her family with cash, such as a
certain American “Baron” Ikrane who had a connection with the family of the Turshan in
Syria (Labib, Asmahan 54).  

Although public entertainment was not common for Druze women, the mother
sang in cabarets and nightclubs in Rawd al-Faraj, where Farid had free access to a variety
of entertaining events (Labib, Lahn 16-20). He also ventured around the cafés to listen to
the singers and learn songs to sing to his family and the young children on his block. He
favored the voice of the singer Muhammad al-‘Arabi, but because he could not afford to
order a drink, he would sit on the sidewalk and often sleep while enjoying a song. Al-
Bakri notes that the family knew about Farid’s infatuation with the songs of the famous
singer and Fu’ad would go and carry his sleeping brother home (29).

Farid’s musical exposure added to the repertoire he learned from school where he
trained in the sacred singing classes, participated in the choir, chanted accompanied by
instruments, such as the piano, organ, and bells, and adapted his voice to express the

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50 Abou al-‘Aynayn and Zuhur note that the “Baron” wanted to take ‘Alia’s children to
live in America but when she refused he helped her with a hundred dollar monthly
allowance (11; Asmahan 42). The sources do not mention how long this generosity
lasted or the methods and ways used to send this gift. Farid does not mention this
incident in his Mudhakarat by Maktabat al-Jamahir, and Fumil Labib states in Lahn al-
Khulud that the rich American man gave money to the children before he left for his
country (25). I believe that the family accepted money from the “Baron” before he left
and did not get a specific allowance. I strongly believe that the money was also given to
the children who in turn passed it to the mother. It would be considered inappropriate in
traditional Arabic society for an Arab woman to accept the gift of a strange man, but the
use of the children as mediators eliminated any possible expectation on the part of the
woman. Although the al-Atrash situation eventually improved, it had nothing to do with
the Baron’s money. The children who now attracted the attention with their talent and
were able to find jobs, including Fu’ad, who had a full time job and the mother, who also
made a few recordings with her voice, improved their living situation from their wages.
meaning of the religious songs (Labib, *Lahn* 21; al-Bakri 31; Asmar 34; Zuhur, “Musical Stardom” 283). Although, the lamenting and expressive style of Farid appears in some of his early songs, it becomes his trademark in his later compositions. For example, *Banadi ‘Aleik* (“I call out to you”) from the film *Lahn al-Khuloud* (“Melody of Eternity”) (1952) exemplifies the singer’s expressive and mature lamenting style. The French school, however, expelled the talented boy when a visitor saw him singing, recognized him, and revealed the boy’s real name (al-Atrash 25).51 Farid moved then to the Roman Catholic school to continue his elementary program and was specifically chosen to sing a political song in an event sponsored by the Arab nationalist Ahmad Zaki Pasha, at the University of Cairo. Fumil Labib explains in *Lahn al-Khuloud* (“Melody of Eternity”) and *Nujoum ‘Araftahum* (“Stars I Knew”) that the excellent performance of Farid inspired a poet to write the following lines:

\[
\begin{align*}
Ghanna-l-Farida fa ahkama-l-awzana \\
Wa-l-‘ouda fada ‘awatifā wa hanana \\
Faka’annana fi ard Makkata Sujuda \\
Wu ka’annahu wahya al-ilaha atana
\end{align*}
\] (30; 74)

51 Although Farid insists in his *Mudhakkirat* that he never revealed his real name to anyone (24), Zuhur notes that proud of his real name and his relationship to the brave family of al-Atrash, Farid confessed his last name to a friend, who reported it to the French principal (*Asmahān* 42). Perhaps the writer based her observations on information from Labib’s *Asmahān*, which contradicts the information he writes in *Lahn al-Khuloud* about the same incident (21). I am convinced that the Syrian calligrapher Mitri Hawawini who recognized the young Farid, not knowing the al-Atrashs decision to withhold their last name, told the principal not to harm the youth but to add to his status.
Farid sang and mastered the meters, and his lute gushed sentiments and tenderness. It was as if we were praying in Mecca, and as if the spirit of God has appeared to us.\footnote{Sherifa Zuhur also quotes the poem but mistranslates words only a native Arabic speaker can understand (Asmahan’s Secret 58). These misinterpretations occur in other songs as well. In this poem, the mistakes in the second line and the fourth line change the meaning and undermine the power of Farid’s song, which seems to provide a spiritual experience for the listener.}

This exposure attracted admiration for the young talent and helped Farid secure a seat at Ma’had al-Mousiqa (“the School of Music”) in Cairo.

Ma’had al-Mousiqa in Cairo was only around a decade old when Farid became a student there. Ramsis Awad notes that local artists insisted on the need for a school to teach acting and music. Afraid of the effect of theatre on their policy, the Ottoman government disregarded the demand for a school of theatre and started a school of music (229-30). Awad also quoted some newspaper articles that indicate the public’s concern about music and art in the early years of the twentieth century. For example, the writer and musician Sadek Rustum wrote in the newspaper al-Mahrousah newspaper on 8 April 1914 (no title provided by Awad) about the necessity of al-Ma‘had and pointed out that the school should not concentrate only on the graduates from high and middle societies who are going to become music teachers but also on talented youth who will work as public singers and, thus, be able to affect their taste in music. He pointed out that “we are desperate for professional singers, not amateurs whose mistakes are personal and will not count because they do not affect the national taste since they are not in touch with the public and do not serve the nation with their music” (Awad 231).
Perhaps affected by such comments, al-Ma‘had granted scholarships for talented youths who could not afford the tuition and who, once graduated, would work as public singers hired as teachers who were known for their notoriety in Eastern music, such as the musician Riyad al-Sinbati. Fumil Labib notes that Al-Sinbati became Farid’s mentor, encouraged him, recognized his talent, and after a year sent him off to enchant his admirers (*Lahn* 28).

Farid was determined to become famous, and through Farid Ghusn (1916-1985), a musician he met at the Nadi al-Mousiqa (“Music Club”), he landed a job at Shaqal, a local radio station (al-Atrash 47).53 The new friend also put him in contact with Ibrahim Hamoudi, the second singer in the country after Muhammad ‘Abd al-Wahab (1897-1991). Because the availability of the job with Hamoudi, however, depended on celebrations and special occasions, Farid decided to seek another job at Badi‘a’s (Labib, *Lahn* 29).

According to Badi‘a’s biographer Nazek Basila, the “Queen of Theatres” hired Farid’s sister, Asmahan, who resembled Jeanette MacDonald vocally and somewhat physically, first, then, her brother Farid (306). ‘Abdallah Ahmed ‘Abdallah, a journalist who also wrote Farid’s biography, notes that Badi‘a appreciated Farid’s voice in 1936 but was afraid that her famous star Ibrahim Hamoudeh would quit his job at her *sala* if she hired a new singer; she restricted Farid, therefore, to playing the *oud* for her dancers (18-9). In his *Farid al-Atrash: Fannan Ahabba Kul Shay* (“Farid al-Atrash: An artist who

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53 Farid Ghusn, Farid al-Atrash, and Badi‘a Masabni are originally from al-Sham, which for Egyptians refers to Syria and Lebanon (al-Bakri 38). Al-Sham for Syrians and Lebanese, however, means Damascus.
loved everything”), Mahmoud al-Sharif, a musician who met Farid at Badi’a’s, notes that the arrangement with Badi’a allowed free time for Farid to continue his studies with Muhammad al-Arabi, to learn and memorize folk music, and to take private voice lessons with an Italian teacher in the afternoon (33). The Italian teacher must have trained Farid to render his voice to match the music for a more expressive effect similar to the arias in the Italian operas. Every now and then, Farid played solo music, which attracted attention to his excellent playing. Subsequently, he sang with some of Badi’a’s groups, singing solo at times.

The education of Farid at the Ma’had al-Mousiqa adhered to traditional music. Although some people, such as ‘Abd al-Wahab, were trying to enhance Arabic music, the main components of it consisted of the dawr, mouwashah, qasidahh, and mawwal. The dawr consists of phrases sung by the choir, then solo phrases sung to a different melody by the singer or mutrib. Every now and then, the mutrib and the chorus exchange a melodic conversation. The mouwashah consists of a speech in both classical and colloquial Arabic with some Turkish words such as janem, aman, yalalalli sung by the chorus and accompanied by music. It follows a four-part AABA-style musical composition. The qasidahh is an ode that is put to music. Here, the singer does not have to restrict himself to a specific melody, but he improvises every time he sings the same poem. The mawwal consists of four parts (AAAB) but this can be unrestricted and improvised before the dawr.

54 A mutrib (f. mutribah) is a virtuoso singer who not only entertains, but who through enchantment, can transport his audiences to rapture and delight.
The four styles rendered the singer superior to the musician, and the lyrics took priority over the music. The sophistication of the Arabic language, which is pregnant with words of fine shadings and the sounds of the words themselves, also forces a higher status for poetry. In the introduction to The Procession of Khalil Gibran, George Kheirallah notes the effect of recited Arabic words and explains: “Anyone present at an Arabian gathering where prose or poetry is recited may readily note how the heads and then the bodies of the listeners commence to sway in rhythmic accompaniment to the recitation” (53). Therefore, the meaning of the words and the beauty of their pronunciation did not invite a need for support from the melody, which stood as a different component in old Arabic songs.

Unlike Western musicians who started working to establish a relationship between music and words in the late fifteenth century, such as the Italian Camerata,\textsuperscript{55} Arab musicians initiated serious attempts at change only in the late nineteenth century. It is possible that the delay also happened because Arabic music was mostly composed for pleasure, and did not have any role except to enchant. For example, in the film Habib al-‘Omr to be discussed later in this chapter, ‘Am Ashour sings an old fashioned song to the crowd in a café. By repeating a word or sentence in different ways, he enchants his audiences and brings them to ecstasy with his ability to improvise the song. The music

\textsuperscript{55} The meeting of the Italian Camerata group at residence of the musical patron and amateur Giovanni Bardi (1534-1612) resulted in some of the musical theories by Vincenzo Galilei (1520-1591). The later group that met at the wealthy Jacopo Corsi (1561-1602) also exemplified the effort of musicians, composers, and music theorists to enhance music by adhering to the intonation of the words. The singers and composers Jacopo Peri (1561-1633) and Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643) were among the first to comprehend the relationship between intonation, affection, and harmony and applied it to their work (Palisca 31-2).
played on the ‘oud of ‘Am ‘Ashour’s to accompany his song “Anist Ya Um al-‘ayoun” (“welcome you who has big eyes”) is simply a background, because the singer enchants with his voice and the words he eloquently utters:

Anist ya um al-‘ayoun, sharrafī ya roh al-muḥjāḥ ba’d al-ghiyab.
Kan qalbi ‘alēik, ‘alēik qalbi, wu kulo shujoun, shujoun qalbi.
Sharrafī ya roh al-muḥjāḥ ba’d al-ghiyab kan qalbi ‘alēik. (Habib al-‘Omār)
Welcome, you who has big eyes, welcome, you the soul of my heart after your absence. I was worried about you, and my heart was full of pain.
Welcome, you the soul of my heart after your absence, I was worried about you.

These few lines may last for few hours because the singer can set the mood and bring his audience to a level of *nashwa* (“rapture”) by invoking the feelings for the lover through his repetition. Easterners do not dance to such songs. They simply absorb the meaning and allow their soul to wander in imagination and ecstasy.

Fikri Butrus explains that the change in Arabic music started with Abdo al-Hamouli (1840-1901), who released it from Turkish tunes and invented new ones to apply to Arabic poems (57-9). His rival Muhammad ‘Uthman (1855-1900) also introduced new ways for the singer to break off the continuous melody of a song (Hafiz 9). Then, Salama Hijazi (1852-1917) elaborated on what Maroun al-Naqash, Ya‘coub Sanou’, Ahmad abou Khalil al-Kabani, and others who incorporated singing into theatrical plays (146-7).
However, many musicians consider Sayyed Darwish (1892-1923) as the first to understand that songs should not be restricted to ecstasy and enchantment, but could portray feelings of the common people. Therefore, the singer introduced a new genre that related to the listeners, who, in turn, enjoyed singing it. In other words, Darwish was concerned with matching not simply the words to the music, but the whole sentence to a familiar condition or tune. His songs dealt with peasants and work, illustrating their struggles through *folkloric* melodies and sounds (Fayyad 256-7). For example, the song “Sabah al-Sabah” (“Here Comes the Morning”) explains the daily struggle of the Egyptian worker:

\[
\text{Sabah al-sabah fatah ya alim} \\
\text{wu al-jeib mafihs} \text{hi wala mallim} \\
\text{min fi al-youmin dol shaf taltim} \\
\text{zay al-sanayi\'ah al-mazalim}.^{56}
\]

Here comes the morning by the will of God, the opener of all gates, the omniscient, and the pocket has not even one piaster. Who in these days endures slapping, like the unjustified workers.

A song of this type does not repeat the same word in improvisational style because the people concerned do not have time for the ecstasy of the lengthy older style. The song mimics their language, which is easy to register in their mind. The first line of *Sabah al-Sabah* repeats a part of the expression *ya fatah ya alim, ya razzaq ya karim* (“Oh God the opener of all gates, the omniscient, oh God the giver, the generous”), what a Muslim

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56 “Sabah al-Sabah” is a popular song in the Middle East. People of all ages sing it for entertainment because it is easy to memorize its words and tune.
worker repeats every morning to invoke God before he leaves his house. The remaining lines describe the poor state of the workers and tell their story.

Sayyed Darwish also encouraged other composers to improve their contribution to Arabic music by seeking new ways of representation. For example, Muhammad ‘Abd al-Wahab indicates in Fayez Nassar’s *Mudhakarat Muhammad ‘Abd al-Wahab* (”Memoirs of Muhammad ‘Abd al-Wahab”) that Darwish’s efforts resulted in an international conference that was held in Cairo at the Ma’had al-Mousiqa to discuss possible ways to improve Eastern music (83).

One of the solutions was to use Western instruments in addition to the traditional Eastern instruments in the *takht* (a kind of instrumental ensemble): the ‘oud, *qanoun* (string instrument), *riqq* (drum), *nay* (flute), and violin. As a result of this decision, ‘Abd al-Wahab used the cello, contrabass, and castanets in “Fi al-Layl Lama Khaliy” (“In the Blasé of the Night”) and songs of the films of the 1930s. He also used the piano in “al-Siba wu al-Gamal” (”Youth and Beauty”), the accordion in “Mareit ‘ala Beit al-Habayeb” (“I Visited the Home of My Lover”), the guitar in “Insa al-Dunia wu Rayeh Ballak” (“Forget the Trouble of Life and Relax”), and the banjo in many other songs.

‘Abd al-Wahab also borrowed Western passages and incorporated them into his songs as if they were his own. Musicologist ‘Afif A. Bulos remarks that “al-Gondole” (lyrics of ‘Ali Mahmoud Taha), if played faster, brings to mind an opera by Dvorak, and “Ya Dunia ya Gharami” (“Oh My Life Oh My Lover”) an Arabic version of a well-known Western folk song (9). People who were familiar with Western music, such as my father and his friends, recognized the “stolen” parts and competed among each other to
find the original music. They listen to ‘Abd al-Wahab only for the sake of the competition and not out of admiration.57

Farid al-Atrash admired the innovative approach of ‘Abd al-Wahab, although later he became his rival, because Farid also sang the Egyptian music that Sayyed Darwish had initiated and innovated it with Western melodies and instruments. Al-Atrash, however, differed from ‘Abd al-Wahab because he came up with his own lawn (“style”) that incorporated the music of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and many other Arab countries. He included the Syrian and Lebanese improvisatory pieces of Ya Leil (“Oh night”) and Ohf ohf (the sound of pain) in his mawwals and replaced the incessant repetitions with a variety of dancing tunes. These musical mixtures along with contemporary poems proved to be the combination that allowed the two components to complement each other and succeed.

Farid al-Atrash’s Breakthrough

Although some important musical personalities such as ‘Abd al-Wahab considered Farid al-Atrash as second to his sister Asmahan when the siblings started their careers, the breakthrough came for Farid with the song “Ya Raytni Tayr” (“I Wish I Was a Bird”), a poem composed by his friend Yousef Bedros, which Farid set to music in one

57 ‘Am ‘Agib, the doorman of the building where I lived in Heliopolis, Cairo from 1984-1987 loved ‘Abd al-Wahab and considered him, as many Egyptians do, the mutrib par excellence of Egypt for most of the twentieth century. He thought the singer was simply a genius.
night (al-Atrash 54). He sang the song on the air of the new National Public Radio station in 1937 (‘Abdallah 22). Midhat ‘Assem, the director at the station who was also a teacher at the Ma‘had al-Mousiqa and heard Farid’s music on other radio stations, recognized his potential, and hired him in 1934. Farid became the third member on the air where Midhat ‘Assem and Farid Ghusn were the other two who performed their music on the radio at least twice a week (al-Bakri 41-2; ‘Abdallah 22-3). Although Farid had been playing music since 1928 on private stations, the program were cancelled when the government started its own station, the new station became his ticket to fame and instant recognition (al-Bakri 41). The text of “Ya Raytni Tayr” that made Farid an instant celebrity, is as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
Ya raytni tayr la atyr hawaleik & \quad matrah ma trouh ‘ouni ‘alayk \\
Ma tkhalli ghayri y’qareb layk & \quad lakin ya rayt kilmat ya ray \\
'umra ma kanat t'amar bayt.
\end{align*}
\]

58 According to Farid in Mudhakarat Farid al-Atrash published by Maktabat al-Jamahir, the text of “Ya Raytni Tayr” (“I wish I was a bird”) is by Yousef Bedros. He spent the night preparing the poem that Farid worked on the next night setting it to music (53). In Section Two of “The Complete Texts of Farid al-Atrash’s Songs” in Turatnana al-Mousiqi, the song was listed by an unnamed poet but composed by Farid (n.p.). The same source, however, lists elsewhere Yousef Bedros and Farid al-Atrash as poet and composer (Abou’Off and ‘Abd al-Rahman 175). Another writer, ‘Abdallah Ahmad ‘Abdallah notes in his Lahn al-Khuloud that the musical composition was by Yahya al-Lababidi, the artistic director of the Palestinian Radio Station at the time. According to this source, al-Lababidi gave the composition to Farid because he recognized the potential success of the young singer (20-22). Badi’a Masabni’s mentioned the song as the first hit of Farid’s compositions that started a chain of demand for his dancing-style melodies (Basila 307). A recent book by Rabi’ Muhammad Khalifeh, who relied on previous writers for his eclectic information, considers Bedros and Farid as the author and composer (12) but lists elsewhere al-Lababidi as the writer and composer of the same song (55, 278). I believe that Bedros and Farid were responsible for the song because the poem fits Bedros’ style and the dance-like melody shows an early trace of Farid’s trademark.
Ya rayt kul al dunia milki ana wu habibi bil sharki
Ma kunt bafouto wula taki lakin ya rayt kilmat ya rayt
‘umra ma kanat t’amar bayt.
Ya raytni ya albi Zahra ta zayn sadrak shi marra
Wu ba farfeh qalbi ya hasrah lakin ya rayt kilmat ya rayt
‘umra ma kanat t’amar bayt.
Ya raytni sha’ra bi jufounak tarid al-shams ‘an ‘ayounak
Wu at’allam sihrak wu fununak lakin ya rayt kilmat ya rayt
‘umra ma kanat t’amar bayt.
Ya raytni mandil bi ‘ibak dayman basma‘ daqit albak
Law kint bi ta’rif shu ba hibak lakin ya rayt kilmat ya rayt
‘umra ma kanat t’amar bayt.

I wish I were a bird to fly around you, you would not let any one else but me around you, but I wish, the word “I wish” has never built a house.
I wish all the universe were mine, my lover and I were partners, I would not leave her a moment, but I wish, the word “I wish” has never built a house.
My heart, I wish I were a blossom, to once decorate your chest. My aching heart would feel happy, but I wish, the word “I wish” has never built a house.
I wish I were a hair in your eyelashes, to protect your eyes from the sun. I would learn your charm and art, but wishing has never built a house.
I wish I were a kerchief on your chest, always hearing your heart beat If you know how much I love you, but I wish, the word “I wish” has never built a house.

The innocence and aspiration in the tone of Farid’s voice, the delicate meaning of the poem, and the dance-like tune attracted attention to the young singer, and his admirers visited the sala of Badi’a to meet him and listen to him live. Of course, Farid was an excellent entertainer because his talent included original compositions, with a tender voice, and knowledge of a variety of music. He drew on the Syrian and Lebanese styles of his background, the compositions he knew from his mother, the Christian harmony he learned at school, the songs he heard at the popular cafés and clubs, the classical training in Eastern music at the Ma‘had, and his familiarity with the groups of musical spectacles at Badi‘a’s sala. He also capitalized on the sounds of the Shami dialect, which charmed the Egyptians, and on his frequent exposure on the radio, which contributed to the singer’s huge success. This combination allowed him to sell twenty thousand recordings, resulting in an amount that permitted him to join the ranks of the big stars, such as Muhammad ‘Abd al-Wahab, Munira al-Mahdiyyah, Fathyyah Ahmad and Um Kulthoum (‘Abdallah 23).

Commemorating the death of Farid al-Atrash, ‘Abd al-Wahab writes in his al-Fan wu al-Hayat wu Farid al-Atrash (“Art, Life and Farid al-Atrash”) in praise of the unique quality of Farid’s voice:

Basically Farid has a perfect and pure voice that has all the quality to succeed as a mutrib. Secondly, it is also strong and melodious so it can
stretch between the qarar (statement) and the jawab (response). So at the end he can affect his listeners without limits so they get provoked and clap while showing their enchantment by calling: Allah. The voice of Farid is not that of a singer but a mutrib. The difference between the two is that the first is excellent while the second is talented. The first may excite his audience but the second burns their palms from clapping. (15)

The youthful novelty and the surprising compatibility between the poem and the music in “Ya Raytni Tayr” (“I Wish I Was a Bird”), which Farid sang when he was twenty-two years old, would be described as simple and innovative. It embodied classical traditions presented in a fresh manner and represented the concerns of the young artist. Farid depended on his own resources to develop his talent. Farid failed the exam at the Ma‘had because an illness affected his voice during his performance (Labib, Lahn 41). The song, however, caused a sensation because as Abou ‘Off expresses it, citing Farid in his Farid, al-Fanan al-Insan (“Farid, the Humanistic Artist ”): “[He was] the first to liberate the song from the Turkish style and its boring duration” (16). Farid continued his trends throughout many types of Arabic songs, including the qasidah, mawwal, taqtouqah (singing with chorus), monologue (solo without chorus), short song, long song, singing conversation, national song, religious song, spectacle, and operetta. He also added Western-influenced dance tunes, such as the tango, waltz, bolero, rumba, mambo, samba and foxtrot to the songs that were featured in his movies.
The Dancer in Early Egyptian Cinema

Farid was recruited for the cinema for his youth, looks, and singing partner: his sister. In the early 1940s, he resembled Tyrone Power (1913-1958) with his shiny dark hair and distinctive eyebrows. Unlike Power, however, who followed his father from Cincinnati to Hollywood, Farid and his sister were the first generation of actors in their family. Their basic training in acting came from watching and observing the acting of other cinematic personas. Farid and Asmahan went to the cinema to see foreign and local films. The siblings often imitated the singers they watched on the big screen. Once, as Fumil Labib indicates, the musician and composer Muhammad al-Qasabji, who in addition to Daoud Husni and Midhat Assem contributed to the discovery of Asmahan, was visiting the al-Atrash family while, she was imitating Jeanette MacDonald in her room. (Lahn 48; Zuhur, Asmahan 45). Such an incident proves that the siblings were able to see and were inspired by the latest productions of Western movies.

In fact, films produced in Europe and America traveled quickly to Egypt. The cinema came to Egypt soon after the invention became public in France and America. The first Lumière film was screened in Alexandria to exclusive Egyptian crowds in the Café Zavani, the Tousson stock exchange, and in Cairo at Hammam Schneider (“Schneider Baths”) in 1896 (Khan 15; al-Hadari 32; Shafiq 10). By 1908, there was one cinema in Port Said, Assiut, and Mansura, respectively, three in Alexandria, and five in Cairo with many others opening later. They showed imported Western films (Rachty and Sabat 17). These movie-theatres projected short films at least twice weekly to entertain the allied troops stationed in Egypt and the local intellectuals who influenced the
importation of newly produced Western movies (Landau 157). Between 1912-1920, however, Western companies, such as the Italo-Egyptian Cinematographic Company, built several studios similar to Edison’s Black Maria and shot short local films with Western directors, staff, and actors. Other companies, such as Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, established a branch in Egypt with René Tabouret as its director (Khan 17).

It was not until the early 1920s, however, that Egyptian actors participated in the films and Egyptian students started to study cinema in the West (Khan 15-6). Mohammad Bayyoumi (1894-1963) was the first to study filmmaking in Germany from 1919-1923 (Farid 25). With the equipment he brought with him, he directed and shot a successful short fictional silent film *Al-BashKatib* (“the Head Clerk”) for Amin ‘Atalla in 1923. It was a screen adaptation of a play previously performed by Amin ‘Atalla’s troupe and the first Egyptian film to include a local dancer (Darwish 11). The film tells about a clerk who falls in love with a dancer and misappropriates a large amount of money. He is caught, imprisoned, and then encountered a series of misadventures (Khan 17).

With the arrival of the production of the talkies in 1931, more singing and dancing started to appear on the big screen. The first singing film was “Unshoudat al-Fou’ad” (“Song of the Heart”), which included famous Egyptian singers and actors, such

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59 Egyptian sources agree on the time of Bayyoumi’s trip to Germany, but vary on the date of his return. Samir Farid cites the many writers who date Bayyoumi’s return between 1921-1923. This is crucial because not all of them consider *al-Bashkatib* (“The Head Clerk”) as the first film by Bayyoumi. They date the film, however, between 1923-1924 (25). Viola Shafiq however, relies on al-Hadari, who dates the film to 1924, for information about Bayyoumi. Unlike al-Hadari, she considers 1923 as the date of *al-Bashkatib* in another she uses 1922 (*Arab Cinema* 11, 70).
as Nadra, Zakaria Ahmad, George Abiad, Dawlat Abiad, ‘Abd al-Rahman Rushdi, Muhammad ‘Abdallah, and Ali Ahmad. The film was shot at the Éclair Studio in Paris and directed by the Italian, Mario Volpi (Khan 23). One can speculate that the film was a flop because of the tedious quality of the songs, which may have bored the spectator. Such songs that were only able to enchant through the close contact between the singer and his audience translated to the screen as distant and boring performances.

At this time, also, ‘Abd al-Wahab and Um Kulthoum developed into major movie stars. People came to hear their favorite singers and see them on the big screen. In their first films, they did not utilize extensive dancing, and while Abd al-Wahab sang about his broken heart in films, such as *al-Warda al-Bayda* (“The White Rose”) directed by Mohamad Karim and shot by Tobis Studio in Paris in 1933-4, Um Kulthoum became the slave girl whose pleasant voice changed her destiny. In her first film *Widad* (1935), which was shot by Misr Studio (“Studio of Egypt”) and directed by its German advisor Fritz Kramp, dancing in the harem not only reveals women’s activities in the “forbidden” interior shots but also entertains the spectators who can enjoy them without being physically there. This film, which takes place in the age of the mamlouks60 (1250-1516), introduces the dancers in ways similar to those of *The Sheik*. Women are sold in the market place and their dancing is for the entertainment of men. *The Sheik* and *Widad* differ, however, in that *Widad* is clearly set back in an historical era while *The Sheik* did not make the distinction between the past and the present. Due to a lack of accurate

60 The first mamlouks, who ruled from 1250 to 1382, were of Turkish origin and were named Bahri (river) mamlouks. The second period consisted of Burgi (citadel) mamlouks who were of Turkish, Circassian, and Greek origin, and who ruled from 1382 to 1517 (al-Sayyid Marsot 26-33).
research, perhaps, or to make their bodies more revealing, however, the dance costume
designer of Widad dresses them in contemporary cabaret costumes, which takes them out
of the historic period to offer them as possible harem girls in contemporary times.

The dancers in Widad also balance swords on their heads and pretend to fight with
them, a scene reminiscent of Gérôme’s painting Sabre Dance in a Café. A scene of two
women fighting with swords, especially when combined with cabaret outfits, may also
have a sexual connotations. According to the research of Magda Ahmed Abdel Ghaffar
Saleh the sword performance was “a thing of the Bedouin;” therefore, the costumes of the
dancers do not match the performance (151). Cabaret costumes are, in fact, eclectic in
essence and were influenced by many sources, including ancient Egypt, India, Latin
America, and Hollywood, and reached their renowned version in the twentieth century.
Therefore, the iconography of Widad is similar in its inaccuracy to the iconography used
in Western art to depict the Eastern dancer. In other words, the attempt to create a
romanticized story that took place in an historic period to show off Um Kulthoum,
sacrificed all Arab women. Widad presented a fantasized version of an Islamic period
that worked against the claim that women were respected and treated equally. They were
bought and sold in the market, and their price was set according to their beauty and talent.
Also, assigning the dancer the role of a background entertainer for men as a subject for
their gaze, coupled with the cinematic emphasis on her sexuality, illustrated in the
closeup shots and in the eyes of the men at the banquet who direct the spectators to enjoy
the dancers like them, are methods similar to Intolerance, The Sheik, The Son of the
Sheik, and Hoopla. Therefore, Widad, which was hailed by the lovers of Um Kulthoum’s
voice, portrayed Eastern dancers within the same scope of Western art. The enlightened woman can see *Widad* as contributing to a theme that strengthens Western ideas of debasing Eastern women. Therefore, the universal message of love and women’s empowerment intended through the role and songs of the talented Um Kulthoum limits itself to a shallow story of love that excludes the women in the film by confining them to dancing as the object of male desire.

The dancer in cinema, nevertheless, attracted the attention of many investors. Even Badi‘a produced and starred in a feature film called *Malikat al-Masarih* (“Queen of Theatres”) in 1935. The film included over seventy actors, dancers, and extras. According to Badi‘a, the film was unsuccessful because the director of Misr Studio, Ahmad Salem, who favored Um Kulthoum and her film, *Widad*, that was being made simultaneously at the same studio, edited and finished Badi‘a’s film, *Malikat al-Masarih* poorly. The plot did not make sense, the sound was unclear, and all the attractive shots were left out. Badi‘a was convinced that Salem ruined the film intentionally by canceling the best scenes because he knew that such a spectacular film would distract the audiences from Um Kulthoum’s film. The dancer-producer mentioned specifically a dance scene when she played Cleopatra with all the dancers around her in costumes that reflected their status as pharaonic princesses. These costumes cost Badi‘a a great deal of money and looked extravagant on the film, but the dance was not included in the final cut of the movie (Basila 331). In this regard, Badi‘a may have been influenced by the costumes of a scene from the 1934 Paramount production of *Cleopatra*. Claudette Colbert stands
magnificently surrounded by her princesses, on the steps inside her lodging waiting to receive Caesar (Warren William) as Emperor of Rome.

Looking to Western productions for such inspiration was common in the Arab world. Ahmad Shawqi looked at ‘ Antar, a French historical drama by Shukri Ghanim that was inspired by the tales of Sirat ‘ Antar and performed at the Odéon in Paris in 1910, for his own historical drama Amirat al-Andalus (“The Princess of Andalusia”) (Landau 133). Shawqi, who took ‘Abd al-Wahab under his wing, traveled with him several times to Western countries for inspiration. ‘Abd al-Wahab recalls that the two of them went to museums, concerts, operas, and other artistic venues during their first trip to France. Shawqi, who was researching material on Cleopatra, spent time at the Sorbonne and other libraries to review literary and visual materials (Nassar 77-79). Another playwright and actor, Yousef Wahbi (1900-1982) borrowed lines and adapted plays of Western playwrights for his theatrical and film pieces. For example, his famous sentence that frightened many Arab girls and is still used as an idiom by some families to warn their teenagers about having pre-marital sex: “Sharaf al-bint zay ‘ud al-kibrit ma yowla’sh illa mara wahdah (“the honor of a girl [her virginity] is like a match. It will ignite only one time”) is a straight translation of a line from the 1929 play Marius by Marcel Pagnol (1895-1974), which became a film (part one of The Fanny Trilogy) directed by Alexander Korda and produced by Paramount-Pagnol in 1931.61 Also, versions of

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61 Cesar (Raimu) tells his son Marius (Pierre Fresnay): “Marius, l’honneur c’est comme les allumettes ça ne sert q’une fois.” Wahbi adopted other sentences from the writings and movies of Pagnol in his plays and films. The last acting role of Farid in 1974 Nagham fi Hayati (“Melody in My Life”) with actress Mirvat Amin was also based on Fanny, the second part of Pagnol’s Marseilles trilogy.
foreign films that dealt with Eastern topics, such as *The Thief of Bagdad* of 1924, acted and produced by Douglas Fairbanks, directed by Raoul Walsh, and another film by the same title in 1941 produced by Alexander Korda and directed by Ludwig Berger, Michael Powell, and Tim Whelan were also produced in Egypt (Rachty and Sabat 17). In other words, Eastern artists looked to the West to inspire and enrich their arts. People in the entertainment industry watched and were influenced by the form, technique, and styles of Western films passed on to their spectators. There is no doubt that the coupling of Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy in films such as *Naughty Marietta* (1935) and *Sweethearts* (1938) inspired producers to consider Farid and Asmahan for their al-Atrash cinematic debut in *Intisar al-Shabab* (“The Triumph of Youth”). Such motivation helped establishing Farid as an artist and encouraged him to create music appropriate for films.

**The Dancer in Farid al-Atrash Films**

Farid al-Atrash and Asmahan played in their first film *Intisar al-Shabab* in 1941. Al-Bakri notes that Michel Bayda and Gabriel Talhami wanted Farid and his sister to play in a film called *Shay’ min la Shay’* (“Something from Nothing”) in 1938, but offered so little money that the siblings refused. Farid later found a good script in *Intisar al-Shabab* and asked Misr Studio to help Gabriel Talhami who was operating Aflam al-Nil at the time, to produce it. Under the direction of Ahmad Badrakhan, the director of Misr Studio, the film was made in 1940 and released in 1941 (55). Through the songs that Farid composed for the operatic voice of his sister, her excellent rendition of them, and his own songs, Farid secured his position as a top composer. The music of *Intisar al-*
"Shabab" included a variety of styles from folkloric, "tarab," and Western features of operettas. Sherifa Zuhur observes in her research about Asmahan that some of the al-Atrash family considered Farid responsible for his sister’s achievements because his musical genius, deep knowledge of Asmahan’s voice, and her abilities in rendering the notes, allowed him to choose the exact tunes for her success (Asmahan 93). Al-Bakri cites another critic, Yousef al-‘Ani, who wrote in the al-Jamhouriah newspaper in 1981: “I am not exaggerating if I say that the film "Intisar al-Shabab" included the most beautiful of Asmahan’s songs and the richest of what she sang in terms of composing, melody, and performance” (59).

"Intisar al-Shabab" includes a few short dance segments performed to the music of Farid al-Atrash. The first dance was to the song of Asmahan’s “al-Ward” (“the Roses”) with the lyrics of Muhammad Hilmi al-Hakim. The dozen dancers, who according to Rabi‘ Muhammad Khalifeh, include some who trained with Badi‘a, such as Tahiya Carioca, Samia Gamal, and Beba Ibrahim, are dressed in long white triple-layered skirts with dark trim on each layer (142). They wear white, short-sleeved tops and white flowers decorate their heads. They dance in lines or around Asmahan in slow movements in which each dancer carries her skirt, twirls, swings one of her arms up and down, takes a step forward and back, thrusts her pelvis forward, or alternates the shoulders forward and back. She also joins the rest of the dancers to form a flower shape shot from above with the singer in the middle as each dancer bends her head down, then back and leans back in a formation that was common in Hollywood extravaganzas and spectacle films.
The second dance takes place as Farid and Asmahan sing the lyrics of Yussef Bedros in the duet “al-Shurouq wu al-Ghuroub” (“the Dawn and the Dusk”). The dancers here consist of four women in white costumes and four men in white tuxedo jackets with black pants. They tango, use steps from the rumba and the foxtrot, form two lines, alternate their positions, and make their way up the steps in the back to form a circle around the two singers located on the higher stage.

The third dance is performed by a woman in Qahwat al-Fan (“Art Café”) who is escorted by a few male audience members onto the billiard table and is given a cue stick to use as prop for her dance. She is wearing a knee-length dress and high heels as she carries the stick in both hands in front of her and undulates her hips in a rhythmic circular motion to the song “Wahyatik” (“Upon your Life”), which Farid sings in the other room. This dancer is enchanted by the music of Farid, who is singing through the phone line to Ihsan, the object of his love.

The final dance appears in the operetta “Layali al-Andalus” (“Andalusian Nights”) at the end of the film. The dancers now are dressed again in their white skirts and dark vests. They perform on a platform surrounded by Moorish architecture. Their movements include hopping on one step, lifting their arms up, bending down to one side, and twirling around in their performance. Nasser (Farid) sings under ‘Afaf’s (Asmahan) balcony, in a Romeo and Juliet style, as two dancers dressed in two-piece dance costumes carry feather fans behind their heads, and perform “Raqsat Tahia” (“The Dance of Tahia”), which becomes later the ending dance she will perform in her next film with
This dance includes a male dancer who dances Spanish Flamenco. His arms extend up above his face, and open out straight at shoulder level while he takes steps around the dancers. The same arms’ movements will be seen later in the dances of Samia Gamal.

Farid composed more dance music for the second film he starred in with Badaweya Mohamed Karim al-Nirani, known as Tahiya Carioca (1920-1999), called *Ahlam al-Shabab* (“the Dreams of Youth”), which was premiered in 1942. The dancer in this film portrays a *bint al-balad* (“a girl from the country”) dancer who comes from a lower-class background and sometimes behaves in an “uncivilized” and unpolished manner. She is an opportunist who is not completely honest. Bahia Sha’sha’ (Tahiya Carioca), like the Salomé of Oscar Wilde, uses her charms when she must and can be dangerous to people around her. Bahia divorces her husband and leaves her child, Hamido, with his father ‘Abdo (Muhammad Kamal al-Masri), who works as her manager. Bahia makes extra cash and receives gifts from her side job as a *fataha* (“bargirl”) in the Casino. She sits with the customers after her dancing to make them buy liquor, and the owner pays her a percentage of his profit from her clients. Bahia is also a liar. She fabricates a story about inheriting a ring from her mother to Ghadban Bey ‘Absi (Bishara Wakim) who claims that he has sent her this ring. Bahia reacts by screaming at the poet Wagdi (Hasan Fayek), who she thought was responsible for the precious gift. She kicks him out of her table because he is poor and cannot afford her gifts. She also lies to Ghadban Bey when he catches her and Farid (Farid al-Atrash) kissing in her room,

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62 According to Fumil Labib, Farid calls it “Raqsat Tahia” when he talked about his first film (Lahn 68).
which they claim is a rehearsal. Bahia is also dangerous because when she gets angry, she attacks men with whatever she finds around her. She throws vases and other items at Farid, her lover, because he does not visit her as often as she likes. Later, she beats him and threatens to kill him and take revenge on him. In other words, Bahia Sha’sha’ (Tahiya Carioca) represents the Egyptian *femme fatale*.

The dances of Tahiya in *Ahlam al-Shabab* vary from solo to duet. She performs the *zaffa*, skirt dance, and a tango in cabaret outfits, and dances *baladi* (“country style”) with a *melaya* (“black veil that covers the head and body”). In the first segment Bahia Sha’sha’ stresses her role as *femme fatale* by dancing sensually in the *sala* of *al-Ghazala al-Hamra* (“The Red Deer”) to the music *Touta* by Farid. The dancer’s sensuality is illustrated in her long dark wavy hair, her half-closed eyes that stare at the camera, her well-defined lips that display a big smile, the two-piece shimmering cabaret costume with fitted sleeves that stretch from the wrist and open up in a bell-like shape before it ends above the elbow, and her slow rendition of hip rotation. After she stands up from her floor position and the thin curtain rises up, the camera focuses on Tahiya’s face, which she alternately conceals and reveals by the crossing of the sequin-sleeved arms in front of it. The camera focuses on her suggestive expression for an extended time, then tilts down to her naked torso, which is divided in two by a strip of the shimmery fabric, which connects the bra with the hip-belt. The dancer at this moment rotates her hips before turning her back and alternates hip thrusts from side to side.
There is no doubt that such choreography and cinematography aim to heighten the sensuality of the dancer and attract more attention to her flirtatiousness. In his *Farewell to Tahia*, Edward Said explains that:

Eastern dancing as Tahia practiced it shows the dancer planting herself more and more solidly in the earth, digging into it almost, scarcely moving, certainly never expressing anything like the nimble resemblance of weightlessness that a great ballet dancer, male or female, tries to convey. (230)

Said does not mention how the camera translates the slow movements of the body and how the dance of Tahiya supports her role as a *femme fatale*. The sensuality of the slow movements of the isolated parts of the body, the suggestive face, and the slow tilting shots that screen every muscle of the scantily-covered body down to the hips render it sexy. This presentation fits well with the image of the *femme fatale* presented by Tahiya who was the first Eastern dancer to become a moviestar. Her friend Zeinab Khalil, known as Samia Gamal (1924-1994), rejected the image of the *femme fatale*. In her films with Farid and with the special music he composed for her dancing, she represented the new woman, a feminist who believed in her potential, equality, and her right to work and prosper. She learned her rights from the West or from the writings of Qasim Amin (1863—1908), who called for women’s emancipation and liberation right after he studied in Europe and was exposed to the intellectual and philosophical climate of the West.

The following films deal with the Eastern dancer as an indispensable part of entertainment in Eastern countries. They represent her as a member of Egyptian society
who like other artists struggles, works hard, and succeeds because she adheres to the values and traditions of her culture.

Habib al-‘Omr (“The Love of My Life”)

Habib al-‘Omr tells about the difficult life of a contemporary group of entertainers and the problems they face in their society. The crowd in al-Mansourah booed the group’s creative singer Mamdouh (Farid), because he would not sing the nonsense song, “Min Foq li-That” (“from High to Low”) that they wanted to hear. Touta (Samia Gamal), the dancer of the group, is called on stage to calm the crowd with her dancing. When the owner of the theatre fires Mamdouh, his band leaves with him. Touta practices her dancing in the back of the truck that transports the group to Cairo as her friends sing and play music. She also dances in an audition for one of the sala owners who likes her and wants her to work alone without her group. He claims that singing is not in demand during wartime and dancers can have the customers “open” bottles of liquor. When Mamdouh rejects the offer for Touta, the owner tells him that he will pay her twenty pounds for her dancing and she will double it from entertaining the customers at their tables. He also considers Mandouh lucky because he has a treasure, which will allow him to have a good living. Of course, the members of the group refuse to degrade Touta to the level of fataha (“bargirl”). When the group cannot find a job, Touta with the help of ‘Am Ashour (Muhammad Kamal al-Masri), an old-fashioned singer and an old friend of Mamdouh’s deceased father, starts dancing at the sala. She provides for the group and keeps her job a secret from Mamdouh. She appears on the stage in the cabaret costume
that she was wearing when she danced in al-Mansourah and performs with five other dancers who take turns leading the group. Mamdouh discovers Touta’s lie, slaps her, and considers her a fallen woman.

This anger of Mamdouh is important to the plot because it shows the resistance that faced the new woman within her own society. As in Western films, the scene deals with the supremacy of masculine power over women. The Eastern man wants his partner to work only when he thinks it reasonable. If she works without his consent, even with a good intention, he condemns her as bad. The following dialogue between ‘Ashour, Mamdouh, and Mur‘esh supports the writer’s claim and explains the position of Eastern men toward dancing:

‘Ashour: *inta jara li ‘a’lak eih ya Mamdouh?*


Ashour: *Tariq eih ya wad inta? Inta makhoul?*

Mamdouh: *Tariq al-salat wu raqasat al-salat.*


Mamdouh: *Ma’ana mush min warana.*

‘Ashour: *Ana rigli ma kanitsh bitfarq riglaha, awadiha binafsi wu raga‘ha binafsi.*

Mamdouh: *Tib’a ghaltan zayaha.*

‘Ashour: Is something wrong with your mind you Mamdouh?

Mambouh: Please Sheikh ‘Ashour. It is enough that you let her go astray.

‘Ashour: What are you saying? Are you insane?

Mambouh: You know well what cabarets and cabarets-dancers are.

Mur‘esh: It is her job, her profession.

Mambouh: With us but not behind our back.

‘Ashour: I was with her at all the time. I accompanied her there and back.

Mamdouh: You are as guilty as she is.

Mambouh: Enough, no need for more discussion. Who wants to come with me and live with honor, come! Who wants to stay and live off her, he can stay!

The complexity of this incident is similar to that of *Hoopla.* Lou was accepted as a dancer only to help her husband Chris, and with his full support of her dancing. Touta and Lou cannot take the initiative and decide their own way of living because they can legitimize their dancing only when supported by the men in their lives. While Chris and then Nifty, his father, accepted Lou’s dancing, Mamdouh rejects it because of his ego and his experience with the cabaret and *sala* dancers. A woman should not be the breadwinner of the family and cannot judge right and wrong wisely. Her work in the
cabaret is ‘ayb (“shameful”), because she may become a prostitute or develop into a femme fatale and challenge the patriarchal power.

Touta becomes famous and stays true to her group. She includes Hulela (Isma‘il Yasin), the qanouni (“the qanoun player”) and Mur‘esh (Hasan Kamel), and the raqaq (“the raq player”) in her band. Mamdouh leaves his band and goes alone to sing on the radio and then to work in Syria. Touta, who now is known in the film as Samia Gamal, listens to Mamdouh’s song “Ahbabina Ya ‘Ayni” (“My Lovers, Oh My Eye”) on the radio with ‘Ashour, Mur‘esh, and Hulela. The three companions dance to the music, and while ‘Ashour uses his cane as a prop for his moves, Mur‘esh tightens the bottom of his jacket around his hips and imitates Samia’s dancing next to Hulela, who shimmies his shoulders. Meanwhile Samia gets ready to perform another dance to the music of “Raqsat al-Jamal” (“The Dance of Beauty”), which Farid actually composed especially for her dancing in Habib al-‘Omr.

Samia emerges on the stage from behind the white curtains of the ornamented arched doorway wearing a dark cabaret costume that has many strands of beads all over its fitted skirt. Although the skirt has a slit in the middle that often reveals the dancer’s legs, the strands of beads that vibrate to the smallest movement of the body distracts the spectators from concentrating on the peeping flesh. Also the V-shaped bra straps that stem from the middle of the dancer’s bosom and wrap around the neck elongate the face of the dancer and enlarge the size of her shoulders. Such a style enhances Samia’s figure, glamorizes her, and suits the upper class cabaret and her choreographed movements.
The dancer uses her arms to change the shape of her body. She sometimes make them look like an extension of her shoulder or like a Spanish dancer by elevating them a little above the shoulder in a bull fighter position, ready to strike his spears into the bull. This step creates a sense of vertical movement while keeping the undulating lower body isolated. It also elongates and gives the viewer more to admire. She also smiles, avoiding the camera and moving constantly. In other words, “Raqsat al-Jamal” introduces the beginning of Samia’s style, which reduces the earth-bounding element of the Eastern dance as indicated in Gérôme’s *Dance of the Almeh* and Tahia’s dance style. By adhering to the notes of “Raqsat al-Jamal” and expressing them through the movements of her body, Samia introduces a new sense of virtuosity that gives the spectators more than a simple presentation of feminine sexuality.

Samia subsequently performs the same style in “Raqsat al-Nar” (“The Dance of Fire”), which is announced in the film as the last of Samia’s dances in the sala because she is going to start her career as a movie star. The performance starts with Samia lying sideways on a stage in front of a white-curtained arcaded background, surrounded by eight dancers. They wear *sirwals* or harem pants, bra-like tops covered with vests, and light transparent veils that connect to the back of their necks and their wrists. They lift their arms up and down in unison, which brings to mind the Denishawn group of Ruth

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63 Rabi’ Muhammad Khalifeh mistakenly indicates that “Raqsat al-Nar” was performed by Nadia Gamal, a Lebanese dancer (1935-1992) who made her debut with Farid and Sabah in the 1956 film *Izzay Ansak* (“How would I forget you?”) (28). Nadia plays the role of the *almeh* dancer Loza who dances to the songs of her sister Zanouba. Nadia dances three times, the first is to Sabah’s song “Zanouba”, which was put to music by Farid and the other two times occur during an audition and at the finale of the operetta “Sane’ al-Tamathil” (“The Sculptor”). The last two dances are less than a minute each in length.
St. Denis and Ted Shawn in *Intolerance*. They form a half circle around the heroine, who rises up from her position, kicks her leg forward through the slit of her belted skirt while arching her back in a balletic move. She descends a few steps to another, larger stage, similar to the one in the Café Maure where Yasmin was dancing when Ahmed abducted her in *The Son of the Sheik*. Like Yasmin, Samia’s expressive dancing and the extra leaping leg extension in this choreography distract from the sexuality of the moving body. Samia expresses the agitation of fire by using the thin veil connected to the top of her head and her wrists as an extension of her body. The flying fabric ceases to indicate a sign of a harem woman and suggests motion. In a way it reminds the viewer of Loïe Fuller, who at the turn of the century also danced a “Fire Dance” and her use of light and veils as extensions of her body to suggest motion. Samia’s twirling with arms elevated, her veil, and the use of her body to utilize horizontal and vertical spaces render her lighter and visually interesting. Sulayman al-Hakim notes that Izaac Dixon, the choreographer of “Raqsat al-Nar,” trained Samia and Tahia since they worked at the sala of Badi’a (25).

The combination of the Eastern sensibility of Samia and the Western sensibility of Dixon matches the Eastern and Western musical sensibility of Farid. It also introduces a new vocabulary to Eastern dance which is now accessible to other dancers through *Habib al-‘Omr*.

Samia performs the last dance in *Habib al-‘Omr* to the title song, “Habib al-‘Omr”. Mamdouh sings the lyrics of Ma’moun al-Shinawi in a new theatre that was built with the money of his band once again including Touta. Thinking first that he was working for a rich man, Za’tarani Bey, Mambouh agrees to perform at the new theatre
that was built especially for him. Not knowing that his group arranged this job for him and paid for the building, he recruits them all except Touta to work with him. He explains to the members of the band: “Sibuna min Touta, Hiya waslat khalas” (“Leave Touta alone, she has already made it”). This statement reminds the viewer of Mamdouh’s distrust of the shameful way that may have been responsible for Touta’s success, and reflects the singer’s jealousy of the dancer’s accomplishment and his inability to forget his injured ego. Samia, on the other hand, stays faithful to her lover and ready to risk all to help him. When Mamdouh discovers that Touta has engaged the actor Za’tar to pretend that he was a rich man who needed a singer in his theatre, and that she has contributed to building the theatre, he refuses to sing at the opening night. People intervene and when Mamdouh realizes that ‘Izzat al-Maniyalawi (Muhammad ‘Ulwan) and Ilham al-Tourounbuli (Lola Sidki) conspired to separate him from Touta, he forgives her and asks her through a radio appearance to join the group in their opening night. She accepts the invitation and hurries to the theatre to dance to Mamdouh’s song.

At this point, Samia appears behind the seven male choir members and musicians of the orchestra, on the top of a spiral-shaped stage. She makes her way down the side steps carrying the bottom of her dress to open the slit and reveal her bare leg. Her dark colored dress consists of a long skirt and a top that shows her bare stomach, left shoulder, and right arm. A piece of the same fabric extends from a buckle on the left hip, diagonally to the right shoulder and connects to the top of her bra with another big buckle, then drapes loosely like a shawl behind the shoulder. The left arm is covered with a single sleeve that covers her arm from the wrist to the middle of her upper arm. A
few white flowers crown her hair from the top to the left ear and two white bangles decorate her right wrist. This outfit complements Farid’s Western suit and his black bowtie, all of which fits with the big orchestra that includes Eastern and Western instruments arranged on the steps, as seen in some Western musicals.

Samia travels between the small dais where Farid stands and the floor surrounding it where the female choir, dressed in long white dresses, and a piano player are located. She restricts her steps to some undulations and shoulder movements timed to complement elegantly the visual presentation of the orchestra and the innovative arrangement of the music. Samia ends her short dance by joining Farid on his stand, in front of him and to his left, as he holds her, and they both bow.

The importance of *Habib al-'Omr* resides in its being the first film that Farid produced. Its artistic creativity led to its selection to represent Egyptian cinema in the 1984 Film Festival in Nantes, France (al-Bakri 69). The film was innovative and included many pleasing aspects that included an interesting plot and excellent entertainment combining Eastern and Western influences.

The next film will focus on the Western lifestyle preferred among the contemporary upper class Egyptians and highlight their activities and interests. It will also demonstrate Western influence on the music and dancing of Farid and Samia.

*Ahibak Inta* (‘I Love You’)

The first dance in Ahibak Inta shows Nadia (Samia Gamal) as a Spanish dancer wrapped in a long, white, fringed embroidered shawl dancing in a cabaret. She decorates
her hair with two large, white flowers behind her left ear and wears a white, fitted short-sleeved top with a big collar made of printed fabric that slides off her shoulders. The long, flared skirt that matches her collar is fluffed with a laced, puffy underskirt that is revealed every time she kicks the skirt away. Nadia twirls, extends her leg up, jumps in the air, runs forward, elevates her arms and lets the back of her arms face each other above her head. She also hops backward, bends her body forward, puts her hands on her posterior as if to lift her skirt and skips backward. These new movements are performed to a very well-known Spanish tune that forms the beginning of Farid’s musical composition. It will eventually change to different tune (that will be elaborated on in another film) to form “Raqsat al-Jawari,” and then ends with a tango. This introductory music and dance sequence, however, confirms a new sensibility and effort on the part of the composer and choreographer to maintain the same mixture of Eastern and Western dance theme throughout Ahibak Inta.

Munir (Farid al-Atrash), the poor but musically talented employee at a telegraph office, composes the music for Nadia’s following dance as a token of his love for her. She performs “Raqsat al-Tuboul” (figure 34) on a platform shaped like a drum, while eight backup dancers perform individually on smaller drums situated around the main stage. Some women are “shackled” to the bottom of Nadia’s stage in a pose similar to the slave girls in the 1933 MGM production of Roman Scandals. The dancers in Roman Scandals are chained around a rotating circular pedestal where a slave woman, who resembles Samia, performs a dance illustrating her struggle that uses similar body movements. Izzac Dixon who choreographed the dances of Ahibak Inta may have been
influenced by the work of Busby Berkely in *Roman Scandals* or by the source that influenced Berkely.

The Eastern and Western fusion is also promoted in the outfits of the dancers in “Raqsat al-Tuboul.” The costume of the background dancers, who wear their long, black hair loose and decorate it with flowers behind their ears, consists of a short, wrapped skirt and bra of printed fabric. They wear necklaces and perform barefooted. They resemble Hollywood’s conception of women from any “primitive” society. In contrast, Samia wears a *sirwal harimi* (“harem pants”), similar in shape but flimsier than that of Gérôme’s *almeh* in the painting of 1863. Its upper part is contained in a girdle-like belt of brocaded fabric that holds the waist and hips. The top part of Samia’s costume resembles a more sophisticated version of the *almeh*’s vest. The fashionable small jacket with short sleeves and an oval-shaped collar is made of matching brocaded fabric and reveals a part of the bra that complements the pants. Samia also wears a pair of flat ankle-tie sandals like those often depicted in Greek paintings and sculptures, and a turban similar to those of Turkish nobility.

The dancers show a new style in their choreography, characterized by shimmying their hands, throwing their arms above their heads to the beat of the drum, bending their knees, opening their legs, and shifting their weight from one side to another as done in the films of Hollywood to emulate “primitive” dancing and to demonstrate a serious search for additional expressive moves. These steps and the costumes, as with the music of Farid, expand the vocabulary and attire of Eastern art and allow the dance not only to
hybridize with Western perceptions and appeal to a variety of tastes, but to express the theme of intercultural exchange prevalent in *Ahibak Inta*.

*Ahibak Inta*, like most of Farid’s films, deals with aspects of a Western lifestyle current among the aristocracy and upper-middle class Egyptians. Nadia not only is a famous dancer, but has a close relationship with her male dance teacher, Chica Chica Boom (‘Abd al-Salam al-Nabulsi), with whom she casually holds hands, hugs, and shares friendly kisses. When Nadia tells Chica Chica Boom about her engagement to Munir, he hugs her and kisses her without noticing the jealous lover behind them. Munir mistakenly interpreted their act as a love affair and leaves abruptly the Pansion al-Nujoum (“Motel of Stars”), where Nadia and her dance group live. On his way, he encounters Riri (Lola Sidki), a young woman who throws herself into the Nile in an attempt to kill herself to end her engagement to her fiancée (Mahmoud Shukoukou). Munir saves her by calling on other people to rescue her because he cannot swim. He carries her home to her father, Basyouni Bey (Hasan Fayek), a retired pharmacist, and sister Sousou (Thurya Hilmi). Believing that Munir is ‘Ali ‘Izzat, a famous swimming champion, the family welcomes the hero, and invites him to spend the night. As a result, Sousou wants also to get rid of her own fiancée (Isma‘il Yasin), using the same trick. The two jealous fiancées inform Nadia about Munir’s change of identity. Nadia finds Munir at the swimming pool with young women who, similarly, wear fashionable swimming-suits that Ahmad Khorshid, the cinematographer of *Ahibak Inta*, was certain to emphasize.
Like the female nude in the paintings of the nineteenth century and the sexualized feminine body in Western movies of the 1930s, the body of the Egyptian female was used to attract the gaze. Through cropping and zooming in, Khorshid attracted attention not only to the lifestyle of rich people, but also to their fashions, characters, and leisure activities. His tactical presentation, as in Western cinema, fulfilled the curiosity of the spectator, started a debate, informed the audience about human behavior, and disseminated trends in fashion. Egyptian writer Samir Farid notes in his *Tarikh al Raqabah ala al-Cinema fi Misr* (“The History of Censorship in Egyptian Cinema”) that the censoring bureau in 1947 encouraged the presentation of wealthy areas and its people because they were clean and stylish, while it forbade the appearance of poor, dirty places and their people, including “dirty” cabarets (59). Therefore, dancing seemed appropriate when performed for the elite and at their parties, and was used to promote the new musical styles of Farid that also combine Western elements.

Nadia performs at the birthday party of another *Bey* friend of Basiouni to a song of the old Ustaz Tawakkul, who plays the ‘oud and sings old style songs while sitting on a chair. The singer sleeps in the middle of the song and Munir saves the party with his performance of the lyrics of Bayram al-Tounsi “Habito Lakin ma Baqoulshi” (“I love him but I do not tell”). The contrast between the two singers strengthens Farid’s innovative approach and his original songs. Also, Samia’s reflective costume, which shimmers under the lights, and her energetic movements support the modern style of Munir.
When the song ends, the fiancées bring the real ‘Ali ‘Izzat, who challenges Munir to a swimming competition. Munir eventually confesses the truth to Basyouni, who in turn forgives him because he also helped his daughters and their fiancées. Everyone unites to bring Nadia and Munir together, and Basyouni funds their operetta.

The operetta “Al-Sharq wu al-Gharb” (“The East and West”) celebrates artistic interculturalism and promotes the hybrid fusion. It contains three main characters and a chorus. Farid al-Atrash represents the East, a female singer, Raja’ Abdo, represents the West (ironic switch in representation), and Samia Gamal leads the chorus in dance to both Eastern and Western tunes. The two singers converse through the music and explain their attractions while the dancer illustrates their dialogue through her choreographed routine. Farid insists on the beauty of the East, its traditions, and the sublimity of its music especially in singing *ya leil* (“oh night”). Raja’, on the other hand, emphasizes the romantic aspects of Western art and its effect on young couples. Poet Saleh Jawdat writes in “Al-Sharq wu al-Gharb”:

**Farid:**

- *Ay min fou’adi al-wahid*  
  *toul al-layli ay*
- *Ala water min jourohi*  
  *ghinwati wu shakway*
- *Al-dam’ wu al-huzn kasi*  
  *wu al-’alam shakway*
- *Malish anis fi al-wujoud*  
  *ghayr al-watar wu al-nay*

**Raja’:**

- *yalli bi tradded ay ay*  
  *wu bi tishki humoumak li al-nay*
- *Ta’dar ’al wahda izzay*  
  *qoul li ahzanak bye bye*
- *It’arrab wu isma’ najway*  
  *wu itharrak wu ir’us wayyay*

**Farid:**

- *Naghamatik mu al-fan al-gharbi*  
  *wu al naghamat di ghariba ‘alayi*
Ana sharqi wala yihizzish albi illa al-alhan al-shaqiya

Raja’:
Shouf al-Samba shouf al-Rumba dum li husnak sihri wu fanni
A’shaq fannak ti’shaq fanni wu ‘akhud minnak wu takhud minni
Habba habba nibqa ahibba arqus samba wu tirqus rumba

Farid:
Al-Sharq khayalu asil wu jamaluh maloush mathil
Da biyshir qalb al-leil lamma yghaniluh ya leil ya leil

Raja’:
Ya mahla najwa al-layali najwa al-amal wu al-na’im
Wu bardu lahnuh fi khayali bi yisri zay al-nassim
Wu al-‘ayn lil ‘ayn min nazrat ‘ayn tilqa al-gharibayn yabqou habibayn
Wu min nazrat ‘ayn min al-‘ayn li al-‘ayn tilqa al-malyyin itnin itnin

Farid:
Hasama’ek min alhani angham ‘Iraki wu Lubnani

Mawwal ‘Iraqi (“Iraqi mawwal”)

Nafsi ‘azizah ya khalik hal hin zallitaha
Wu ma tuzul illa likum zalliytaha
La tuhujouha turouh li ghirukum tihwa
Ana wu al nabi ma youm lighayrakum zallitaha
Ya masabarni ala balway ya layl

Mawwal Lubnani (“Lebanese mawwal”)

Qadish ‘oudek ya maliha khayel
Min nashwoutu fi mashyitu bi yakhayel
Ma zilti inti al-qadi wu qalbi bi hikmek radi
Laysh al-‘azul bayni wu baynek hayel
Al-ithnin:  *Al-fann ma loush watan al-fann milk al-khuloud*

*Qoum nimshi wayya al-zaman wu nihiz qalb al-wujoud*

*Fannak da khayaluh hazin wana fanni khayaluh sa‘yid*

*Yala nidum al-itnin wu n‘alif fann jadid*

*Wu yabqa li al-fannin ‘id*

Farid:  My heart is lonely all night. I sing and complain to the strings of my injured heart. I drink my sorrow and tears while my song describes my suffering. I have no one in the universe except the strings and flute.

Raja’: You who are suffering and telling his trouble to the flute, how can you be lonely? You must forget your trouble. Come closer, hear my mysterious tunes, and dance with me.

Farid: Your tunes are Western and foreign to me. I am from the East and only Eastern tunes affect my heart.

Raja’: Watch the samba and the rumba and add to your beauty my mystery and art. I adore your art and you adore mine. I’ll take from you and you take from me. Slowly we will love each other. I’ll dance samba and you rumba.

Farid: The East has true imagination and its beauty is unique. It bewitches the aching heart when singing ‘oh night oh night’.

Raja’: How nice is the message of hope and happiness in the night. And also its tune that whispers like the breeze. When people look closely in each
other’s eyes, the strangers become lovers. One look from an eye to another and you see the millions become couples.

Farid: You are going to hear my tunes of Iraqi and Lebanese melodies. Oh people, I am proud, but I humble myself for you. I humble myself only for you. Do not let me go and love someone else. By God I never humbled myself but for you.

How beautiful your figure is. You walk arrogantly because you are proud of your beauty. You are the judge of my heart, which accepts your decision. I am wondering why the enemy wants to keep us apart.

Both: Art does not have a country; it is immortal. It goes along with time and moves the core of existence. Your art is sad; my art is blissful. Let’s merge the two in a new art. Both arts will celebrate.

Samia dances to each part of the song by alternating between dance styles and costumes of both East and West. Of course each dance will also have special costumes for the backup dancers, which transform the operetta to an informative fashion spectacle. The operetta includes choreography from many dances, including samba, rumba, dabké (line dance), Eastern dance, tango, and modern dance. It also reinforces Farid’s style of operetta, which started with *Intisar al-Shabab* and will later appear in many of his subsequent films.

The next film will include fantasy figures and symbolic references that supplement the vocabulary of dance and use the dancer as a defender of good against evil. It will also introduce more Western influenced fashion and dance movements.
'Afrita Hanem (“Mrs. Ghost”)  

The story of ‘Afrita Hanem deals with the unconscious mind and wisdom. It tells about a genie, Kahramanah (Samia Gamal), who wants to help poor ‘Asfour (Farid al-Atrash) in his quest for happiness. She grants all his wishes and transforms into the dancer Simsimah (Samia Gamal) to dance for his group. ‘Asfour thinks that he loves ‘Alia (Lola Sidki) who wants him for his money, but through Simsimah, Kahramanah teaches him about true love and that fortune alone cannot guarantee happiness and wisdom.

‘Afrita Hanem introduces the genie (Samia Gamal) dancing an expressive routine to the music “Kahramanah” (figure 35) by Farid al-Atrash. She is dressed in a light colored two-piece costume that consists of a bra, bloomers, and a long skirt with a sequined edge. Kahramanah carries the edge of the skirt, twirls, and reveals her legs and bloomers to tease her partner ‘Asfour who feels threatened by her presence. ‘Afrita Hanem includes many other dances in the famous long song of Farid’s called “al-Fusoul al-Arba’a” (“The Four Seasons”), which seems to create an Arabic version of Antonio Vivaldi’s (1678-1741) theme from “The Four Seasons” in that the music demonstrates the nature of each season. Farid arranged the music to a poem of Ma’moun al-Shinawi that describes the effect of each season on the abandoned lover. In it, ‘Asfour proclaims:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Adi al-rabi} & \quad \text{‘ad min tani} & \quad \text{wu al-badr hallet anwaruh} \\
\text{Wu fein habibi illi ramani} & \quad \text{min jannat al-hub li-naru} & \quad \text{hatha wu khud 'umri}
\end{align*}
\]
Wu illi ra’itu ramani  
fatni wu shaghal fikri

Kan al-nasim ghinwah  
al-Nil yaghaniha

Wu mayyitu al-hilwah  
tifdal ti’id fiha

Wu moujuh al-hadi kan ‘ouduh  
wu nur al-badr awtaruh

Ynaghi al-ward wu khoudouduh  
ynaghi al-leil wu asraruh

Wu anghamuh bi tiskirna  
wu ansamuh bi tishirna

Ana wu huwa ma fish ghirna

Lamin bitidhak ya saiyl  
Layalik wu ayyamak

Kan li fi ‘ahdak alif  
‘ahedni quddamak

Wu kan li fi qalbuh tayf  
ykhtur fi ahlamak

Min youm ma fatni wu rah  
shadwu al-balabil nouwah

Wu al-ward lawn al-jirah

Mar al-kharif ba’duh  
Dabbal zuhour al-gharam

Wu al-dunia min ba’duh  
hawan wu ya’s wu alam

La al-qalb yinsa hawah  
wu la habibi yerhamni

Wu kul ma qoul ah  
yizid fi zulmuh wu yu’limni

Wu adi al-Shita ya toulayalih  
‘ala illi fatuh habibuh

Yinagi tayfuw wu yinagih  
wu yishki lil kawn ta’zibuh

Mawwal:

Ya badr ya fager ya nismah  
ya tayr ya zahr ya aghsan

Hatouli mi al-habib kilmah  
tiwas al-‘asheq al-hayran

Akhad ward al-hawa minni  
wu fat li shoukuh yu’limni
Spring has come again and brought the light of the full moon, but where is my lover who threw me from the heaven of love to its hell? I would give my life for his days of delight. Although I took care of him, he left me and kept me wondering. The Nile sang the song of the breeze, the tide repeated it, the quiet wave formed its lute, and the rays of the moon became the strings. The breeze flirted with the flowers and their petals as well as the night and its secrets. When we were alone, these tunes intoxicated us and the breeze bewitched us.

Summer, for whom do your days and nights smile? I had a lover who swore love in front of you. His heart was a ghost that appeared in my dreams. From the time he left me, the songs of the birds sounded like crying and the colors of the roses became those of wounds.

Fall has come after summer and wilts the flowers of love. Life after him became degradation, depression, and pain. My heart cannot forget him, and he does not grant me mercy. Every time I declare my pain, he increases his rudeness and hurts me.

Winter is here with its long nights for the lonely lover who sings for his lover and his ghost, and tells the universe about his torture.
Oh moon, morning, breeze, birds, branches, bring me a word from my lover to ease the heart of the adoring lover. He took from me the roses of rapture and left me with painful thorns. I do not know my guilt except that I was true to my love with all my heart. He disappeared without telling me when I will see him again. I am still hoping he will pity me and send me his ghost in the spring.

Farid coordinates the meaning and imagery of “al-Fusoul al-Arba’a” with expressive musical notations and vocalizations that exemplify feelings of pain, yearning, sorrow, and hope. He also expresses the change of the seasons in his fashions, for example, by changing his jackets and the styles of his shirt.

Samia also illustrates the change of the seasons through a constant switching of costumes to indicate the weather and the dance style she performs. First, she appears in a full-hoop skirt made of printed fabric, a large, jasmine-strung necklace, and a matching bracelet as she sits on some steps. She makes her way down the steps to an alley where the neighbors on the balconies shower rosepetals on the angelic-looking backup dancers, who wear white dresses and sunhats. The group surrounds Samia and, when she dances next to Farid, they form two lines behind them. They swing their arms leisurely in front of themselves, above their heads, and twirl while switching places between lines.

Samia then changes to express summer and appears sunbathing in her bikini. Another woman close by combs her hair, and yet another sits lazily in front of a carpet she was weaving while a local juice vendor crosses the alley. Farid sings and walks to Samia, who is enchanted to see him. Then Farid sits so he can hug her.
Samia switches outfits again for the fall and appears in a dark strapless corset-style dress similar to a classical ballet costume, complementing it with a pair of unattached glove-like sleeves that stop at the middle of her upper arms. She dances with the backup dancers, who twirl slowly while holding up the side of their full skirts, then, she circles around Farid who holds her and tangos with her.

Samia alters her fashion now to a short fur coat and poses in front of a tree with falling leaves. When the music starts, she takes off her coat to reveal her dancing costume. It consists of a white skirt, a sequined belt, arm cuffs, and a matching bra that has large white straps. Again, she goes down the alley dancing in front of the baladi ("country style") dressed dancers, including both women and men with canes. The group and their leader change costumes once more only to reappear again in white dresses in order to dance the last section of the song that repeats the first part of the poem.

The dancing in “al-Fusoul al-Arba’a” is not as expressive as the dances of “al-Nar” or “al-Tuboul” of Ahibak Inta. It remains controlled and appropriate to the meaning of the words but follows the intricate tunes of the music. Therefore, the choreography and cheerful face of Samia balances the gloomy text, so that it will not be too depressing for the spectators. This tactic, as writer Samir Farid indicates in his Tarikh al-Raqabah ‘ala al- cinema fi Misr (“History of Censorship of Egyptian Cinema”), supports the Egyptian laws that urged filmmakers to be sensitive to the amount of depression and excitement they provoked in their movies (78). Too much sadness might cause problems that needed to be prevented through balance and careful editing of the plot and songs in films. Also the constant changing of fashion that accompanied the song introduced a new
element of entertainment that distracted from the sadness of the song and was in the style of Western films of the period. The prevailing fashion shows in Western movies during the thirties and forties, such as *The Great Ziegfeld* (1937), *Jezebel* (1938), *The Women* (1939), *Irene* (1940) and many other films, influenced ‘Afrita Hanem’ and fostered balance within the plot.

‘Afrita Hanem’ amused, instructed, and enchanted the viewers while giving them a piece of advice. Although as a final thought the film asked people to accept their destiny and to be content with what they possessed, it presented to them a lifestyle that was, perhaps, more luxurious than their own, restricted as it was to the aristocracy and upper class. The dancer mediates between the rich and the poor since she belongs to a variety of classes. Kahramanah engenders the elite because she is a spirit, while Simsimah comes from a lower status. This mixture allows the dancer to travel between the classes and permits the spectators a peek at another lifestyle.

Samia and other Eastern and Western troupes also perform in Eastern and Western styles at the end of the film in “Operette al-Jinn” (”The Ghosts”) that was written by Ahmad Rami. The text of “Operette al-Jinn” promotes love and defends it through singing the following dialogue:

**Huwa:**  
*yalli wahashti al-‘uyoun*  
*wu fitti qalbi wahid*

*Sabaht bayn al-shujoun*  
*haym sharid fi al-wujoud*

*Al-jawou faten wu saher*  
*tishrah bahahu al-‘ayn*

*Wu ana illi fi al-dunia hayer*  
*aqoul habibi fayn*

**Kowras:**  
*Yalli tihim wahid min gheir habib*  
*al-dunia fiha kul shay’ gharib*
Yalli bitishki min jafah  inta tis‘ad min ridah

Hiya:  shouf ‘andi tayr alif wu jamil  law ghanna yashfi qalbak al-‘alil

Adi bulbul tishtirih?  ‘ayza minnak bousah fih

Huwa  Maqdarsh ashouf ‘asfur asir  adi al-thaman khalilh yatir

Hiya:  Maqardash ana bil bousa nassib  ‘ayzak tikun lil ‘omr habib

Huwa:  Wu ana illi fatni habibi wu tah  wu atmanna a‘ish al-‘omr ma‘ah

Hiya:  Laqit habibi illi ghab  ‘anni wu fatni sharid

Yama qasit al-‘azab  wu ana fi bu‘du wahid

Mawwal:

Yalli nadak al-gharam wu sami‘t alhani

Yama danani al-suhaad min bu‘d khullani

Anna kint wahdi aqasi zul hirmani

Qurback na‘im al fu‘ad aw‘a tighib tani

Kowras:  Inta lina wu hiya Kaman lina  lazem ti‘ishu ‘andina hina

Intu kintu bi al-khayal  wu ihna awla bi al-jamal64

Huwa:  Haram ‘alikum khalilouna ni‘ish sawa fi dunia al-ahbab

Dana qasit fi al-bu‘d kithir wu shuft murr wu shuft ‘azab

Isna‘ou fina jamil. Itrukouna

Kowras:  Mustahil, mustahil

Al-malik:  Ashum rihat uns  la minna wula mi al-jins

---

64 The lines of the chorus are missing in the Arabic sources of al-Jawadi (258-9) and Khalifah (118) works but sung in the video and DVD of Afrita Hanem. Perhaps they were not included in the original text and added during the recording of the operetta, or the writers omitted them by mistake.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jinn;</th>
<th>Eih al-hikayah ya shayatin  qulouli malkum kida haysin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Al-rijal:</td>
<td>Il bint di husnaha fattan  ‘ayzinha tifdal bayn al-jan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ni’shaq bahaha</td>
<td>wu ni’ish ma’aha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-nisa’:</td>
<td>Wu al-shab da yisher al-alhan  khalla al-wujoud kuluh farhan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khallih ma’ana</td>
<td>‘ala hawana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huwa:</td>
<td>Uhkum ya sultan ya ‘adil  fi al-hub bayn al-quloub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-qalb li al-qalb mayel</td>
<td>wu izzay yuhoun al-habib</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-malik:</td>
<td>Al-hub dawlah wu laha sultan  ghalib ‘ala kul al-salatin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jinn:</td>
<td>Yalli khada’tuli mi al-jan  sibou al-haba ‘ib doul hurrin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-kul:</td>
<td>Ya nas al-hub da qismah wu nasib  khallu al-habib yathana bi al-habib</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yalli qalbak mal</td>
<td>ya hanak youm al-wisal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Huwa: You who I miss seeing and left my heart lonely. I became a sad wanderer in the universe. The weather is beautiful and nature bewitches the eye, but I am confused asking where my lover is.

Kowras; You who roam alone, life is bizar re. Its estrangement makes you sad and its closeness makes you happy.

She: Look, I have a beautiful bird who will cure you with her voice. Do you want to buy her? It will cost you a kiss.

He: I cannot see an imprisoned bir d. Take the price and let her fly.

She: Your kiss is not enough for me. I want you to be my lifelong lover.

He: Me, my lover abandoned me and disappeared, and I wish to live my life with him.
I found my lost lover who left me roaming. It was painful and lonely without him.

Mawwal:

You who are called by love, and you heard my tunes. I was sleepless because my partner was away. I was lonely in my destitution. Your presence is my heaven; please do not disappear again.

Devils: You and she are ours. You have to stay here with us. You were in our dreams but we deserve your beauty.

He: Have pity on us. Let us live together in the land of love. I had enough bitterness and pain. Do us a favor. Leave us.

Devils: Impossible, impossible.

King: I smell people not from us or our kind.

What is the story you devils? Tell me what makes you so hasty.

Devils (m): This woman is charming, and we want her to stay with us. We will adore her beauty and live with her.

Devils (f): And this fellow bewitches the melodies. He pleases the universe. Let him stay with us as we wish.

He: You, the just sultan, judge love between the hearts. The two hearts are in love and no one should degrade the lover.

King: Love is a country with a triumphant sultan.

You, my servant ghosts, set the lovers free.
All: People, love is fate. Let the lovers enjoy each other. You whose hearts are attached, how delighted you are going to be when you get together.

The choreographer and director of ‘Afrita Hanem depended heavily on Eastern and Western conventions to conceive “Operette al-Jinn.” The expressive dancing of Simsimah when she portrays a caged bird is fast and sharp. She whisks horizontally and vertically in the cage to emulate the movements of a bird. Her costume, also fashioned to give the illusion of feathers, flies around her body. The bra and belt are sequined and a v-shaped piece connects them at her midrift while the skirt and detached sleeves are made of individual pieces of fabric that alternate in black and white. The jinn women also wear similar outfits while the attire of the male devils consists of a black unitard, a short cape, a tail, a facemask, and make-up.

The representation of the jinn, devils, heaven and hell are Western visual interpretations of the invisible, adapted for the Egyptian plot of ‘Afrita Hanem. Visual representations of the supernatural and prophets are forbidden in most Islamic countries, therefore, the choreographers, fashion designers, and directors of Eastern cinema find a model in Western representations of such subjects. For example, the scene of Farid singing for the god of the underworld reminds the enlightened viewer of the aria “Possente Spirto” in act three of Claudio Monteverdi’s (1567-1643) first opera, Orfeo, which debuted in Mantua, Italy in 1607. Both Orfeo and ‘Asfour begged Hades in a solo style that enabled them to overcome the powers of the supernatural through their divine art. The film also used symbolic references such as a birdcage, a waterfountain, the enthroned devil, and the pitchfork that appeared in Western paintings and cinema.
Although Western artists borrowed the birdcage and waterfountain from Eastern miniatures and used them as symbols to represent the East, such appearances in Western art strengthened their artistic value. The birdcage in Gérôme’s paintings of the *almeh* and the waterfountain that accompanied the odalisque of Ingres, however, may have influenced their use in representing potential assurances of love and pleasure. *‘Afrita Hanem*, however, borrowed imagery, musical form, theme, fashion, and dance steps from Western art to tell a story about Eastern ethics.

The next film also promotes aspects of integration and cultural hybridization from a variety of Eastern countries. These countries include Syria, Lebanon, and Tunisia whose dances expand the vocabulary of the cinematic Eastern dancer.

*Akher Kidbah* ("The Last Lie")

The plot of Akher Kidhbah tells about the singer Samir (Farid al-Atrash), who loves his wife Samira (Samia Gamal), a dancer at Casino al-Rabi’, but he lies to her because she is jealous. One falsehood leads to another and puts Samir in complex, funny situations that involve his friend, co-star, and neighbor Arnab (Isma’il Yasin). Arnab pretends that he accompanied Samir to the opera and that he is engaged to Kiki (Kamilia) to cover up for his friend’s innocent involvement with her. Samira defends Kiki and protects her from a thief who courted her, disguised as an Indian Maharaja.

Samia’s dancing in *Akher Kidhbah* is restricted to the Eastern choreography while Kiki (Kamilia) and a group of dancers perform in a Western style. The first dance in *Akher Kidhba* is a version of a line kick by a group of young girls to the music “al-Kidhb
ah al-Kidhb” (“The Lies, oh the Lies,” lyrics by Ibn al-Leil), performed by Arnab (Isma‘il Yasin), which seems influenced by the role of teacher, represented by the character played by Najib al-Rihani in the film, Ghazel al-Banat (“The Flirtation of Girls”) (1949). Kiki (Kamilia) also dances later in the film to the song “Ana wu Illi Bahibu” (“My Lover and I,” lyrics of Ma‘moun al-Shinawi), which Samir sings in a nightclub when he is forced by Kiki and her group to entertain them. Kiki twirls around Samir in a long, white, strapless dress that swirls around her in the fashion of Ginger Rogers when she performs with Fred Astaire. This scene is shot in an outdoor club where people consume liquor, listen to music, and do ballroom dancing.

Farid and Samia contrast the performances of the other actors first in “Maqalli wu Qultilu” (“He Told Me and I Told Him,” lyrics by Abou al-Su‘oud al-Abiyari). Samia dances in a costume consisting of shimmering, dark bra with wide, white straps, a matching hip-belt, and a white skirt. The costume is decorated with strands of beads that are shaped in half circles to cover some of the dancer’s stomach. This form is also echoed in the front of the hip-belt and between the straps on the back of the costume. The dancing of “Maqalli wu Qultilu” is subtle but attractive due to Samia’s expertise in following the music, undulating and alternating seamlessly from one movement to the next.

Samia gives the spectators a dancing performance that allows them to feast their eyes on a variety of Eastern dancing styles and related costumes in the “Operette Busat al-Rih” (“The Flying Carpet”), written by Bayram al-Tunsi, at the end of the film. The operette is part of the entertainment presented at the nightclub. It introduces Samir,
Samira, and Arnab as instruments of an Indian magician. The curtains open to reveal the three friends and an Indian magician with his crystal ball. They converse with him:

Arnab:   
    *Ya sahir al-Hind yalli al-mu‘jizat fannak*,

Samir:   
    *wu Jami‘ Houwat al-balad mut‘alima minak*,

Samira:  
    *‘ayzin nishuf al-ajab illi qalouh ‘annak*.

Magician:  
    *Shufou al-‘ajab*.

Al-kul:  
    *Hat al-‘ajab*.

Magician:  
    *A’alla’kum wu labiskum, alabiskum wu tayyarkum*.

Arnab:   
    You, sir, Indian magician whose art is miracle-making,

Samir;   
    And you, master of all the local magicians,

Samira:  
    We want to see the extraordinary acts we heard about.

Magician:  
    See the extraordinary.

All:  
    Give it to us.

Magician:  
    I will strip your clothes, put you in different fashions, and let you fly.

The lyrics of “Operette Busat al-Rih”, which is sung by Farid and ‘Ismat ‘abd al-‘Alim, celebrates Eastern countries and compliments their peoples. The flying carpet transports the group to introduce the neighboring peoples and share their traditions. The dialogue of “Operette Busat al-Rih” is:

Farid:  
    *Busat al-rih jamil wu murih wu kullu aman wala al-bulman*  
    *Busat al-rih busat al-rih ya tayer fuq wu kulak zawq*  
    *Ana mushtaq wu barani al-shawq wu dawayya fi Souriya wu fi Lubnan*

‘Ismat:  
    *Nasim Lubnan shafa al-arwah  ‘alil al-qalb ‘aleih irtah*
Wu ya mushtaq fi bar al-sham tibat sakran bila aqadah

Farid:
Souriya wu Lubnan qamat wu qudud ‘aleiha tishuf ‘oyun wu khudoud
tizawwed nar al-qalb baroud ana a ‘shaq Souriya wu Lubnan
Nirouh ya busat ‘ala Baghdad bilad khayrat bilad amjad

‘Ismat:
Nahna hina bi al-sayf nihmi ardina
Wu fi nahar al-hayf nibni ‘ardina
Amma al-karam li al-dayf makhlug fi ardina
Wu al-‘izz fi al-itnayn al-sayf wu al-karam

Ah ya zalam ah ya zalam ah ya zalam

(Mawwal)

Farid:
Ya dajla ana ‘atshan maqdar artawi
Min husnak al-fattan hada al-kasrawi
Fi kulli ramshet ‘ayn khanjar miltawi
Lawu sab mini al-qalb ya’dimni ‘adam

Ah ya zalam ah ya zalam ah ya zalam

Busat al-rih ya bou al-jinahin Marakesh fayn wu Tounis fayn
Ana liya habib hinak wu itnin wu b‘adhum ‘andi al-youm shahrin

‘Ismat:
Bilad al-hout wu al-ghalla wu al-zaytun
Fiha al-shafayef qout wu li al-sharab’ayoun
Yalli ‘alya tifut inzel wu koun hanoun
Ishba‘ ta’am wu sharab wala tizid ya khay

Farid:
Tunis aya khadra ya har’a al-akbad
Ghizlanek al-bayda  
tis‘ab ala al-saiyad

Ghizlanek fi al-marsa  
walla fi halq al-wad

Ala shutout ti‘oum  
ma tikhaf saiyd al-may

Busat al-rih awam ya jamil  
ana mushta‘ li-wadi al-nil

Ana laffit kitir wu laqit  
al-bu‘d ‘aliya ya masr tawil

Al-ithnin:  
Illi yafut ardina  
yiruh wu yirga‘ lina

Ma fish kida husnina  
wula fish kida zurfina

Ya hilwi ya tab‘ina  
ya khiffa ya dammina

Farid:  
The flying carpet is beautiful and comfortable. It is safer than the Pullman. Sophisticated flying carpet which flies high, I am yearning and my cure is in Syria and Lebanon.

‘Ismat:  
The breeze of Lebanon cures the souls and relaxes the aching lover. You who long for the Syrian land that intoxicates you without liquor.

Farid:  
Syria and Lebanon have beautiful figures and shapes, attractive eyes, and nicely rounded cheeks. Their beauty adds fuel to the fire of the hearts. I adore Syria and Lebanon.

Let’s go to Baghdad, a rich and honored country.

‘Ismat:  
Here we defend our land with sword and we protect our honor in bad times. We are also generous toward our guests. The sword and generosity are our honor.
Farid: Oh Dajlah, I am thirsty and I cannot have enough from the Kisraoui’s charm. Every eyelash of your beauty is a scimitar; if it attacks me it will kill me on the spot.

Flying carpet with two wings, where is Marakesh and Tunis? There I have two lovers. When I am away from them two days, it feels like two months.

Marakesh is the country of fish, grains, and olives. Its people have beautiful lips and eyes that are admired by all their guests.

Tunis, your land is green and tingles in the hearts. Your beautiful deer are unaccessible to the hunter. Your courageous women are everywhere in the cities, coasts, and shores.

Beautiful flying carpet, I miss the valley of the Nile. I toured around away from Egypt for too long.

Both: When someone visits our land then leaves he must come back again. We are beautiful, charming, even-tempered, and funny.”

In the first part of “Operette Busat al-Rih,” Samia wears on her waist a striped belt that connects and secures a small half-circled apron-shaped fabric that covers her belly and posterior. She wears a short skirt that is attached from one side to her wrist, a sleeveless vest, and a pillbox hat decorated with a long plume and tied to a veil. Samia wiggles her shoulders and hips, puts one hand on her head and the other one on her waist, and sways her torso from one side to another. She also advances one leg and shifts her weight from the front leg to the one in the back and then up where after which she
slightly crouches down in a dabké (line dance) style. Farid sings next to her in his hatta wu ‘uqal (traditional head dress) and jalabieh and robe, the traditional clothes of Syria and Lebanon, and does a dabké with her.

They both change their costume when they arrive in “Baghdad” where Farid changes to the traditional outfit of Iraq. Samia wears a specially fashioned costume that consists of a skirt and a wide belt that connects in the middle to a sleeveless top. She tops it with a tarboush decorated with feathers and carries a shawl that wraps behind her back and is fastened on her upper arms above the sleeves that end at her elbows. Samia contrasts with the background dancers whose costumes consist of a pair of dark pants printed with white stars in the same style as the almeh of Gérôme, a long-sleeved vest with a white bra revealed under it, a dark V-shaped belt, a tall hat, and a veil. These dancers, like Samia, use dancing-steps similar to the earlier ones but carry swords in their right arms. At times they hold the tips of the swords in their left hands, behind their heads, or rest them on their shoulders while walking, circling, or twisting their bodies.

Then comes the dance of Marakesh and Tunis, where Samia appears in a printed belt and bra trimmed with a shiny edge, a skirt and a veil connected to a fitted hat and trimmed with coins. She dances with her arms extended forward while twisting her arms. She undulates slowly and moves across the screen back and forth. Farid on the other hand, wears a traditional cap and jalabieh. The costumes become more stylish and the dancing becomes more elaborated when the carpet lands back in Egypt.

Samia’s costume now consists of a pointy bra and a belt that rests low on her hips. The fabric is light in color and weight, and the bottom of the skirt is attached to her wrist
to frame her body. Her hair is decorated with pearls and a veil that also frames her from
behind. She keeps her arms up and undulates while turning her body from side to side.
She grabs the cane from Farid, who is now representing an *ibn al-balad* ("son of the
country") in his traditional outfit, and she carries it above her head while she twirls and
undulates.

The dances of “Operette Busat al-Rih” borrowed dance steps from the visited
countries, introducing them to the spectators and showing their various traditions and
dances. Therefore, Eastern dancing and singing unite the Arab world in “Operette Busat
al-Rih” as it united the East and West in “Operette al-Sharq wu al-Gharb” in *Ahbak Inta*.

The following film will show once more an interest in combining Western and
Eastern dancing to entertain the spectators and to re-emphasize the importance of
interculturalism in art, not only by using Western dance, but by exporting Eastern dance
to the West.

*Ma Taqoulsh li-Had* ("Do Not Tell Anyone")

The story of *Ma Taqoulsh li-Had* is about the singer Wahid (Farid al-Atrash) and
the dancer Wal‘ah (Samia Gamal), who plan to get married. When Wal‘ah goes to Paris
to dance, Nousah (Nour al-Huda), a student at the Ma‘had al-Musiqah, becomes her
fiancé’s singing partner. Wahid’s uncle Ghazalah (Estefan Rosti) tricks him into
marrying her so he can have Wal‘ah for himself. Wal‘ah comes back and finds Wahid
already married, but Nousa explains to her the circumstances of their marriage and
rejoins the lovers.
Ma Taqoulsh li-Had, like the previous films, contains dance sequences and an operetta (figure 36). Early in the film, Wal‘ah appears at the top of a set of set of high steps, dancing in a dark sequined cabaret costume to “Safer Ma’a al-Salamah” (“Travel Safely,” lyrics of Ma’moun al-Shinawi music by Farid). All the backup dancers are seated on the steps in a pose that emphasize their naked legs, and wave their right arms in front of them. Wahid, dressed in his tuxedo, appears in the front, and when he starts singing, the dancers line up behind him. Wal‘ah makes her way downstairs while she carries both sides of the skirt to reveal her legs. As usual she dances in front of the singer who extends his arms behind her to frame her waist. At the end of the song, the dancer goes up again and bows at the top of the stairs.

Wal‘ah performs again at the Belvedere in Paris. The plot emphasizes the dancer’s trip by showing the airport, her plane, and her conversation about it with Farid. The venue is similar to the Egyptian salas, decorated with a big painting influenced by the Baroque and the Rococo periods, and has guests from many countries. Samia performs in the same style of “Raqsat al-Nar” with its expressive choreography, use of space, and energy. Part of the musical composition is taken from the song, “Ana wu Illi Bahibu,” which Kamilia performed with Farid in Akher Kidbah, mixed with one of Farid’s musical overtures. The dance rhythm and brisk melody of this composition permit the dancer to express her feelings of enchantment through the tempo of her alternating undulation and rest periods. There is a definite change in her dancing when she accompanies Farid and when she performs solo. Here, she expresses her virtuosity in the constant articulation of the body and the use of rest periods in which she curves her
body downward to one side, or leans to one side as if preparing, to leap. The costume for 
this dance appears to include a flesh-colored mesh piece that connects the rhinestone top 
part to a matching hip-belt. It holds the dancer’s flesh in but does not restrict her 
undulations. It does attract more attention to the navel covered with a shiney, button-
sized piece of jewelry. This was fashioned, perhaps, to avoid the vertical extension from 
the middle of the bra to the belt used in previous costumes, to cover the navel and avoid 
censorship. Samir Farid indicates in his Tarikh al-Raqabah ala al-Cinema fi Misr “The 
History of Censorship in Egyptian Cinema,” that beginning in 1947 the government 
issued laws restricting the presentation of the body and closeup shots of some parts of the 
body, including the belly (78). This costume was perhaps intended to indicate a looser 
approach to these restrictions since the performance was supposed to be occuring outside 
Egypt.

Samia performs a similar dance in Malha al-Nujoum (“The Stars’ Nightclub”), 
which is known for its bad reputation. She wants to annoy Farid and get revenge since he 
made someone else. She wears a black costume and veil, and, through her movements, 
she illustrates her anger and sadness. Later, with the help of Nousah, Samia recognizes 
the trick that was played by Ghazalah to get rid of Farid and win her. She forgives him 
and participates in his “Operetta Ma Taqoulsh li-Had” with Nour al-Huda, and the 
Sudanese singer Isma’il ‘abd al-Mu’in. Ma’moun al-Shinawi writes the lyrics of the 
operetta as following:

Farid: \textit{In san al-Woud}

Nour: \textit{Ma taqoulsh li-had}
Farid:  
*In khan al-‘ahd*

Nour:  
*Ma taqoulsh li-had*

Kowras:  
*Itmata‘ ma taqoulsh li-had*  
*wu itlawa‘ ma taqoulsh li-had*

Farid:  
*Mahma habibak lawa‘ fik*  
*til’a al-zull laziz fi hawak*

*Yalli habibak qasi ‘aleik*  
*leih al-nas tisma‘ shakwak*

Nour:  
*Itmatta‘ bi habib tihwah*  
*wu yihbak wu yahn ileik*

*Wu ishkilu wu inta wayyah*  
*wu dumou‘ak baynah fi ‘ineik*

*Yimkin ya ‘tuf wu yalin qalbu*  
*wu yi‘ud lak ikhlasu wu hubuh*

Farid:  
*Yalli qasit fi hawak*  
*wu du‘t mur al-‘azab*

*Insa asak wu danak*  
*wu ifrah ma‘a al-ahbab*

*Al-dunia leih nishki minha*  
*eih fiha nibki ‘aleih*

*Layaliha timdi wu sininha*  
*wu tiruh wu rah takhud eih*

*Nour:  
*Mahma bakeit leih tibki li-had*  
*mahma shakeit leih tishki li-had*

*Ya jamal al-hub ma bayn itnin*  
*ya halawat al-wasl ma bayn qalbyn*

*Yathannou fi hawahun*  
*wu y ghannou najwahun*

*Ifrah bi ridah*  
*ma taqoulsh li-had*

**Wu ithanna ma ‘ah**  
*ma taqoulsh li-had*

Isma‘il:  
*Inna ‘ishiqna min youm khulqna*  
*zitna fi daqiqna*

*Ma hadd shafna wu la*  
kashafna wu la ‘irifna

*Nar al-hawa ya zoul*  
*bi al-sabr nilqiha*

*Wu in ban lahhiba ya zoul*  
*bi quloubna nitfiha*

*Leih al-‘uyoun sahra*  
*ma yufout ‘aleiha al-noum*
Hibaybna fi al-Qahira

Kowras:

Hada hawa al-‘urban
Yatkallamu al-rukban

Farid:

Fares tawa al-sahra
Kan al-sabab nazrah

Lawu bi al-quloub milna
Al-hub yaqtulna

Lawu ni’shaq warda min al-ward

Nikhtifha ma naqoush li-had

Nour:

Ah min firaquh ay
Sabri ‘ala balway
Dumu’i nazla seil

Yama yiqasi al-weil

Farid:

Ihna al-Sa’ayda nihib al-jadd
Yiban ‘alaya inni sa’idi
La azzul naﬁsi wu la amud iydi

Nour:

Ya ‘asheq mahma taqoul ah
Leih al-shakwa li gheir illah

wu ihna fi al-khartoum
ikhlas wu shawq wu hanan
‘annu fi kul makan
wara ghazal yihwah
ghar sahmaha fi hashah
tab ‘al-wafa fina
wu al-hub yihyina
nuqtifha ma naqoush li-had
naru fi ‘qalbi tizid
wu ay min shaqaya wu ay
saber al-jimal fi al-Bid
‘ala al-ta’am wu al-ray
wu yutoul ‘alaya al-leil
ma artah fih ‘ala khad
min shawq yihud al-heil
ma nishtikih li-had
nihmi al-sharaf wu nisun al-‘ahd
‘asha karamti ghalia ‘alaya
illa li-ruzq bita‘ab iydaya
leih tifdah qalbak bi yadeik
min fi al-dunia yihn aleik
Al-ithnin: *Il qismah kidah wu al dunia kidah.*

Farid: If your lover was faithful

Nour: Do not tell anyone

Farid: If your lover betrayed you

Nour: Do not tell anyone

Both: Enjoy and do not tell anyone. Suffer and do not tell anyone

Farid: No matter how love torments you, you like its humiliation. You who love causes you pain, why do people hear your complaints?

Nour: Enjoy the lover who loves you and misses you and confess your love to him with your tears. Perhaps, he will be sympathetic and stay faithful to you.

Farid: You who suffered in love and tasted the torturing pain, forget your sadness and be happy with the lovers. Why do we complain of life? What does it have that makes us cry? Its nights and years go and nothing can you take with you. No matter how much you cry or complain, why do you publicize it?

Nour: How lovely is passion between a couple and how great is it to join their hearts. They prosper in love and sing of it. Rejoice in his approval and indulge him without telling anyone.

Isma‘il: We have been in love with people of our kin since we were created. Nobody saw, discovered, or knew about us. The fire of love is patiently burning in our chests and our hearts contain it. Why do our eyes stay
awake and we cannot sleep? Our lovers are in Cairo and we are in Khartoum.

All: This is the love of Arab sincerity, longing, and tenderness. Travellers everywhere talk about it.

Farid: A horseman treads the desert after his adored gazelle. All because of a glimpse that shot him with its arrow. If our hearts sway, loyalty is our trait. Love kills and revives. If we love a rose, we pluck it and take it without telling anyone.

Nour: Oh his parting hurts and his fire in my heart swells. I am miserable and my patience is like that of the camel in the desert for food or drink. My tears flow, my night grows, and I cannot rest on any side. I often suffer woe with passion that breaks my strength, but I do not complain.

Farid: We the people from Upper Egypt are serious. We protect, honor, and keep promises. I show my roots because I take pride in myself. I do not humiliate myself nor beg, and I earn my keep with my hard work.

Nour: Oh lover, however you sigh why do you expose your love? Why do you complain to any but the lord? Who is going to pity you?

If his love is true or if he cheats on you, do not tell anyone. Enjoy and suffer without telling anyone.

All: Such is fate. Such is life.

The rhythm of “Operette Ma Taqoulsh li-Had” varies from Arabic to tango, to African. Samia dances to each part accordingly and changes costumes to fit the dance.
She also paints herself black when she dances to the part from Sudan. Most peculiar, however, is her dancing with two male dancers in their tuxedos. They twirl together with her in the middle and hold her hands while she arches her back completely to the ground and then they help her up again. They also support her when she swings from one dancer to the other and hold her from her shoulders when she leans on them and lifts one leg up. Her costume, which is similar to what she wore for her Spanish dancing in *Ahbak Inta*, complements her moves and places her in reference to the backup dancers, who wear long evening dresses and dance with male partners. Samia dances the *dabké*, the *baladi*, and finishes with a dance that is influenced by the samba steps and costumes of Carmen Miranda. She wears a striped, two-piece costume with layered sleeves and dances on a small cubical stage in front of her backup dancers, who take their places on similar small, individual stages, behind the main singers Farid and Nour. Of course the “Operette” ends with dancing that encourages the world to celebrate love.

*Ma Tagoulsh li-Had* introduces the dancer once more as an independent artist who represents her country by using her skills to speak a universal language. Abroad, Wal‘ah asks her musician Dunghol (Muhammad Kamal al-Masri) to explain what the manager of the theatre was trying to convey when he knocked at her door to alert her about the time of her performance. Wal‘ah did not speak French, the spectators’ language in the foreign country, and wished that Wahid were with her to help her. However, the dancer overcomes her inability to communicate by giving her spectators a splendid show. The guests respect her art because she dances to sophisticated tunes and enchant them with her performance.
This glorification of the dancer is certainly intentional in the plots of Farid al-Atrash’s films. Her position as an accomplished artist has been established in the mind of the spectators, and her characters will be revealed once more in the following film: *Ta’ala Sallem*.

**Ta’ala Sallem** ("Come and Salute")

The film of *Ta’ala Sallem* relates a story about a poor lover, Mishmish (Farid al-Atrash), who works as a waiter in the Casino Layali al-Hana, owned by Khayrat Afandi (‘Abd al-Fattah al-Qasri) and his daughter Sukkara Hishshek (Samia Gamal). Mishmish loves Sukkara but she is engaged to a conman, Sharif (Farid Shawqi). Mishmish inherits a great deal of money from his uncle, but Sukkara refuses to marry him because she does not love him. When she discovers the evil intentions of her fiancé, she leaves him and falls in love with Mishmish because she recognizes his good character and sincerity. They become lovers and partners in their new casino.

Samia presents two dances in *Ta’ala Sallem* to the lyrics of ‘Abd al-Aziz Salam. Farid sings the first song “Khudi Qalbi” (“Take My Heart”), in a charity event at the Casino al-Arizona. Both singer and dancer decide to forgo their wages to help the charitable event. He is dressed in a suit and Samia in a cabaret costume similar to the previous ones. The top of this costume has an overlay of white voile fabric that stretches around her neck, continues down her back, then extends under her arms and joins together in the middle of her chest. Her skirt is made of the same fabric and is cut as a full circle. When Samia carries her skirt from the slit and twirls it, she resembles a ballet
dancer. In the second dance based on the song “Dayman Ma‘ak” (“Always With You”), Samia and her backup dancers start in a *melaya* (black wrap) and slippers. They dance less vigorously than other sequences in the film and use much less space. The controlled choreography reminds the viewer of the dances of Tahiya who usually planted herself on one spot. Even when Samia takes the *melaya* off and reveals her *baladi* (country style) dress, the use of space remains minimal. In this performance, Farid and Samia exemplify a *baladi* couple in love. Soon they change to Western clothes, a suit and a black shimmering cabaret costume that has a white border around the bra and the belt. Her light skirt matches the single-slitted, long, puffed sleeve that covers her left arm. The couple stands on a circular stepped stage that looks like a wedding cake, also common in Western movies. The dancing girls surround them at the bottom of the steps and at times, they lean backwards to form the shape of a flower.

The film re-emphasizes the protagonist as a hard-working woman who uses her art to survive. Sukkara trusts people and when she loves, she is truthful and sincere. Samia, once again, shows the spectator that even if she works at a *sala*, she is still a woman of her society who behaves according to the values of her community, and, like most people, struggles to find real affection. Although *Ta‘ala Sallem* does not include an operetta or expressive musical pieces of a multicultural nature, it is still part of the legacy of Farid and Samia that aims at uniting the world, through their singing and dancing, in the service of the universal theme of love.
Conclusion

Farid al-Atrash and Samia Gamal flattered each other on the big screen in the films described above. They were young, good-looking, and in-love both on and off the screen. They projected excitement and charm unprecedented in Arabic movies. According to al-Bakri, between 1947 and 1952, Farid and Samia were the moviestars par excellence of the big screen and their movies were the most popular in the Arab world (78). Their films were popular because they entertained, enchanted, and informed the spectator about a different lifestyle, and brought to them the music and dance of the world.

The films of Farid and Samia were also successful because they included jokes, comical situations and aspects of an extraordinary lifestyle prevailing among the aristocracy and upper middle class Egyptians in the first half of the twentieth century. Many shots show Egyptian women in their shorts taking dancing classes, meeting with men in night clubs, and mingling with strangers without chaperons. For example, the shot in the swimming pool in *Ahibak Inta* zooms in on the women who parade around in their two-piece swimming suits, and the closeup of mouth-to-mouth kisses in *Habib al-‘Omarr* and *Ma Taqoulsh li-Had* shows conduct that may shock viewers. Such cinematic presentations offer the spectators a Western attitude and behavior that may raise criticism.

The films also gave the spectators a visual introduction to the songs and operettas of Farid al-Atrash that complemented their novelties in Arab cinema and demonstrated their multicultural origins. The variety of music of Eastern and Western origin, such as
the tango, waltz, choral music, and the mawwal were supported by Eastern and Western fashion and dancing of Samia and her backup groups presenting local and foreign dancers. These dancers performed to Farid’s tunes, which were composed with them in mind. Samia put on an excellent interpretation of energy and charm, able to assert the advantage of music for the body and the soul. In other words, the art of Farid and Samia affected the senses and presented through listening and sight a spiritual and secular experience, which therefore rendered it excellent.

Moreover, Farid elevated the position of the Eastern dancer by making her equal, if not superior, to the Western dancer in his operettas, and influenced her new dance movements through the composition of diverse tunes for her dancing. Farid’s Western-flavored music appealed to high society and middle class Easterners who could enjoy it. The recognition of Farid’s tunes in the aristocratic society helped popularizing it in the lower class that imitate the taste of the richer group in behavior, style, and art. The lower class was, thus, introduced to a new genre that broadened the styles of everyday music and dance.

Farid introduces the initial resistance of the lower class to his music in the opening scene of Habib al-‘Omr. He cannot sing the song the crowd in his small town asks for because he believes in artistic performances and enchanting experiences. Samia appeals to these spectators because she was more accommodating in her ability to dance to their preferred music. This same necessary flexibility was harnessed and mirrored in the movies of Farid to promote the skills of the Eastern dancer who could follow his intricate music.
In addition, the portrayal of the dancer as a hard-working independent woman of values and essential goodness in the plots of the films that Farid produced and whose stardom he shared with Samia cancelled the dancer’s former image as femme fatale. Unlike Tahiya Carioca, Samia’s roles exemplify the new woman who happened to be an artist, recognized not only in her own country but also in the West. She, as *Ma Taqoulsh li-Had*, tells is contrasted to dance in a Western country.

Her independence, however, is sometimes rejected by Farid’s character, who exemplifies an Eastern man, not only because of his masculine ego but because he still considers the fine line between artistic performance and prostitution in Eastern dancing. In the end, altering the venue of the performance causes a change in its perception.

In summary, like Gérôme, who used the Eastern dancer to enhance and broaden the appeal of his paintings, Farid used the Eastern dancer in his art to showcase his music. With the dancer in mind, he composed modern Arabic music that introduced new elements and demanded innovative dance steps and a different milieu. This combination pushed Eastern dancing forward and glorified it by changing its reception on the part of the audience.
Conclusion

Listen to the music with your soul. Now, while listening, do you not feel an inner self awakening deep within you—that it is by its strength that your head is lifted, that your arms are raised, that you are walking slowly toward the light?

(Isadora Duncan, My Life 58).

This dissertation has suggested that the Eastern dancer turned into an ambassadress from the East to the West, revealing the traditions and lifestyle of her people. When Western artists brought her images with them, or built up her character when influenced by other artists, they introduced her as they saw her. She embodied beauty, youth, novelty, and salaciousness. She also suggested a fashion that emphasized her sexuality and luxury as trademarks for her appeal. Each one of these artists reflected his (they are all men) own background and fear through her representation and allotted himself the position of master of her psyche. Each used special surroundings and a unique style to accentuate and stress his vision, and each convinced his viewers of his accurate rendition of his experience of the Eastern dancer.

Jean-Léon Gérôme presented her in a realistic setting, utilizing a documentary style that told about her trade and environment. Although he might have witnessed some dancing by a prostitute in Upper Egypt, he introduced her as dancer and singer or generalized her to exemplify Eastern women. He did not specify her as “prostitute” but painted her over and over again in a variety of dance styles and used props that emphasize her sexuality. All the paintings of the Eastern dancer by Gérôme suggest
sexual activities that strengthen the fantasized elements of the dancer and transform her into a tangible reality. Gérôme’s paintings demonstrate the ability of the artist to initiate a new painting style and to fulfill the prevailing artistic tastes of his time. His detailed approach and meticulous method complemented the “truth” expected in art that began with the invention of photography, and fulfilled the voracious curiosity of Westerners and their desire to unveil the East. Gérôme’s family trade in business, his intuition for beauty, his knowledge of the art market, and his connections with the art dealer Goupil supported his approach and rendered it marketable.

In addition, the political ideology of the West that shaped Western art affected Gérôme’s point of view and directed his artistic ideas. He easily fused together the topic of sex, which interested and challenged Western art lovers as well as the masculine ego, which had to be fulfilled by exposure to the female body. Knowing the anatomy and the delicate parts of a woman’s body allowed the artist a power to control her and use her simultaneously. In the case of the Eastern dancer, this knowledge spread to include her culture, mode of behavior, and moral code. Meyda Yegenoglu explains the effect of such a combination as: “the double articulation of cultural and sexual difference, culture and gender are other-ed through each other” (52).

Gérôme used this “otherness” also to include his own fantasy by addressing his own sexual preferences and fears through combining Eastern dance poses with a Western female model. Naturally, this combination advocated a Western male fantasy that surfaced through his visual and sometimes physical contact with the free body and sexual allure of a foreign woman. The Western artist ultimately wanted a Western lover in
exciting Eastern fashion. Therefore, Gérôme created a truth that concentrated on a Western spirit emerging through an Eastern structure. In other words, Gérôme painted a hybrid representation of the Eastern dancer that reflected his imagination and embodied elements of both Western and Eastern culture.

Oscar Wilde followed in the footsteps of Gérôme and picked up a story from the Bible that, even when altered, is deemed true. Because he never visited the East before he wrote Salomé, Wilde built his vision on ideas from the artistic records of other artists. They, in turn, also built their vision from other artists who might or might not have visited the East. Therefore Wilde’s depiction of the Eastern dancer is pure imagination, which left no doubt of its intention to identify women with danger. To use Joan Riviere’s term in describing men’s representation of woman as chief constituent of her identification, the artist “masqueraded” the Eastern dancer and associated her dancing with death (53). Wilde’s representation developed the body of the woman into a risky device comparable to Medusa’s head. Nothing affected her decision, because she was a “soulless” foreigner, a dangerous woman sans merci. Her exotic beauty appealed to men because her femininity is their own creation. Her powerful impression and sexuality contaminated their souls and threatened their existences.

Although Wilde elevated both man and Western culture by means of comparison in Salomé, he did not conceive the feminist interpretation of the heroine and the ways she related to struggling women. To them, she embodied power and symbolized resistance. She also gave them a new way to utilize fashion and clothes for the purposes of their
transformation. These rebellious women took Wilde’s interpretation of their femininity and used it to achieve their own desires.

Gérôme and Wilde, as men of their times, feared woman’s sexuality and her ambition for equality. As Edward Said explains, an artist could not be “detached from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of society” (10). Even when Gérôme and Wilde attempted to escape from ennui and the restrictions on their lives by searching for inspiration outside their environment, they addressed issues significant to their own experiences. Consequently, the Eastern dancer offered them all the elements of stimulation, charm, and flexibility that permitted them to manipulate their concerns, while maintaining their positions socially and politically. In addition, their portrayal of the Eastern dancer fashioned the future interpretation of her that progressed in other artforms.

The depiction of the Eastern dancer in Western films continued in the same vein as the visual and written work of previous artists and introduced the Eastern dancer in support of a political stand and as a means of strengthening Western beliefs. Western filmmakers used her character as a tool to teach their women acceptable behavior. The only way for the Eastern dancer to survive and escape the condemning cocoon that formed her character was by retaining in her personality Romantic aspects from the East within the crucial morality of the West. This hybrid product granted her the charm and innocence necessary for her survival in Western society. If the dancer defied masculine power and violated the social order of her patriarchal culture, she then condemned herself
to classification as a member of the low class. The dancer who embraced Eastern dancing, which included foreign behavior as a profession, could overcome her disapproval only when she adopted it in support of her family. In this case, Western society considered it a sacrifice on her part and promoted her as an original performer. Her body ceased to signify only absolute sex because her intention comprised a superior motivation that rationalized her behavior. Also, other incentives that could justify her adoption of Eastern dancing deserved sympathetic consideration but kept her in a temporary low class status that might not prevent her from moving upward once she quits her dancing. The dogma of the wickedness of the Eastern dancer changed because she associated herself with Western society through adhering to the social norms imposed by it.

The early Eastern films recognized the potential wickedness of the dancer and enabled her to exist in any social status because she was a member of the society. She, however, acquired a higher status when she behaved in a “civilized” manner impressive to both Eastern and Western cultures. Her sex appeal, reflected in her dance routine, matched her tough personality but restricted her expansion to Western societies because she was wicked. Only through innovation and extraordinary music could she become sophisticated herself and advance her art. Therefore, she, the Eastern dancer in Farid al-Atrash’s movies, replaced the *femme fatale* with that of the new woman. Her dancing suggested artistic endeavors that reflected the folk dance of her background and innovative steps borrowed from other cultures. Therefore, the Eastern dancer once again
represented a hybrid art that is now utilized in the East by Eastern artists to represent their cultures.

Like Gérôme and Wilde and Western filmmakers, Farid al-Atrash produced works that promoted the dancer as an artist who could affect the prevailing Western ideas about the Eastern dancer, and represented the East through its own people. Even when she used some fundamental Western dance steps, the overall attitude of her presentation remained Eastern. Therefore, my opinion contradicts Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who concludes: “The subaltern cannot speak” (104). I say yes, the subaltern can speak and must speak even if it takes a hundred years. Western artists “wrote” the history of Eastern dance in their art, but Farid al-Atrash used the cinema to show the world that an Eastern artist can to present the dancer the way he “saw” her. Through his vision, the Eastern dancer reclaimed her art and popularized it.
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United Artists, 1924.

The Thief of Bagdad. Dir. Ludwig Berger, Michael Powell, and Tim Whelan. 1941.


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Filmography

*Intolerance (1916)*

Production and distribution: Wark. 1916. DVD. Delta, 2004
Screenwriter: David Wark Griffith
Director: David Wark Griffith
Cinematographer: Billy Bitzer and Karl Brown
Composer: Breil and Griffith
Film Editor: James and Rose Smith
Production Designer Walter L. Hall
Set Decoration: Frank “Huck” Wortman

The fourth segment The Fall of Babylon 539 B.C.

Cast:
Constance Talmadge The Mountain Girl
Elmer Clifton The Rhapsode
Alfred Paget Belshazzar
Seena Owen Attarea, the Princess Beloved
Carl Stockdale King Nabonidus
Tully Marshall High Priest of Bell
Geroge Siegman Cyrus the Persian
Elmo Lincoln The Mighty Man of Valor
George Fawcett A Babylonian Judge
Kate Bruce A Babylonian Mother
Ruth St. Denis Solo Dancer
The Denishawn Group Dancers
Loyola O’Connor Attarea’s Slave
James Curley The Charioteer of Cyrus
Howard Scott A Babylonian Dandy
Alma Rubens Girls of the Marriage Market
Margaret Mooney Girl of the Marriage Market
Ruth Darling Girl of the Marriage Market
Mildred Harris Favorite of the Harem
Pauline Stark Favorite of the Harem
Winfred Westover The Favorite of Egibi
Grace Wilson The First Dancer of Tammouz
Lotta Clifton The Second Dancer of Tammouz
Ah Singh The First Priest of Nergel
Ranji Singh The Second Priest of Nergel
Ed Burns The Second Charioteer of The Priest of Bell
Martin Laundry Auctioneer
Wallace Reid A Boy Killed in the Fighting
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charles Eagle Eye</td>
<td>Barbarian Chieftain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlee Van Cortlandt</td>
<td>Gobyras, Lieutenant of Cyrus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Cosgrove</td>
<td>Chief Euneuch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna Mae Whalthall</td>
<td>Dancer, Handmaiden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethel Grey Terry</td>
<td>Dancer, Handmaiden</td>
</tr>
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<td>Eve Southern</td>
<td>Favorite of the Harem, Dancer, Handmaiden</td>
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<td>Natalie Talmadge</td>
<td>Favorite of the Harem, Dancer, Handmaiden</td>
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<td>Daisy Jefferson</td>
<td>Favorite of the Harem, Dancer, Handmaiden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carol Dempster</td>
<td>Favorite of the Harem, Dancer, Handmaiden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauline Stark</td>
<td>Favorite of the Harem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmel Myers</td>
<td>Favorite of the Harem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Sheik (1921)

Novel: Edith Maude Hull (The Sheik, 1919)
Production: Paramount, 1921. DVD. Image, 2002
Screen Writer: Monte M. Katterjohn
Director: George Melford
Cinematographer: William Marshall

Cast:
Agnes Ayres    Diana Mayo
Rudolph Valentino   Sheik Ahmad Ben Hassan
Adolphe Menjou    Raoul de Saint Hubert
Walter Long       Omair
Lucien Littlefield  Gaston
George Waggner    Youssef
Patsy Ruth Miller  Slave Girl
F. R. Butler      Sir Aubrey Mayo
**The Son of the Sheik** (1926)

Novel: Edith Maude Hull (The Sons of the Sheik, 1925)

Production: United Artists. DVD. Image, 2002

Screenwriter: Frances Marion and Fred De Gresac

Director: George Fitzmaurice

Cinematographer: George Barnes

Art director: William Cameron Menzies

Cast:
Rudolph Valentino Ahmed /The Sheik
Vilma Banky Yasmin
George fawcett André
Montagu Love Ghabah
Karl Dane Ramadan
Bull Montana Ali
Bynunsky Hayman Pincher
Agnes Ayres Diana
Charles Requa
William Donovan
Erwin Connelly
**Hoopla (1933)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Cast</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Story:</td>
<td>John Kenyon Nicholson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production:</td>
<td>Fox</td>
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<tr>
<td>Screenwriter:</td>
<td>Charles Wagner, Brady King, Joseph Mocure March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director:</td>
<td>Frank Lloyd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinematographer:</td>
<td>Ernest Palmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composer:</td>
<td>Louis De Francesco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art director:</td>
<td>William Darling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costumes:</td>
<td>Rita Kaufman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cast:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clara Bow</td>
<td>Lou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston Foster</td>
<td>Nifty Miller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Cromwell</td>
<td>Chris Miller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herbert Mundin</td>
<td>Hap Spissel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Gleason</td>
<td>Jerry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minna Combell</td>
<td>Carrie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger Imhop</td>
<td>Colonel Cody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florence Roberts</td>
<td>Marthe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Salome Where She Danced (1945)

Story:        Michael J. Phillips
Production in Technicolor: Walter Wanger
Distribution: Universal
Screenwriter: Laurence Stallings
Director:     Charles Lamont
Cinematographer: W. Howard Greene
Composer:    Edward Ward
Film Editor: Russell Schoengarth
Costumes: Verra West
Dance Director: Lester Horton

Cast:
Yvonne De Carlo        Salomé, Anna Marie
Rod Cameron            Jim Steed
David Bruce            Cleve Blunt
Walter Slezak          Colonel Ivan Dimitrioff
Albert Dekker          Count Von Bohlen
Marjorie Rambeau       Madame Europe
Abner Biberman         Dr. Ling
Kurt Katch             Count Von Bismarck
John Litel             Gen. Robert E. Lee
J. Edward Bromberg     Prof. Max
Intisar al-Shabab ("the Triumph of Youth"), 1941

Story: ‘Omar Jumay‘i
Producer: Gabriel Telhami
Screenwriter: Badi’ Khayri
Director: Ahmad Badrakhan
Cinematographer: Farkash
Songwriters: Ahmad Rami, Bayram al-Tunsi, Yousef Bedros, and Lutfi al-Hakim
Composer: Farid al-Atrash
Director of Orchestra: ‘Aziz Sadek
Make-up: Hilmi Rafle

Cast:
Farid al-Atrash Wahid
Asmahan Nadia
Anwar Wagdi Mohyi
Bishara Wakim Bishara
Fuad Shafiq Joz
Hasan Faiyek Loz
Hasan Kamel Bunduk
Mary Munib Um Isma‘il
**Ahlam al-Shabab** ("the Dreams of Youth") (1942)

Story: Yousef Wahbi  
Producer: Michel Telhami  
Screenwriter: Badi’ Khayri  
Director: Kamal Selim  
Composer: Farid al-Atrash

**Cast:**  
Farid al-Atrash Farid  
Tahiya Carioca Bahia Sha’sha’  
Madiha Yusri Ilham (Voice of Fathia Ahmad)  
Abbas Faris Basiouni Bey, Ilham’s Uncle  
Mary Munib Fulla, Ilham’s aunt  
Bishara Wakim Ghadban Bey  
Hasan Fayek Wagdi  
‘Abd al-Fatah al-Qasri Madbouli Sab’ al-Layl  
Muhammad Kamal al-Masri Si Abdo, Bahia’s ex-husband and manager  
Hasan Kamel Bash kateb  
Sayyed Suleiman Fattouh  
Abd al-Halim Mursi
Habib al-‘Om ("the Love of my Life") (1947)

Screenwriter: Badi‘ Kheiri
Director: Henri Barakat
Producer: Farid al-Atrash
Cinematographer: Ahmad Khorsheid
Songwriters: Bayram al-Tunsi, Amin Sudki, Saleh Jawdat, Yousef Bedros, and Ma‘moun al-Shinawi
Composer: Farid al-Atrash
Film Editor: Galal Mustafa
Make-up: Mustafa Ibrahim
Distribution: Sharikat al-Film al-Masri

Cast:
Farid al Atrash Mamdouh al-‘Anbari
Samia Gamal Touta
Lola Sudki Ilham
Hasan Fayek Mur‘i Za‘tar
Muhammad Kamal al-Masri ‘Ashour
Thurayya Fakhri Um Mamdouh
Isma‘il Yasin Hulela
Hasan Kamel Mur‘esh
Hasan Abou Zeid Nour
Elias Mu’adab Huzzien
Muhammad ‘Ulwan ‘Izzat al-Manyalawi
**Ahbak Inta** (“I Love You”) (1949)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Story and screenwriter</td>
<td>Yousef Jawhar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Ahmad Badrakhan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producer</td>
<td>Farid al-Atrash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinematographer</td>
<td>Ahmad Khorshid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Songwriters</td>
<td>Bayram al-Tounsi and Saleh Jawdat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composer</td>
<td>Farid al-Atrash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader of <em>takht</em></td>
<td>Aziz Sadek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader of orchestra</td>
<td>Pepe Almanza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choreographer</td>
<td>Izzac Dixon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make-up</td>
<td>Mitcho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farid al-Atrash</td>
<td>Munir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samia Gamal</td>
<td>Nadia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Abd al-Salam al-Nabulsi</td>
<td>Ustaz Ghazal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lola Sidki</td>
<td>Riri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurya Hilmi</td>
<td>Sousou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaynat Sidki</td>
<td>motel’s owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sana’ Samih</td>
<td>friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hasan Fayek</td>
<td>Basyouni Bey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahmoud Shukoukou</td>
<td>Drwish al-Nims, Riri’s fiancé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isma‘il Yasin</td>
<td>Hikmat al-Far, Sousou’s fiancé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhamad al-Dib</td>
<td>Idris</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘Afrita Hanem (“Mrs. Ghost”) (1949)

Story: Abou al-Su‘oud al-Abiyari
Screenwriter: Henri Barakat
Director: Henri Barakat
Producer: Farid al-Atrash
Cinematographer: Julio de Luca
Songwriters: Ahmad Rami, Yousef Bedros, Ma’moun al-Shinawi, and Fathi Kadoura
Composer: Farid al-Atrash
Choreographer: Izzac Dixon
Make-up: Mitcho

Cast:
Farid al-Atrash ‘Asfour
Samia Gamal Kahramanah and Simsimah
Lola Sidki ‘Alia
Isma‘il Yasin Bu’o
Zeinat Sidki Landlady
Estefan Rosti Ushta Afandi
Zaki Ibrahim Wiseman
‘Abd al-Salam al-Nabulsi Mimi

Dancers: The International Kirsta Group

65 The DVD version of this film mistakenly introduced Ahmad Darwish as the producer but listed Farid al-Atrash as the producer on the cover. All consulted sources listed Farid al-Atrash as the producer. It seems that Founoon, the company that transferred the film to a dvd may have listed the name of the owner of the copyright of the original copy they worked from. This case is similar to the dvd of Habib al-‘Omra that Albert Rashid of New York bought it for distribution in America. He transferred it to a DVD and put wrongly his name as a producer instead of Farid al-Atrash. When I called his shop in Brooklyn to complain about the authenticity of his claim, he explained that because he owns the right commercially to his copy, he credited himself. I still think that the law that protects copying and distributing American movies should also protect foreign movies.
**Akher Kidbah** ("the Last Lie") (1950)

Story: Abou al-Su‘oud al-Abiyari  
Screenwriter: Ahmad Badrakhan  
Director: Ahmad Badrakhan  
Producer: Farid al-Atrash  
Cinematographer: ‘Abd al-Halim Nasr  
Songwriters: Bayram al-Tunsi, Ma’moun al-Shinawi, Abu al-Su‘oud al-Abiyari, and Yousef Bedros  
Composer: Farid al-Atrash  
Choreographer: Izzac Dixon  
Make-up: Mustafa Ibrahim

Cast:  
Farid al-Atrash  Samir  
Samia Gamal  Samira  
Kamilia  Kiki  
Isma‘il Yasin  Arnab  
‘Abd al-Salam al-Nabulsi  Amin Sad al-Hanak  
Estefan Rosti  Doctor  
‘Ali Al-Kassar  
Sa‘id abou Bakr  Mahraja, abd al-Jabbar  
‘Abd al-Halim al-Qal‘awi  
Zaki Ibrahim  Director of opera  
‘Abd al-Mun‘im Isma‘il  
Gamalat Zayed
Ma Taqoulsh li-Had (Do not Tell Anyone) (1951)

Story: Abou al-Su‘oud al-Abiyari
Screenwriter: Henri Barakat
Director: Henri Barakat
Producer: Farid al-Atrash
Cinematographer: Julio De Luca
Songwriters: Ma’moun al-Shinawi, Abd al-‘Aziz Salam, and Mahmoud Fahmi Ibrahim.
Composer: Farid al-Atrash
Choreographer: Edward Fares
Make-up: Mustafa Ibrahim

Cast:
Farid al-Atrash Wahid
Samia Gamal Wal‘ah
Nur al-Huda Nousah
‘Abd al-Salam al-Nabulsi Zambalek
‘Aziz ‘Uthman Ustaz Bashraf
Estefan Rosti Ghazalah Bey
‘Omar al-Hariri Nabil
Muhammad Kamal al-Masri Dungol
Isma‘il ‘Abd al-Mu‘in Guest singer from Sudan

Local Dancing Groups: Firqat al-Raquisat al-Masriyyat
Foreign Dancing Groups: De Rose and Marly
**Ta'ala Sallem** ("Come and Salute") (1951)

- **Story:** Abou al-Su‘oud al- Abiyari
- **Director:** Hilmi Rafleh
- **Producer:** Farid al-Atrash
- **Cinematographer:** Julio De Luca
- **Songwriters:** Ma‘moun al-Shinawi, Abd al-‘Aziz Salam, and Mahmoud Fahmi Ibrahim.
- **Composer:** Farid al-Atrash
- **Make-up:** Mustafa Ibrahim

**Cast:**
- Farid al-Atrash as Mishmish
- Samia Gamal as Sukkara Hishshek
- Kamila as Banana
- Isma‘il Yasin as Simsim
- ‘Abd al-Salam al-Nabulsi as Shahada
- ‘Abd al-Fattah al-Qasri as Khayrat Afandi
- Farid Shawqi as Sharif
- Mimi Shakib as Mimi
- Siraj Munir as Siraj
- Muhammad al-Bakkar as Karawan Hayran
- Zeinat Sidki as Fatakat
- Widad Hamdi as attendant
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Private Collection.
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