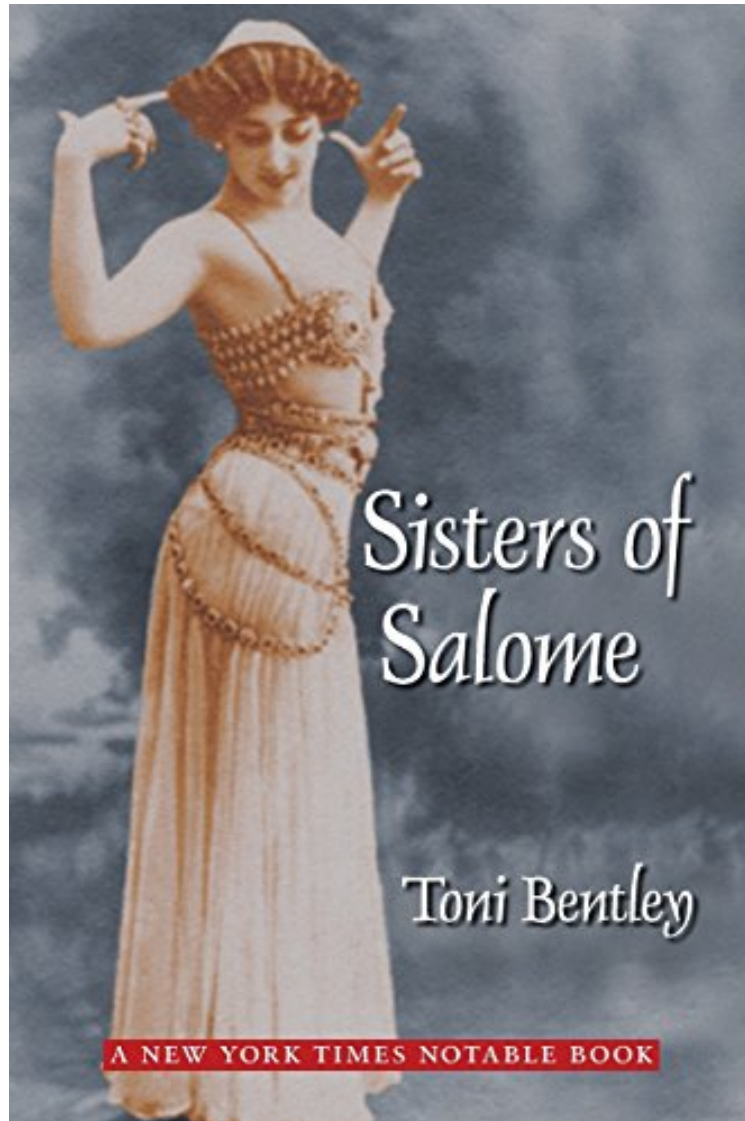


Sisters of Salome

Toni Bentley

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Toni Bentley : Sisters of Salome before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sisters of Salome:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The thought behind the danceBy H. StarrenburgIt is a while ago that I read this book, and I liked it, albeit not enough to go through it again. Ms Bentley described 4 dancers who did rather erotic numbers in the days that the Salomania rage was sweeping over Europe. She seemed more interested in the motives of the dancers rather than the quality of the performances. This, because of her own reaction to performing erotic dances. I think it is this that makes the book helpfull. It is not realy about dance, it is about the experiences and

feelings of women who expose themselves, and use the dance as a vehicle. In the eyes of some this may be a taboo subject, and I admire the honesty wherewith Ms Bentley writes about her subject, and about her own feelings. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. An interesting slice of history By E. J. Evans This is not really a book about dance. It's an informal work of history that focusses on 4 women who were prominent erotic dancers in the early 20th century, but the book sets out to describe the lives of these women in all their various aspects instead of just their dance careers. The common background for all 4 of these women is a peculiar cultural phenomenon, a widespread popular obsession (triggered by Wilde's play "Salome") with the dance of Salome. All 4 of these women exploited this Salome craze for their own advantage and self-aggrandizement, but in quite different ways (and often with tragic results). The book has a refreshingly informal style and the prose is direct and clear. 18 of 21 people found the following review helpful. Brilliant, fascinating book By Mick McAllister A former Balanchine dancer becomes a writer, gets interested in the bizarre Victorian/Edwardian phenomena of "Salomania," and finds a willing publisher in one of the most prestigious presses in the world. Talk about dreamland. And the book is perfect. After you read the first ten pages, you will have trouble putting it down. Bentley moves swiftly from her own personal connections to her subject matter: dance, a poignant photograph of Colette, Balanchine's curious interest in Crazy Horse strippers, her own experiment in confrontational nudity. She writes a brief chapter on the historical and literary Salome that is, among other things, the most intelligent essay I've ever read on Wilde's play. She devotes a chapter each to the four centers of the fixation on Salome--Maud Allen, Mata Hari, Ida Rubenstein, and Colette--while providing a wealth of information on the changes in the history of dance between 1890 and 1920. And she finds in women's fascination with Salome a psychological core that is compelling and persuasive. This is an excellent book. Beautifully conceived, intelligently realized, well written, amusing and informative, it is a joy to read and recommend.

The origins of the art of exotic dancing lie in English drama and Viennese opera: Oscar Wilde's 1893 play *Salome*, and Richard Strauss's 1905 opera based on it, brought onto the stage a female character who captured and dominated the audience with the raw power of her naked body. Her Dance of the Seven Veils shocked and fascinated, and *Salome* became a pop icon on both sides of the Atlantic. Toni Bentley explores how four influential women embraced the persona of the femme fatale and transformed the misogynist image of a dangerously sexual woman into a form of personal liberation.

From Publishers Weekly Former NYC ballerina and independent scholar Toni Bentley offers a study of four famous women who created versions of the legendary femme fatale *Salome* (popularized by Oscar Wilde) in *Sisters of Salome*, a cultural study and the story of an obsession. Bentley explores the experiences of women who have tapped into the power of the nude female body, particularly four who found fame by portraying *Salome*: Maud Allen, Mata Hari, Ida Rubenstein and Colette. Bentley gives a sketch of each woman's life and what compelled them to dance their own versions of *Salome*, showing how she was "not only a misogynist, masochistic male fantasy, but a heterosexual, sadistic female fantasy as well." (Yale Univ., \$27.95 288p ISBN 0-300-09039-0; May) Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Bentley examines the cult of *Salome* that flourished in Europe and in North America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Dubbed "Salomania," this craze had its roots in the Oscar Wilde play and the subsequent Richard Strauss opera based on the life of *Salome*, the biblical temptress. Popularized by Maud Allen, the progressive Canadian dancer; Mata Hari, the notorious Dutch spy; Ida Rubinstein, a Russian proponent of the modern dance movement; and Colette, the intoxicating French novelist, the daring Dance of the Seven Veils became an exotic symbol of female self-determination and liberation. In order to calculate the startling impact this cultural phenomenon had on Victorian sensibilities, the author recounts the personal stories of the four extraordinary women who embodied and embraced the freedom represented by *Salome* and her uniquely empowering striptease. This fascinating slice of popular culture will appeal to both social and dance historians. Margaret Flanagan Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved Here is a book that will scare the pants off John Ashcroft. A highbrow survey of what generally passes as a lowbrow art. . . . The detail is as delicious, and as revealing, as a Dance of the Seven Veils. New York Times