SHIFTING SANDS OF IDENTITY:
SALOME AND SELECT EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY INTERPRETATIONS

Michael F. Vincent

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Committee:
Eftychia Papanikolaou, Advisor
Mary Natvig
ABSTRACT

Eftychia Papanikolaou, Advisor

Richard Strauss’s Salome constitutes an operatic adaptation of Oscar Wilde’s 1891 play. The popularity of this biblical account spans several hundred years with portrayals in mediums including folk tales, poetry and musical adaptations. The identities of the characters evolved over time, with emphasis on different personalities and relationships with each variation. Beginning with Gustave Flaubert’s short story Hérodias (1877), retellings dramatized the exoticism of the characters by virtue of their ethnicities and geographical location. By the end of the nineteenth century, Salome had developed into the Oriental femme fatale of Wilde’s and Strauss’s renderings.

Early twentieth-century audiences became familiar with Salome’s story through a multitude of interpretations including Strauss’s opera. In this thesis, I examine the identities of the main characters of the tale. The characteristics of previous realizations betray the origins and meanings of these identities. Although the characters differed in each interpretation, audiences always saw them as part of a faraway time and place. The Orientalist underpinnings of early twentieth-century interpretations demanded that the characters be constructed to conform to exotic stereotypes.

Chapter 1 reveals the development of the story, with an emphasis on Salome’s identity and her relationships with John the Baptist and Herod. Chapter 2 compares the Salomes of modern dancer Maud Allan and composer Richard Strauss. Chapter 3 demonstrates that the characters in Salome were understood mainly through contrasts of identity.
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INTRODUCTION

Richard Strauss’s operatic adaptation of Oscar Wilde’s Salomé depicts the biblical story of the eponymous character and the events surrounding her relationship with John the Baptist. The characters of the opera—various members and guests of Herod Antipas’s court in addition to Salome and John the Baptist—have established identities and conform to musical and dramatic stereotypes. Difference often defines the identity of one character or group of characters, resulting in implied hegemonic power structures including the Roman influence in Judea. The setting of the story—Galilee circa 30 C.E.—caused Wilde, Strauss, and ultimately contemporary audiences to see the characters as part of a faraway time and place: characters that were Others and subject to exotic and Orientalist interpretations.

The story of Salome has involved the changing identities of its main characters ever since its inception. The constantly shifting identities seem to reflect views of both the creators of the particular retelling and the culture in which they flourished. Beginning with Flaubert’s Hérodias, an emphasis was placed on the Otherness of the characters, by virtue of their ethnicities and geographical location. The early twentieth century saw a divide between those that identified with Salome and those that reviled her difference. Strauss’s score betrays his own reactions to each character’s identity. Even so, the Salome phenomenon extends far beyond his opera, and even beyond itself in that it represents the wide-sweeping cultural attitudes of its time. In this thesis, I demonstrate how the identities of certain characters were perceived in the early twentieth century and the relationships of these perceptions to Western culture. I specifically show that the identities of the characters were not the same in each retelling and shifted to highlight particular cultural aspects.
Anton Lindner introduced Strauss to Oscar Wilde’s *Salomé* in January 1902, when he sent Strauss an edition of Wilde’s play translated by Hedwig Lachmann, with accompanying illustrations by Marcus Behmer.\(^1\) Strauss had set one of Lindner’s poems to music in 1898, and the poet was hoping for further collaboration with Strauss. Lindner offered to set the play to verse and give Strauss a libretto. Strauss received initial sketches of the libretto but was not impressed. Ultimately, he found Lachmann’s prose translation sufficient and reduced it to create a libretto.\(^2\) Strauss first saw the play at its Berlin premiere in 1902, where Max Reinhardt directed a production with Gertrude Eysoldt in the title role.\(^3\)

Strauss began composing the music for *Salome* in August 1903. As his conducting duties occupied most of his time, he worked on the opera in the summer months of 1903 and 1904. Strauss completed the fair copy in September 1904 and began orchestrating it, completing his work in June 1905. *Salome*, a one-act *Literaturopern*, premiered in December of 1905 at the Königliches Opernhaus in Dresden. Ernst von Schuch, who had conducted the premiere of *Feuersnot* in Dresden four years earlier, was again the music director for this premiere.\(^4\)

The main plot points of *Salome* can be summed up in a few sentences. Salome falls in love with John the Baptist after seeing him imprisoned in a cistern at Herod’s palace. John rejects Salome and Preaches on the vices of her family, enraging Herod and his wife, Herodias. Salome dances for Herod, her stepfather, in order to seduce him into executing

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1 Behmer’s illustrations are in the style of Aubrey Beardsley, but differ in the sense that they leave out elements superfluous to the text. For a full discussion of Behmer’s illustrations see Norma Chapple, “Re-envisioning *Salome*: The Salomes of Hedwig Lachmann, Marcus Behmer and Richard Strauss” (Master’s Thesis, University of Waterloo, 2006).


John and giving her the head. She kisses his decapitated head, and Herod orders his guards to kill Salome.

The concept of identity conjures varied philosophical ideas. It implies both an awareness of self and an awareness of Others. Nineteenth-century philosopher G.W.F. Hegel explained that “self-identity [exists] by exclusion of every other from itself . . . [in other words] an individual makes its appearance in antithesis to an individual.” The Other, understood as being different from the self, springs from alterity, which is the state of being different. The concepts of identity and alterity work themselves in two ways that concern this thesis: firstly within a dramatic narrative and secondly in the society that creates or views the narrative. First, the idea of characters contrasting with each other always exists within Salome’s tale, no matter what form it has taken. For instance, alterity exists between John the Baptist and most other characters for the vast majority of retellings. Second, the creator or viewer of the tale constructs the identities within and may choose to identify with them. Salome, for instance, can be seen as a dangerous Other or an admirable and strong-willed woman depending on the context.

Existing Salome scholarship tends to focus on one of a few recurring themes: exoticism, Orientalism, eroticism, fin de siècle femmes fatales, the “Jewish Question,” early twentieth-century interpretations of Salome’s dance, or literary traditions. Due to the number of mediums that depict Salome, scholars from diverse disciplines have written about her: musicologists, literary and cultural historians, dance historians, and film scholars. No single musicological study with a focus on exoticism or Orientalism, however, has looked past the surface musical features of “The Dance of the Seven Veils” as the exotic foundation.

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in *Salome*. In this thesis, I explore the exotic underpinnings of Strauss's opera in a broader view.

Orientalist discourse relies on highly-charged concepts of identity and alterity. It creates diametrically opposed regions of the world: “the Orient” and “the Occident.” The Orient can be taken to mean nearly any region of the world that does not stem from Western European culture. According to literary theorist Edward Said, there are three types of Orientalism. The first is an academic tradition that flourished in the nineteenth century and consisted of scholars who, in some way, researched and wrote about the Orient. These Orientalists constructed identities for entire regions of the planet, and entire timelines of those regions, by using stereotypes, misunderstood cultural practices, and often little or no knowledge of the people for whom they spoke. More importantly, they presented these constructions as based on fact, and had the academic, national and political means to be considered veracious.

The second type of Orientalism is a mode of thinking that perpetuates the ideas of academic Orientalists. This type generally comes to us via the written word, whether that word is fiction (for example, Gustave Flaubert) or non-fiction (for example, Karl Marx). We can also observe its effects, for instance, through the acts of a politician or military leader. Being a general mode of thought, it is not restricted to any discipline. Whatever form it takes, it somehow results in an unequal pairing of East and West.

The third type of Orientalism emerges from a synthesis of the first two. No single person can practice this type of Orientalism; it is the consequence of the collective actions and ideas of people belonging to the first two categories. In essence, this type of Orientalism

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was a way for European cultures to dominate, manage and produce the Orient in nearly every facet of life. Through it, according to Said, “European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.”

The ideas of identity and alterity lie at the heart of Orientalism.

Exoticism shares some central tenets of Orientalism, but the term also has different implications. Musicologist Ralph P. Locke defines exoticism as “the evocation of a place, people or social milieu that is (or is perceived or imagined to be) profoundly different from accepted local norms in its attitudes, customs and morals.”

The pitting of two identities against one another—“Us” and “Them”—musters some of the same attitudes as Orientalism. Exoticism, however, does not connote the same type of political discourse that Orientalism does. It was never an academic discipline, has not (directly) informed national nor international policies of any nation, and exists solely in the “work” as a way of representing an Other. Also, there need not be a geographical implication in exoticism. The Other can be anyone, anywhere, at any time. An Orientalist work will always have exotic features, whereas an exotic work can sometimes have Orientalist features. Whereas Orientalism carries with it value judgments, exoticism can be (but is not always) free of these implications. Identity is the lynchpin that links the two concepts together.

According to Locke, exoticism in music can be analyzed in two ways: the “Exotic Style Only” Paradigm and the “All the Music in Full Context” Paradigm. Although both kinds of representation have existed as long as exoticism itself has, Locke has only recently

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7 Said, Orientalism, 3.
brought the “Full Context” Paradigm to the forefront of musicological studies.\(^9\) The “Exotic Style Only” Paradigm refers to a type of analysis that takes into consideration only the surface traits of the music, and references specific musical features that have historically been used to depict exoticism.\(^10\) The “Full Context” Paradigm looks beyond the surface features of the music and takes into consideration, as the name implies, the entire context of the music. For instance, Locke uses as an example Carmen’s “Card Aria,” which displays no “Hispanic or Gypsy musical color,” but presents the stereotype of “Gypsies as superstitious and irrational.”\(^11\) Music, text, staging, plot, program notes, concepts or stories previously understood by the perceiver, and any other factor that could conceivably affect the ways an audience perceives the work are all taken into consideration under the “Full Context” Paradigm. I will use both paradigms to explore exotic characterizations in \textit{Salome}.

Richard Taruskin and Ralph Locke carefully remind us that losing sight of objectivity (if there is such a thing) can be easy when examining Orientalist attitudes. From the perspective of a twenty-first century academic, it is all too easy to engage in an ideological critique when Orientalism is at stake. While examining Russian Orientalism in \textit{Prince Igor}, Taruskin stated that “making Stasov and Borodin out as a pair of feckless ‘orientalists’ . . . would be a bore.”\(^12\) Even so, knowing that they were Orientalists, whose

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\(^10\) These exotic devices have been listed in numerous places including Derek B. Scott’s “Orientalism and Musical Style,” \textit{The Musical Quarterly} 82, no. 2 (1998): 327. Also Locke, \textit{Musical Exoticism}, 51-54. I have selectively drawn the following list from Scott’s article: whole tones; aeolian, dorian, and phrygian modes; augmented seconds and fourths; arabesques and ornamented lines; melismas on vocables; sliding or sinuous chromaticism; rapid scale passages, especially if they are an irregular rhythmic fit (for example, 11 in the space of 2); a melody that suddenly shifts to notes of a shorter value; repetitive rhythms and melodies; parallel fourths, fifths, and octaves; drones and pedal points; harp arpeggios and glissandi.


ideologies are at odds with our own, “equip[s] us with a context, and a subtext.”

Locke emphasizes this objective sentiment, albeit with an emphasis on the validity of the music in question, as opposed to the ideologies of those involved. He takes care to distance himself “from the tendency to suggest that invented exoticisms are somehow invalid in music, as if the composer were too lazy or too culturally narrow to offer the listener something more authentic.” Strauss’s music for Salome paints her as an Arabic character, or at least suggests that she has what people thought were Middle Eastern qualities. When considering this music, it is important to consider the context of Orientalism and realize that Strauss drew from a European tradition, not an “authentic” one.

During “The Dance of the Seven Veils,” Salome transforms from a chaste teenager to a dangerous femme fatale. At this moment, Strauss musically portrays Salome as Other. As Ralph Locke has pointed out, this is the only place in the opera where the “Arab style” appears. Until Locke codified his Second Paradigm, “The Dance of the Seven Veils” was in fact the only reason that Salome was regarded as an Oriental opera at all. It is telling that in this scene, Salome, temporarily an Other, uses her sexuality to exert power over Herod.

The images that Westerners associated with Arabic dancing were often overtly sexual and seductive. During the nineteenth century, Salome was portrayed as an Arabic character precisely because of the sexual nature of the dance. Traditionally, Arabic culture had often been associated with overtly sexual behavior. In Voyage en Orient (1851), the Orientalist writer Nerval suggested that the Orient was a country of dreams and illusions (le

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13 Taruskin, “‘Entoiling the Falconet,’” 255.
16 Locke, Musical Exoticism, 80-81. Locke calls Salome “heavily exotic” and notes that performers, operagoers and critics consider the exotic locale to be “more imaginative, powerful, affecting, and nuanced” than certain other works.
pays des rêves et de l’illusion), “which, like the veils [one] sees everywhere in Cairo, conceal a deep, rich fund of female sexuality.”

This idea directly connects with Salome through the writing of Gustave Flaubert. His short story Hérodias (1877), as I demonstrate in Chapter 1, grew as a direct result of the misperceptions he had about Middle Eastern women.

Several scholars have explored the rich history of Salome’s story. Katherine Downey’s monograph Perverse Midrash: Oscar Wilde, André Gide, and Censorship of Biblical Drama demonstrates the relationship of Wilde’s play to the biblical text. She focuses on aesthetics and the perversion of biblical narratives as they relate to Wilde’s play. Udo Kultermann’s article “The ‘Dance of the Seven Veils’: Salome and Erotic Culture Around 1900,” traces some recurrences of Salome in literature, art, sculpture, dance, and early film.

Some sections of this article are better seen as overviews (such as the parts on dance and film, which may be better represented in articles specifically addressing these), but the parts about painting and sculpture bring into light pieces not considered in other places.

Derek Puffett’s Richard Strauss: Salome (1989) provides a starting point for a musicologist researching the opera. Analyses provide insights into the “libretto” and music. Motives and musical characterizations are the most-discussed aspects of the opera’s music. The book summarizes the most basic aspects of the opera and its genesis. A useful inclusion of the book lies in an appendix, where Puffett includes Strauss’s stage directions for “The Dance of the Seven Veils” from the 1920s. I will use this appendix to help formulate my arguments about Strauss’s conception of Salome.

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17 Said, Orientalism, 182.
In their respective articles, Davinia Caddy and Larry Hamberlin offer musicological insights into early twentieth-century re-imaginings of Salome’s character. They both focus on single-woman acts. Caddy explores the dancing of Loie Fuller, Ida Rubinstein and Maud Allan, and, along with costume and choreography, she considers the narrative that the music provided in the acts of these women. Hamberlin elucidates the American reception of Salome’s figure by examining the array of Vaudeville and popular songs that reference the character. His insightful conclusions demonstrate the inherent differences between European and American views of the Salome craze. I will use Caddy’s and Hamberlin’s articles when examining single-woman Salome acts of the early twentieth century.

Some important non-musicological studies serve to contextualize Salome from various angles. Gaylyn Studlar has examined Salome’s influence on American silent films in her article “‘Out-Salomeing Salome’: Dance, the New Woman, and Fan Magazine Orientalism.” Studlar considers the interaction between female identity and Orientalism and the effects this had on the film industry. Cultural historian Sander Gilman has explored homosexuality, Judaism, and the early reception of Salome in Germany in his article “Strauss, the Pervert, and Avant Garde Opera of the Fin de Siècle.” Gilman shows that audiences saw the opera as “Jewish” and made connections with various Jewish stereotypes. Karen Painter also has explored this topic from a musicological angle in her

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Painter shows the musical connections that German and Austrian audiences perceived among Schoenberg, Mahler and Strauss. I will consider Painter’s points when I discuss the characterization of the Jews in *Salome*.

In this thesis, I plan to go beyond the surface features of the music and bring a fuller understanding of the Others in Strauss’s opera to the forefront. Salome, being the central character of nearly every modern depiction since Wilde’s play, undoubtedly occupies much of this thesis. But I also discuss other characters—the Jews, Nazarenes, John the Baptist, Herod and the Romans—and the relationships of those characters to Salome. Early twentieth-century Western audiences understood Salome’s identity not just through Strauss’s opera, but through a multitude of outside interpretations and media (which focused mainly, if not solely, on Salome). Thus, I have structured my thesis to “lead into” the opera by first dealing with a number of interpretations of the story which affected perceptions of the character of Salome.

Chapter 1 introduces Salome, the Herod family, and John the Baptist. I discuss the development of the story, with an emphasis on Salome’s identity. Her character is simply the most varied from account to account and, as I show, she comes to represent the ideals and feelings of both the storytellers and perceivers. As there is no way for me to relate every account, I have chosen to concentrate on select ones either because to have excluded them would have left out a large part of the story, or because the account has been under-represented in recent literature. This chapter explains the central elements of Salome’s identity and how they shifted from tale to tale.

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Chapter 2 deals with early twentieth-century depictions of Salome, with a particular emphasis on Orientalism and exoticism. I begin with a case study of modern dancer Maud Allan’s *Vision of Salome* act, and focus particularly on its reception. Allan performed a solo dance as a separate concert piece and sparked a trend called “Salomania,” which focused exclusively on Salome’s dance. I demonstrate the various Orientalist and exotic attitudes that Allan used in order to promote her character, as well as critical reactions that evoked Orientalist attitudes. These all serve to demonstrate Salome’s created and perceived identity at this time period. The second half of the chapter focuses on Strauss’s interpretation of Salome’s character, in particular. I examine his one-movement piano quintet *Arabischer Tanz*, an exotic piece that, strangely, has never been mentioned in connection with “The Dance of the Seven Veils” even though both works display strikingly similar exotic musical markers. This comparison reveals Strauss’s perception of orientalism at the time he composed the opera.

Chapter 3 broadens my focus to other characters in the opera. I look at Jews, Nazarenes, and John the Baptist, and consider the relationship between the Romans and Herod’s court. It is between these characters (Jews versus Nazarenes, Herod versus Romans) that alterity is the most pronounced within the opera. The starkest musical contrast exists between the ridiculously nonsensical Jews and the holy, prophetic Nazarenes. Through these contrasts, audiences came to interpret the identities of the characters in *Salome*. Considering the malleable identities of the characters demonstrated in chapters 1 and 2, this chapter concludes the thesis by showing the various ways that Strauss formed the identities of particular characters.
CHAPTER 1: DEVELOPMENT OF THE SALOME LEGEND

The story of Salome comes from the biblical accounts of Matthew (14:1-12), Mark (6:14-29) and Luke (3:19-20 and 9:7-9) (see the Appendix for complete texts). These texts center on the beheading of John the Baptist and Herod’s intentions rather than on the character of Salome. Luke’s short description barely handles the subject, but touches on Herod’s curious desire to see Jesus. The premises of Matthew and Mark are the same as in Wilde’s story: Herod imprisons John the Baptist for decrying the marriage between Herod and Herodias; and Salome dances for Herod and asks for the prophet’s head on a silver charger as payment. In both versions, John objects to Herod’s marriage because Herodias was married to Herod’s brother and left him while he was still alive. In the biblical accounts Salome was a tool of her mother, but in Wilde’s Salomé she acts of her own free will.

The biblical accounts do not mention Salome by name. The late first-century historian Josephus provides her name in a genealogy of Herod’s family in his twenty-volume Antiquities of the Jews. He wrote:

Herodias . . . was married to Herod [Philip], the son of Herod the Great . . . who had a daughter, Salome; after whose birth Herodias took upon her to confound the laws of our country, and divorced herself from her husband while he was alive, and was married to Herod [Antipas], her husband's brother by the father's side, he was tetrarch of Galilee.¹

In addition to revealing the relationships among Herod, Herodias and Salome, Josephus summarizes the controversy that John the Baptist decried: the illegal marriage between Herod Antipas and Herodias.

The evolution of Salome’s story is important because it changed throughout history to emphasize different aspects of the biblical account. Each incarnation of her story

emphasizes affinitive parts, or sometimes accentuates new ones. Until the nineteenth century, Salome’s story was primarily used to emphasize morality. Salome herself was often not a central figure in the drama. She was an instrument of her mother’s will and served no other purpose than to seduce Herod with her dance and ask for John’s head. By exploring literary and artistic influences, and the genesis of Salome’s story, I will clarify which aspects of the story are emphasized with each incarnation of the tale and how each plays a part in constructing Salome’s identity.

The legend of Salome developed throughout history, expanding on the biblical accounts. In the fourth century, Salome’s tale was sometimes used as “an example of the evils to which dancing may lead.” Salome was also a popular subject for medieval and Renaissance painters such as Giotto, Donatello and Titian. Biblical plays from the Renaissance, such as John Bale’s *Johan Baptystes Preachynge* (1538), contrasted the Saint’s faith with the vices of other characters.

Katherine Downey argues that Salome did not emerge as a “central and popular” figure until the nineteenth century. Many earlier accounts of the tale focused on John the Baptist or Herodias. Even so, there were non-mainstream accounts that placed emphasis on Salome. Interestingly, these “fringe legends” anticipated some of the lynchpin components of the most popular Romantic versions. In some of them Salome was subject to punishment for John the Baptist’s death. There may have been a small bit of malevolence seen in her character before Wilde, although his play was the first where Salome was unquestionably

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3 Peter Happé, *John Bale* (New York: Twayne, 1996), 113-117. This play does not recount John’s beheading, but his preaching in the wilderness.
4 Downey, *Perverse Midrash*, 98. As I will demonstrate, however, there were other accounts that focused specifically on Salome. I draw nearly all of these accounts from Jacob Grimm’s *Teutonic Mythology* and select others from the visual arts.
sinister. Generally, the eroticism displayed by Wilde’s Salome was absent or only hinted at in earlier versions.

In the medieval and Renaissance eras, Salome usually had innocuous intentions (by virtue of being a naïve tool of her mother), but she was still subject to retribution because of the outcome of her actions. In one folkloric version of the legend, Salome—in an example of talion justice—was decapitated by ice that broke beneath her while she was walking. In another version, she was ejected into the sky by a whirlwind that spewed from John the Baptist’s mouth. These are no worse than her punishment in Wilde’s version, where Salome has an ornery intention. It seems the tale acquired a misogynistic flare, and Salome was doomed to suffer, whether her actions arose from ignorance or malevolence.

Other provocative female characters of the pre-modern era fared better than Salome. Rahab was an Old Testament harlot who hid spies in her house during the sack of Jericho. By signaling to the invading army with a red string in her window, only the inhabitants of her house were spared from the brigandage. In the Paradiso section of Dante’s Divine Comedy, Rahab is said to be the first soul to join the heavenly ranks after Christ liberated the souls sent to hell under the rules of the Mosaic Covenant. Rahab’s provocative deeds were forgiven despite her status as a female charmer that brought about death with her wiles. Judith, the decapitator of Holofernes, also appears in Paradiso. Despite their murderous

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5 The most notable exception was Alessandro Stradella’s oratorio San Giovanni Battista (1675), discussed below.  
6 Erwin Panofsky, Problems in Titian, Mostly Iconographic (New York: New York University Press, 1969), 44. Panofsky draws these legends from Grimm’s Deutsche Mythologie (see below).  
7 You wish to know what spirit is within/ the light that here beside me sparkles, so,/ as would a ray of sun in limpid water./ Know then that Rahab lives serenely in/ that light, and since her presence joins our order,/ she seals that order in the highest rank./ This heaven, where the shadow cast by earth/ comes to a point, had Rahab as the first/ soul to be taken up when Christ triumphed./ And it was right to leave her in this heaven/ as trophy of the lofty victory/ that Christ won, palm on palm, upon the cross,/ for she had favored the initial glory/ of Joshua within the Holy Land/ which seldom touches the Pope's memory.  
actions, these women were forgiven because the ones they slew deserved God’s vengeful wrath.

Certain other women were seen more often as evil and subject to retribution similar to Salome. Grendel’s mother from Beowulf exemplifies a demon-like female figure slain by the hero. Freydis Eiriksdottir from the Grønlendinga Saga (Saga of the Greenlanders, an Icelandic saga from the middle ages) led a trip to Vinland (now North America) and killed her co-leaders and their cohort in order to secure more profit. She bribed the surviving members of the expedition in order to keep this information secret upon their return to Greenland. Her brother, Leifur, found out and cursed Freydis and her descendents. According to the legend, “after that nobody thought but ill of her and her family.”

Although it is tempting to group these hoary tales of female personages together, the stories, circumstances, and punishments (or lack thereof) were all different. None were quite the same as Salome. Unless a more comprehensive study reveals it to be so, wily women in medieval literature were not subject to universal punishment as they would be in the nineteenth century.

Salome’s name, as given by Josephus, was not used uniformly in the legends. Sometimes, her character was instead named after her mother, Herodias, while still being distinct. German philologist Jakob Grimm referenced the legends of Herodias several times in his Deutsche Mythologie, originally published in 1835. In one instance, Grimm associates

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8 Special thanks to Dr. Vincent Corrigan (Bowling Green State University) for suggesting the Icelandic sagas as sources for provocative medieval females.
10 Jacob Grimm, Teutonic Mythology: Translated from the Fourth Edition with Notes and Appendix by James Steven Stallybrass (London: George Bell and Sons, 1888). All of the following references to “Herodias” in Grimm are in fact references to Salome.
Herodias with the *Windsbraut*, or wind’s bride, a female mythological creation that was capable of summoning—or sometimes existed as—a powerful tempest. Grimm writes,

> The whirlwind appears to be associated with . . . an opprobrious name for the *devil*, to whom the raising of the whirl was ascribed as well as to *witches*. It was quite natural therefore to look upon some female personages also as prime movers of the whirlwind, [for instance] the gyrating dancing *Herodias*.11

Earlier in the text, Grimm concluded that Salome’s acts were “thoughtless rather than malicious.”12 Her actions still resulted in her being associated with witches. Grimm did state that “to this day [a whirlwind] is accounted for in lower Saxony . . . by the dancing *Herodias* whirling about in the air.”13 Apparently, Salome’s dance and the whirlwind show a connection. The whirlwind may have been seen as a destructive force brought about by Salome’s nescient dance, just as it brought about John the Baptist’s destruction.

At some point, Salome’s legend was conflated with other legends in some Germanic areas—so much so that Salome was even worshipped by some people. Grimm writes,

> there is no doubt whatever, that quite early in the Mid. Ages the christian [sic.] mythus of *Herodias* got mixed up with our native heathen fables . . . [notions about] the nightly jaunts of sorceresses were grafted on it, the Jewish king’s daughter had the part of a *heathen goddess* assigned her . . . and her worship found numerous adherents.14

Salome apparently became associated with the heathen goddesses Holda and Diana to the extent that sometimes the three were even synonymous.15 Certainly, if people worshipped Salome, she was a central and popular character (contrary to Downey’s assertion) in at least some parts of Europe. There may not be a direct link to the *fin-de-siècle* portrayals of her, but

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11 Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, 632. Emphases in original in this and all the following excerpts.
15 Holda was a Germanic figure associated with the aforementioned “nightly jaunts of sorceresses” and was a “furious host” also associated with whirlwinds. Diana was a Roman “lunar deity of night” and a “wild huntress.” For more on Diana and Holda, see Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology*, 285, 883, 1055-58.
this fact at the very least serves to highlight the allure of her character. Late nineteenth- and
twentieth-century audiences could not escape her charm, as evidenced by the cultural trend
called “Salomania.”¹⁶ Perhaps the allure of the character lies in her ambiguity. Especially in
the twentieth century, one could see her as evil and deserving of retribution, ignorant and
deserving of pity or empathy, or powerful and deserving of respect or admiration. These
concepts can easily be tied to female sexuality, an aspect unwaveringly associated with
Salome. An individual’s fears or desires could be projected onto Salome to stir whatever
emotions the individual wished.

Hints of eroticism sporadically appear in some versions before the nineteenth
century. Art historian Erwin Panofsky points out the inherent eroticism in Titian’s Salome
(early sixteenth century).¹⁷ Salome holds the charger with the Baptist’s head, while turning
her face away but sensuously glancing at the head from the corners of her eyes (figure 1).
Panofsky argues that the hair of John the Baptist, resting on Salome’s forearm, implies a
sort of eroticism. He also points out the cupid perched on the arch of a window in the
background. This may be one of the only early instances of Salome’s erotic attraction to the
Baptist. Panofsky points out that this also may be the earliest instance of a self portrait en
décapité, where a painter imprints his own features on a decapitated subject.¹⁸ Panofsky
points to two other paintings with Salome as a subject, one by Guercino (ca. 1619) and
another by Pieter Cornelisz van Rijck (late sixteenth or early seventeenth century).¹⁹ The

¹⁶ Contemprorary newspapers often used this term to label the cultural fascination with Salome.
¹⁷ Panofsky is famous for his studies in iconology, where he sought to understand the meaning of a work of art
rather than just the form. He defines the three strata of meaning as: 1. Primary or Natural Subject Matter, 2.
Secondary or Conventional Subject Matter, and 3. Intrinsic Meaning or Content. For his detailed explanation,
see Erwin Panofsky, Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance (Boulder, CO: Westview,
1972), 1-8.
¹⁸ Panofsky, Problems in Titian, 43. Other popular instances of this are Cristofano Allori’s Judith (with the artist
depicted as Holofernes) and Caravaggio’s David (with the artist as a decapitated Goliath).
¹⁹ Panofsky, Problems in Titian, 42-43.
painting by Guercino seems to portray a very young and curious Salome, though not an erotic one. Rjick’s Salome looks bashful and ashamed to even look at the Saint’s head, which is held by the executioner.\footnote{Panofsky mentions that the pendant Salome wears implies eroticism, but gives no further explanation. The pendant looks like it has a depiction of two nude figures in an embrace, but their action—and the allegory that Panofsky implies but does not discuss—is unclear. Panofsky, \textit{Problems in Titian}, 46-47.}
Besides Titian, there is one other rendering of Salome’s story that unambiguously shows Salome’s love interest in John the Baptist. This account comes from a twelfth-century poet named Nivardus from St. Pharaïldis in Ghent. Nivardus, in his epic poem *Ysengrimus*, identifies Salome with St. Pharaïldis.²²

Herod was renowned for this daughter- and would have been blessed in her, but that she too came to grief through cursed love. This girl, yearning for the bed of the Baptist alone, had vowed to be no man’s if he were denied to her. Her cruel father, angered by the discovery of his daughter’s love, decapitated the innocent saint. The grief-stricken girl asked to have his severed head brought to her; the king’s servant brings it, on a dish, and when it was brought, she clasps it in her soft arms, sprinkles it with tears, and is eager to implant kisses on it. As she pants for its kisses, the head backs away, and hisses at her, and through the skylight, in the eddy of breath, she disappears. Since then, John’s unforgettable, hissing anger drives her on an empty journey through the heavens; he didn’t love the wretched woman when he was alive, and he plagues her when he’s dead. Yet the fates doff let her perish completely; honour softens her grief, and reverence lessens her punishment. A third portion of men serve this melancholy lady, and from the second part of the night until the first cries of the black cock, she perches on oaks and hazel-trees. Now her name is Pharalldis, whereas before it was Herodias, a dancer neither preceded nor followed by anyone equal to her.²³

Aside from Salome’s love interest, this poem conflates many characteristics of the legend, especially those that appear in Grimm’s later account. She is worshipped, according to

Nivardus, by a third of all mankind. Nivardus takes care to emphasize her innocence, and

²¹ This painting is currently housed at La Galleria Doria Pamphilj, Rome. It is available for viewing at <http://www.doriapamphilj.it> (accessed 30 November 2010).
²² Panofsky, *Problems in Titian*, 45. Nothing is known of Nivardus’s life other than the fact that he lived in Ghent and was canon at the church of Saint Pharaïldis.
²³ “Hac famosus erat felixque fuisset Herodes/prole, sed infelix hanc quoque laesit amor:/Haec virgo thalamus Baptistae solius ardens/voverat hoc dempto nullius esse viri./Offensus genitor comperto prolis amore,/insontem sanctus decapitavit atrox./Postulat afferi virgo sibi tristis, et affert/regius in disco tempora trunca cliens./Mollibus allatum stringens caput illa lacertis/perfundit lacrimis osculaque addere avet; Ocula captantem caput aufugit atque resuflat, illa per impliumium turbine flantis abit./Ex illo nimium memor ira Johannis eandem/per vacuum caeli flabilis urget iter:/mortuus infestat miseram nec vivus amarat,/non tamen hanc penitus fata perisse sinunt:/Lenit honor luctum, minuit reverentia paenam,/pars hominum maestae tertia servit herae./Quercubus et corylis a noctis parte secunda/usque nigrig ad galli carmina prima sedet./Nunc ea nomen habet Pharalldis, Herodias ante/saltria nec subiens nec subeunda pari.”
implies that she cannot be blamed for her young and inexperienced nature. She is a dancer here, but absent are any implications that she used her dance to seduce or manipulate. One important aspect of the story, which also becomes manifest in Wilde’s play, is that John the Baptist rebukes Salome’s love. Another is that Salome kisses the decapitated head. It is probable that Nivardus’s account would have been readily available to Wilde via Grimm’s *Teutonic Mythology*.

The early accounts of Salome tend to show a woman who is perhaps just as much a victim as John the Baptist. The underlying theme in these accounts is that Salome caused the Baptist’s death, but her actions did not rise from malevolence. She is subject to various degrees of retribution, sometimes deserved and sometimes not. Eroticism arises in most accounts and can be attributed to Salome’s dance, the very purpose of which—even in the original text—was to seduce Herod. The erotic tension between Herod and Salome is ever-present, serving as an important lynchpin in the story. More obscure renderings, those by Titian and Nivardus among others, also construct sexual tension between Salome and John the Baptist. Two important characteristics of Salome’s character emerge from these early accounts and serve as important markers of her identity: her eroticism and her degree of innocence.

Alessandro Stradella’s oratorio *San Giovanni Battista* (1675) sheds additional light on Baroque depictions of Salome. This may be the earliest musical setting of the story. It is also one of the very few seventeenth-century examples of the story. Stradella composed it for celebrations surrounding the jubilee year 1675 in Rome. A group of Florentines requested that Stradella write the oratorio in honor of John the Baptist, patron saint of

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24 Special thanks to Dr. Christopher Williams (University of Toledo) for pointing out this oratorio’s existence to me.
Florence. The curious fact is the selection of this part of John’s story. The librettist, Ansaldo Ansaldi, chose to relate the story of John’s execution rather than an earlier part of the Baptist’s life. John Bale’s play Johan Baptystes Preachynge (1538), for instance, focuses on his preaching in the wilderness rather than his decapitation. The play is hagiographic—perhaps in both senses of the word—and its subject might have been a more neutral choice for an oratorio written to commemorate St. John. The music and the text portray Salome—called Erodiade la Figlia (Herodias the Daughter) in this oratorio—as unquestionably malevolent. She and Erodiade plot together to kill Giovanni. Herod (Erode) is an unfit ruler of his court. In these senses, the oratorio predicts defining traits of Wilde’s characters. There is no sexual attraction, however, between Salome and John the Baptist.

The late nineteenth century saw a resurgence of the Salome myth—which seemed to be absent in the seventeenth (save Stradella) and eighteenth centuries—in European popular culture. Pre-Romantic accounts tend to focus on the story as part of the Bible or are somehow tied to spirituality. The ones not attached to the Bible (for example, the secular/pagan accounts mentioned in Teutonic Mythology) tend to focus solely on Salome as a mythical figure instead of a flesh-and-blood person. Gustave Flaubert’s short story Hérodias (1877) sparked a new interest in Salome, this time with a focus on the exotic. Through Flaubert, Salome’s identity immediately went from being associated with religious or moral themes, to Oriental and outwardly sexual ones. The erotic subtext is subtly changed now that she is seen as an Other.

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Flaubert visited Egypt and adopted a revivalist attitude in his subsequent Oriental writings. He felt compelled to “bring the Orient to life . . . [and to] deliver it to himself and to his readers. . . . His novels of the Orient accordingly were labored historical and learned reconstructions.”

He encountered a prototype for Salome while he was in Egypt: a woman named Kuchuk Hanem. She was an *almeh*, Arabic for “learned woman,” a term that designated a dancer who was also a prostitute. Flaubert partook in both of Kuchuk’s services and wrote about her afterwards. In a letter to Louise Coliet, he related that “the oriental woman is no more than a machine: she makes no distinction between one man and another man.”

Flaubert’s experiences caused him to form a mental connection between the Orient, dancing, and sex.

*Hérodias* still incorporates common elements and ideas from pre-Romantic traditions and the Bible. She appears only to dance for Herod, and is a tool used for her mother’s purposes. The chief addition to the story is the detail of the dance that Flaubert included:

> Her feet slipped back and forth, to the rhythm of the flute and a pair of castanets. Her arms curved round in invitation to someone who always eluded her. She pursued him, lighter than a butterfly, like some curious Psyche, like a wandering spirit, and seemed on the point of flying away. . . . With eyes half closed, she twisted her waist, made her belly ripple like the swell of the sea, made her breasts quiver, while her expression remained fixed, and her feet never stood still. She danced like the princesses of India, like the Nubian women from the cataracts, like the Bacchantes of Libya. She bent over in every direction, like a flower tossed by the storm. The jewels in her ears leaped about, the silk on her back shimmered, from her arms, her feet, her clothes invisible sparks shot out, firing the men with excitement. . . . Opening wide her legs, without bending her knees, she bowed so low that her chin brushed the floor.

Although Salome is not mentioned in this story until she dances, her dance acts as the climax. Like Flaubert’s description of Kuchuk Hanem, Salome’s description fancies that of

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a sex machine. Her body moves in unnatural and erotic ways while her expression remains fixed. Sparks shoot from her arms, feet and clothes, overloading the circuits of the men around her. Her mother has programmed her to seduce Herod, and this she does with the calculating coldness of an android. Flaubert’s *Hérodiade* galvanized new interest in Salome. She became an Oriental image of sexuality: still an accomplice to her mother but more desirable compared to her previous chronicles.

Jules Massenet’s *Hérodiade* (1881, revised 1884) was loosely based on Flaubert’s tale. Massenet’s publisher, Georges Hartmann, suggested the idea and worked on the libretto (under the pseudonym Henri Grémont) with Paul Milliet. This re-telling certainly draws from the exotic aspects of Flaubert’s *Hérodiade*, but it also displays new elements found in no other version. First, Salomé dances in order to save Jean (John the Baptist), although her efforts are in vain. After she learns of Jean’s death, she kills herself with a dagger. The more remarkable difference, though, is the reciprocal attraction between Salomé and Jean. The Baptist admits his love to Salomé before he is put to death. These romanticized events are far cries from any other previous Salome tale.

Richard Wagner’s final opera, *Parsifal* (1882), tackles the idea of redemption and is rich with religious symbolism. Like Salome, Kundry’s character displays various (often conflicting) sides to her personality. Both are *femmes fatales* but have an innocent side to their personality. Both have a varying degree of independence. While Salome succeeds in seducing Herod, Kundry vainly attempts to seduce Parsifal. At the end of *Parsifal*, Kundry achieves redemption, whereas Wilde’s Salome is punished and obliterated for her acts.

Wagner’s libretto pins exotic aspects onto Kundry. Before she attempts to seduce Parsifal, she appears to him thus: “There appears through an opening of the flower-hedges a
young and very beautiful woman—Kundry, in altered form—lying on a flowery couch, wearing a light veil-like robe of Arabian style." Kundry also resides in Klingsor’s castle, which in Wagner’s description resembles a harem. The castle also houses the Flower Maidens. They please any man who happens to come by, and they are ruled by a castrated man (both stereotypical harem characteristics). This further paints Kundry as a dangerous and exotic Other.

Kundry suffers various insults from other characters in the opera. Some of the Grail community treat her with suspicion, as evidenced by the squires in Act 1:

**Third Squire:** Hey, you, there! Still lying there like a savage beast?
**Kundry:** Are the creatures here not holy?
**Third Squire:** Yes! But if you are holy, of that we are not so sure.
**Fourth Squire:** And with her magic balm, maybe she’ll harm our master, even destroy him. 

Gurnemanz defends her pointing out that she does no harm and even aids the Grail community. The squires respond:

**Third Squire:** She hates us though; just look, see how her eyes are flashing hate!
**Fourth Squire:** She’s a heathen maid, a sorceress.

Despite Kundry’s first deed in the opera—bringing a magic balm to possibly heal Amfortas—she is still treated with suspicion and scorn. In this way, Kundry is analogous to the “misunderstood Salome”—that is, the Salome whose actions are not forgiven and whose fate is decided without compassion.

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Klingsor’s description of Kundry is no less forgiving. His description at the beginning of Act 2 might first seem like a list of loathsome epithets, but may reveal more about her character:

**Klingsor:** Arise! Arise! To me! 
Your master calls you, nameless woman, 
first she-devil! Rose of Hades! 
Herodias were you, and what else? 
Gundryggia then, Kundry here! 
Come here! Come here now, Kundry! 
Your master calls: arise!

Prompted by this text, some scholars have commented on Kundry’s relation to Herodias, Salome’s mother. Anthony Winterbourne writes: “Apart of course from being the mother of Salomé . . . Herodias was the consort of Herod. . . . Her demand for the head of John the Baptist made her a religious villainess par excellence.” Winterbourne establishes that Kundry’s association with Herodias marks her as a *femme fatale*. While this is true, there is more to the association than meets the eyes. As I have established above, “Herodias” actually means “Salome” in Jakob Grimm’s *Teutonic Mythology*, of which Wagner certainly owned a copy. It is more probable that Kundry could be associated with both figures, as suggested by Dieter Borchmeyer: “Kundry is a reincarnation of the Herodias and Salome of the Bible, a figure who . . . was condemned . . . to a restless, nomadic existence as a result of her murderous crime against John the Baptist. And according to . . . Jacob Grimm . . . she led the Wild Hunt.” Wagner made a direct reference to “Herodias” in the libretto because of the parallels between her and Kundry.

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In 1882, Salome could still be seen as innocent because she was (usually) an instrument of her mother’s will. Even so, she was still dangerous to all men because she had the power to seduce. The same can be said of Kundry. Only Klingsor can resist her because he castrated himself. (The hero, Parsifal, later proves able to resist her charm.) Salome also had varying degrees of independence, much like Kundry. In Nivardus’s account, Herodias is not mentioned, and Salome makes up her own mind about her lust for John, which ultimately leads to his demise. Her independence and duality of character are intertwined. Morgan Rich aptly describes these aspects in Kundry’s character:

[Kundry] is partially independent in thought and action. As a tool for Klingsor she seduces at his will; he determines her thoughts and actions. However, she also helps the Knights, providing balm for Amfortas’s wound and other tasks that seem repentant. The duality of Kundry working for and against the Knights shows some freedom of thought and action.³⁴

It seems that Kundry’s role in Parsifal resembles the development of Salome’s character, which has either seduced at her mother’s will or acted of her own accord. The chief difference is that when Salome is independent, nothing good results of her actions. Whereas Kundry is forgiven and finds redemption, Salome is always doomed to punishment.

The previous accounts of Salome’s story are markedly different from the one presented in Wilde’s Salomé, although some elements do persist or are exaggerated. One important distinction is the undeniable transformation of Salome from an instrument of her mother’s will to an independent femme fatale archetype. Previously, she had asked for the prophet’s head to please her mother (who had a vested interest in seeing him dead), but Wilde’s Salome was more concerned with satiating her own lust. Salome’s non-reciprocal

sexual attraction to the prophet and scornful action to have him killed were details popularized by Wilde (though he was not the first to paint her so). In addition, previous accounts emphasized Salome’s dance as the element that sparked Herod’s lust for his stepdaughter. It was not until after Salome danced that Herod promised her anything she wished. By slightly changing this circumstance, Wilde dramatically changed the implications and added a deeper aspect of perversion in Herod’s desires. Wilde’s Herod offers Salome anything she wishes before she performs the dance, highlighting the fact that Herod did not need a catalyst to awaken his lust for his young stepdaughter.

Wilde capitalized on the Oriental setting popularized by Flaubert and was the first writer to use the title “Dance of the Seven Veils.” This name references the ancient Mesopotamian myth of Ishtar, who passed through the seven gates of the underworld in order to reach the bottom and gain power. She was required to remove one of her veils at each gate. The veils gave Ishtar her godly power, and as she stood naked at the last gate, her sister Ereshkigal killed her. She was revived by another god, but needed to find someone to take her place in order to leave the underworld. She chose her husband, Tammuz, to take her place.

In The Epic of Gilgamesh, which survives in twelve clay tablets, Ishtar attempts to seduce the hero Gilgamesh, but he rebukes her. In a fit of rage, she asks her father to unleash the Bull of Heaven on Gilgamesh to kill him. (Gilgamesh triumphs over the Bull.) There are a number of reasons that Wilde may have chosen to reference this legend. Ishtar, being a Mesopotamian goddess, was associated with a far-off time and place, and reinforced the Oriental aspects of Salome’s character. Ishtar also sacrificed the life of her husband for her own purposes, much like Wilde’s Salome causes John the Baptist to be killed in order to
fulfill her own whims. Finally, Ishtar was famously rebuked by a lover, no doubt more deserving of respect than her, and appealed to her father to have him killed. The parallels with Wilde's tale are unmistakable.

The popularity of Salome's legend evinces that the important aspects of the story lie in Salome's Otherness. Even the “mainstream” accounts, which omit the erotic tension between Salome and John the Baptist, or which barely focus on Salome at all, still implicitly highlight the difference between the seraphic Baptist and the wanton Herod family. Certainly, Salome's dance accompanies nearly every incarnation of the tale, which distinguishes her and, most importantly, defines her as a sexual being. The idea of a division between characters, especially a moral division, manifests itself in Strauss's Salome. The identities of the characters are defined not only by themselves, but also by comparison with other characters.
CHAPTER 2: SALOME’S IDENTITY IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

According to Davinia Caddy, in the early twentieth century “Salome emerged as a leading Orientalist figure, an archetype of the sybaritic, bodily and sexual.”\(^1\) Salome was viewed this way because of her exotic background. In 1942, however, Strauss retrospectively denounced exotic interpretations of the character. He wrote:

Later performances by exotic variety stars indulging in snakelike movements and waving Jochanaan’s head about in the air went beyond all bounds of decency and good taste. Anyone who has been in the east and has observed the decorum with which women there behave, will appreciate that Salome, being a chaste virgin and oriental princess, must be played with the simplest and most restrained of gestures.\(^2\)

Contrastingly, the very nature of “The Dance of the Seven Veils,” the music, and the name itself implies an erotic striptease.

In this chapter, I seek to resolve this dichotomy and explore the implications of different interpretations of Salome’s story. Derrick Puffett wrote that “the dignity of the heroine, her regal aspect, was uppermost in [Strauss’s] mind.”\(^3\) Strauss’s outline for the dance (according to Puffett, probably written in the 1920s), however, calls for Salome to remove several veils and perform sexual and exotic poses. One instructs her to execute a “pose known as the ’bridge,’ bending over backwards until her hands touch the ground behind her, so that her body forms an arch.”\(^4\) Even Strauss displayed ambivalence towards the character that he helped create. The ambiguity remains, but a synthesis of these two ideas will reinforce one of the arguments of this chapter. It seems that Salome’s identity was not fixed, even in the mind of a single artist. She could be constructed to conform to multiple—and fundamentally different—identities.

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\(^4\) Puffett, *Salome*, 196n.
Salome’s dance and the accompanying music always evoked exoticism after Flaubert’s *Hérodias* became famous. In Strauss’s opera, the music suggests that Salome performs a Middle Eastern dance. This dance and its music formed a connection between Salome’s archetypal *femme fatale* personality and her Otherness, confirming the danger of an exotic seductress. The idea of a *femme fatale* was not always present in realizations of the dance outside of the opera. These instances still depicted Salome as exotic, but different aspects of her character came to the forefront. I explore these aspects using Maud Allan’s *Vision of Salome* set and its reception. In the second half of the chapter, I focus on Strauss’s music for “The Dance of the Seven Veils” and his piano quartet, *Arabischer Tanz*, showing how Strauss conflated an Orientalist idea of Arabic dancing with Salome’s dangerous and exotic persona.

**Maud Allan’s *Vision of Salome***

As a result of its popularity after Wilde and Strauss’s version, Salome’s dance became almost a separate entity. People were drawn to the dance for the same reasons that Salome’s character was popular for such a long time. Even though these incarnations are separate from the opera—in terms of class, subject, format and context—they still reinforce the Orientalist slant of Strauss’s opera. They show that Europeans and Americans yearned for the exotic, especially as a form of entertainment. Anthony Shay indubitably reminds us that “cultural products such as dance, with its promise of the sexual and forbidden, also became a by-product of the uneven exchange between the metropolitan centers of the powerful West and its more primitive Other.”

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character and her dance resulted in an explosion of interpretations in the first decade of the twentieth century.

The public’s general fascination with the character of Salome accounts for the varied interpretations of her dance. In the early twentieth century, newspaper reporters coined the term “Salomania” to explain the outburst of Salome interpretations especially prevalent in Paris, Britain and the United States. In these interpretations, the dance was separated from the story and performed as a separate piece. Loie Fuller performed a 1907 version with Florent Schmitt’s music, Ida Rubinstein to music by Rimsky-Korsakov (1909), and Maud Allan to music arranged by Marcel Remy (1906). Fuller and Rubinstein’s productions were both centered in Paris (Rubinstein’s at the Ballets Russes). Allan’s version, however, gained broader recognition in the United States and Europe. These and subsequent versions of the Dance depict Salome’s orientalism and sexuality as opposed to her restrained, calculating character.

Maud Allan (1873-1956) may have been the most popular Salome interpreter. The Canadian-born dancer toured Europe with her show *The Vision of Salome*, which ran for over 250 performances at the Palace Theatre in London. According to Davinia Caddy, Allan danced to an arrangement of Strauss’s music by Belgian critic Marcel Remy. It seems, however, that Allan and Remy saw Max Reinhardt’s production of *Salome* in 1903 (perhaps

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8 Caddy, “Variations of the Dance of the Seven Veils,” 54.
the same production that Strauss saw in 1902) and decided then to collaborate and create their own version of the dance.  

A 1908 review of a Palace Theatre performance reveals some specific and telling aspects of her set. The anonymous reviewer comments on Allan’s apparel, which apparently discounts a rumor that “the lady is attired for one of her dances in little else than beads.” The critic may have been referring to a costume that became famous when postcards of Allan began circulating around 1907 (see figure 2). The critic instead describes her as wearing “light classic drapery that seems not so much to clothe her as to serve as ambient air wherein she floats. Her limbs and feet are bare: slender and supple limbs, feet that seem rather to caress the ground than to be supported by it.” Figure 3 resembles the description of this costume, and seems less scandalous, given that Allan’s midsection is covered. For this performance, the critic impresses that Allan changed her costume for the Vision of Salome set and wore jewels with a black tunic. It serves to reason that Allan chose a tunic because she marketed herself as a “classic” dancer and romanticized the virtues of Greek and Roman “ancient” dancing. In her autobiography, Allan poetically comments that her first dancing dress “hailed from Greece, and was perhaps 200 years old, having once been the undergarment of some Greek peasant maiden. It was . . . as simple as it was clinging

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11 The New York Public Library has pictures of “Maud Allan as Salome in Vision of Salome” and dates these materials to ca. 1907. Shay displays a variant of figure 2 in Dancing Across Borders, 62, and dates the photograph from 1907 in the caption. It seems plausible that a series of photographs circulated, and that figure 2 was part of the series. Allan’s autobiography (1908) had two inserts of her wearing this costume; see Allan, My Life and Dancing, [insert between pp. 40-41 and insert after final page]. For other examples, see Caddy, “Variations on the Dance of the Seven Veils,” 53; Lacy McDearmon, “Maud Allan: The Public Record,” Dance Chronicle 2, no. 2 (1978): 92; Felix Cherniavsky, “Maud Allan, Part III: Two Years of Triumph 1908-1909,” Dance Chronicle 7, no. 2 (1984): 132.
and graceful.”13 This dress had little—if nothing—to do with ancient Greece, but the oldness of the dress perhaps implied that it was as close to ancient Greece as one could get. It also underlines an important facet of Orientalist thought: the blending of the past as if nothing had changed over thousands of years. Allan also describes (unfortunately, in superficial detail) how she crafted her own costumes. Nearly every contemporary commentary discussed Allan’s costumes, betraying their importance to her assumed identity as Salome.

13 Allan, My Life and Dancing, 79.
FIGURE 2 Postcard of Maud Allan's Salome Costume\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{14} Original housed at the Bibliothèque nationale de France. Available online at \texttt{<gallica.bnf.fr>} (accessed 30 November 2010).
During the first set of Allan’s Palace Theatre performance, the critic describes Allan as if she is part of a dream. She is described as a “Tanagra statuette,” again being compared to a classical Greek idea. A Tanagra-like statuette also appears on the cover of Allan’s

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16 “The New Dancer,” Times Literary Supplement, 26 March 1908, 102. According to the Oxford English Dictionary entry, Tanagra is “The name of a city of Boeotia in Greece, used attrib. and absol. to designate terracotta statuettes of the 5th to 3rd centuries B.C. found in the neighbourhood.” The OED also cites two relevant quotations, the first being from Wilde’s Picture of Dorian Gray (1891): “She had all the delicate grace of that Tanagra figurine that you have in your studio.” The second quotation, from C.A. Hutton’s Greek Terracotta Statuettes (1899), describes the word in more the metaphorical sense used by the Times critic: “That aspect of
autobiography: a female figure with a hooded garment draped over her body (see figure 4).

Allan and the critic chose the Tanagra metaphor because of the charm and elegance associated with it. The critic could not have seen Allan’s commemorative book (unless there was an advance copy available) because her 250\textsuperscript{th} performance took place on 14 October 1908, seven months after the article was published in \textit{The Times}. The critic later describes Allan’s movements as “she makes little rushes backwards and forwards or, like ‘Camilla, skims along the plain.’”\textsuperscript{17} Camilla was an Amazonian warrior from Book XI of Virgil’s \textit{Aeneid}.\textsuperscript{18} The critic again uses a “classical” idea, this one Roman instead of Greek, to describe Allan. These examples imply that Allan and the critic, in describing her dance, drew upon pre-existing and well-known Orientalist discourse.

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{Times Literary Supplement}, 26 March 1908, 102.
\item The critic might refer to the passage when Camilla rushes into battle. See Virgil, \textit{Aeneid}, XI, 597-617.
\end{itemize}

\footnotesize
This cover is different from the more common (but nonetheless rare) edition of Allan’s autobiography, which featured a picture of her in the Salome costume on the front.
As an example of this discourse, Said points out that in Abbé Le Mascrier’s 

*Description de l’Égypte* (1735), the author

Displaces . . . Oriental history as a history possessing its own coherence, identity, and sense. Instead, history as recorded in the *Description* supplants . . . Oriental history by identifying itself directly and immediately with world history, a euphemism for European history. *To save an event from oblivion is in the Orientalist’s mind the equivalent of turning the Orient into a theater for his representations of the Orient . . .* Moreover, the sheer power of having described the Orient in modern Occidental terms lifts the Orient from the realms of silent obscurity where it has lain neglected . . . into the clarity of modern European science.²⁰

Although their goals were different from those of Mascrner, Allan and the *Times* critic still aimed to define the Orient on their terms, to serve their own purposes and to create their own dramatic story. To Allan and her contemporaries, ancient Greece served as an ideal and timeless location on which they could project their own values and desires.

Orientalism became oft-associated with ballet at the end of the nineteenth century. As Eftychia Papanikolaou points out, around this time “the formulaic and predictable aspects of ballet that once made it popular now failed to sustain the public’s taste for the exotic and the extravagant.”²¹ The Ballets Russes, wildly popular in the early twentieth century, capitalized on exotic ballets such as *Schéhérazade* (music by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov) and more traditional ones such as *Les Sylphides* (music by Frédéric Chopin, orchestrated by Alexander Glazunov under the title *Chopiniana*). Michel Fokine, the chief choreographer for the company, usually relinquished classicism in exchange for realism. As Lynn Garafola shows, however, when Fokine choreographed a classically-oriented piece such as *Les

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Sylphides, “he contextualized the material, setting it within a framework of history.”

Maud Allan, in her style of modern dancing, synthesized the ideas of realism and historical context when she marketed herself as a “classic” dancer.

Allan performed three sets the night that the Times critic attended her performance. For the first set, Allan danced to an arrangement of a Waltz by Chopin (op. 34, no. 2). The critic mentions a violin, but no other hint of instrumentation is given. Allan, in selecting a work by a well-known classical composer, also chose a work that could reinforce her “Oriental” identity. In dancing to music written by a Western classical composer, Allan “legitimized” herself and appealed to her upper-class audience. At the same time, however, the music she chose contains common Orientalist musical figures which added to the exotic appeal of her set (see example 1). The musical features that make this work exotic may seem typical in another context, but as the Times critic demonstrates, Allan captivated her audience and projected an Oriental image (through her clothes/movement), thus changing the musical context.

**EXAMPLE 1** Chopin, op. 34, no. 2, mm. 1-8

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23 The critic notes, “the violin bows softly into the first strains of Chopin’s valse in A minor (op. 34, no. 2)—and the dream begins.” *Times Literary Supplement*, 26 March 1908, 102.
These eight measures comprise the first half of what William Caplin calls a sixteen-measure period. The eight measures that complete the sentence (mm. 9-16) consist of the same music, but with the final two measures of the phrase altered to create an authentic cadence. This sixteen-measure phrase consists of only two harmonies: the tonic and the dominant. In addition, the bass voice is comprised entirely of tonic and dominant pedal tones, save the trill and ornamental lower-neighbor-tone in measures 5 and 13. These trills and chromatic lower-neighbors emphasize the chromatic motion to the dominant pedal tone, both from above (F—E) and below (D#—E). The tenor voice also emphasizes the half step between F and E in a series of 6-5 intervals over the bass. The right hand of the piano displays repetitiveness by constantly returning to the A in the upper register of the texture. When played on a solo piano, the tenor voice carries the melody. The Times critic, however, mentions only the violin, hinting that this was the most prominent instrument in the arrangement. The tenor melody would have been outside the range of the violin. It is possible that the piece was transposed to allow the violin to play the melody. (The melody also could have been transposed up an octave.) Another possibility is that the critic heard a viola and mistook it for a violin. Assuming that the piece was given on the program, the audience would have known the composer to be Chopin. The surface features of the music, however, give way to Orientalist interpretation. The tonic-dominant pedal tones, chromatic motion in the tenor voice, static harmony and repetitiveness in the upper register could all be read as stereotypical Orientalist musical devices. This hybrid between the Orient and the

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24 The “first theme”—the eight measures shown in Example 1—is a simple sentence that “acquires an antecedent function by closing with a weak cadence, normally a half cadence.” See William Caplin, *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 65.
classical world was a notion that Allan and her critics emphasized when referring to her
dance.

The second set on the program that night featured Felix Mendelssohn’s
“Frühlingslied” from *Lieder ohne Worte*, Book 5, op. 62, no. 6 in A major. Dancers
commonly used this piece in their sets in the early twentieth century; so much so, in fact,
that it inspired parody in song as Salomania became timeworn in 1909-10. 25 Orlando Powell
and John P. Harrington, British songwriters, quoted Mendelssohn’s “Frühlingslied” in the
chorus of their vaudeville comedy romp, “Salome.” 26 The song was popularized by “coon
singer”—a white performer who sang in Negro dialect for comic effect—Clarice Vance,
who used her purportedly larger build to spoof Salome’s *femme fatale* persona. 27 Vance, a
singer that resorted to stereotypes to construct her on-stage identity, depicted a stereotypical
Oriental dance for comedic effect. This decision may have resulted from two views of
Salome’s identity as depicted by dancers like Allan. Either Vance decided to spoof Salome’s
identity because audiences would find the juxtaposition funny, or because Vance saw the
absurdity of representing Salome’s Oriental persona in a way that probably was not
“authentic.” Both ends derive from the same mean: Salome’s identity was an artificially
constructed and well-known commodity in the performing arts.

25 Larry Hamberlin remarks that “in 1909 appear the first signs that the public's fascination with Salome and
her dance was beginning to wane. The Salome songs of 1909 and 1910 document how Salomania reached its
peak and started its decline in those years.” See Larry Hamberlin, “Visions of Salome: The *Femme Fatale* in
26 As an example of parody, verse 2 of the song reads:
“Girls thin and fat / Round chests and flat! / Pose as Salome, you see; / Show their ability!”
Hamberlin notes that the quotation of the Mendelssohn piece “may be intended to poke fun at ‘artistic’
dancing in general or to ridicule the inappropriate music used by some Salome dancers.” See Hamberlin,
“Visions of Salome,” 674.
27 Hamberlin, “Visions of Salome,” 671-74. Hamberlin reports that Vance “probably sang 'Salome' at
London’s Palace of Varieties . . . [for] a twenty-seven-week run in 1909” before she “found the song suitable
for U.S. audiences.”
Although the *Times* critic clearly identifies the first two musical numbers on the program, the music that accompanied Allan’s finale, *Vision of Salome*, eludes identification. In addition, the critic uses a plethora of Orientalist terms and images, including the “timeless Orient,” to describe the action taking place on stage:

> To the strains of weird Oriental music Salome slowly descends the palace steps. There are jewels on her neck and bosom, and she wears a tunic of black gauze. It is of the essence, of course, of Eastern dancing to show rhythmic movements of the body round itself . . . that it may become . . . something lascivious and repulsively ugly. Now it is obvious that this dancer could make no movement or posture that is not beautiful, and, in fact, her dancing as Salome, though Eastern in spirit through and through, is absolutely without the slightest suggestion of the vulgarities so familiar to the tourist in Cairo or Tangier.\(^{28}\)

Given the clear identification of the previous two pieces, the critic was either versed enough in the repertoire to identify them, or they were printed on the program. If the former is true, the critic either could not identify the piece—Strauss’s “Dance of the Seven Veils” according to modern scholarship—or chose not to identify it in order to give a more exotic musical impression. If the pieces were printed on the program, perhaps Strauss was not credited (Remy might have received the credit, for instance). Again, though, the critic could have opted to relegate the “weird Oriental music” despite knowing its (probably) Western origin.\(^{29}\)

Said argues that one aspect of Oriental projection encompasses “[restoring] a region from its present barbarism to its former classical greatness.”\(^{30}\) The final two sentences of the above *Times* excerpt express this sentiment. Allan, as a Westerner emulating “classical” dance, can only make beautiful movements but is still able to

\(^{28}\) *Times Literary Supplement*, 26 March 1908, 102.

\(^{29}\) The piece might not have been Strauss’s dance, but there is nothing to indicate what it would have been if not. The instrumentation is not indicated, and a piano or small chamber group seems to be the most probable speculation in lieu of a full orchestra.

\(^{30}\) Said, *Orientalism*, 86.
express her Eastern spirit. She omits all the vulgarities and ugliness of “real” Oriental
dancing, apparently present in the cities of Cairo and Tangier contemporary with the
critic’s time. The dichotomy between the ugly Orient and the beautiful—and
appropriated—Orient highlights the sentiment that “the Orient needed first to be
known, then invaded and possessed, then re-created . . . as the true classical Orient
that could be used to judge and rule the modern Orient.”

Maud Allan’s promotion of her “classical” dance style influenced audiences to believe that she was saving Oriental
dance from itself.

The following *New York Times* article from 1908 documents a dance conference in
Berlin, where the British delegates reported on a performance by Maud Allan at a private
dinner party:

As evidence of the “insidious effect” Maud Allan, Isadora Duncan, and other
American “classic” dancers are having upon public morals in England, the
British delegates at the International Dancing Congress, which has just ended
in Berlin, have been telling a remarkable story. . . . If a stormy debate on the
subject of classical dancing had not been choked off by the Chairman, with a
view of preserving international peace, the story would have been sprung at
one of the sessions.

It seems that Miss Allan’s Salome Dance has so fired the imagination
of London society women that one of the great hostesses of the metropolis . . .
issued invitations to twenty or thirty ladies . . . to attend a “Maud Allan”
dinner dance, which would be undesecrated by the presence of any man, and
at which the guests were bidden to appear in Salome costumes. The idea
created intense interest and much enthusiasm among those honored with
invitations. Each of the ladies proceeded to outvie her sisters in providing
herself with a costume matching in all details the undress effect of Miss
Allan’s scanty attire. . . .

Dinner was served to an accompaniment of Salome music tinkled by
an orchestra hidden discreetly behind the fortification of palms and flowers
. . . some of the most graceful members of the party demonstrated that they
had not only succeeded in matching Miss Allan’s costume, but had learned
some of her most captivating steps in movements. It was the intention of the
British delegates to the international terpsichorean conference to tell this story

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in horror stricken accents as convincing proof that the classical dances make for public immorality.\textsuperscript{32}

Caddy points out that this article suggests a “conflation of Salome, her Dance and depravity.” She also shows that “purveyors of public morality” often call for censorship of Salome’s dance.\textsuperscript{33} This report not only reveals the public’s fascination with Salome, but also demonstrates that women and men perceived the character and her dance on different terms. Said notes that “Orientalism itself . . . was an exclusively male province . . . it viewed itself and its subject matter with sexist blinders. . . . [In it], women are usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy. They express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing.”\textsuperscript{34} Throughout most of his book, Said writes about Orientalism as an academic discipline, but the views expressed by his subjects were also expressed by the public. To females, perhaps, Orientalism can be seen a different way, especially when viewing a sexually-charged performance. As I demonstrate later, at least some turn-of-the-century females identified with Salome’s character and sought to appropriate her identity for themselves.

Only women were invited to the party which was “undesecrated by the presence of any man.” The British delegates to the international dance conference in Berlin seem as if they were suspicious of a closed party of women. The reporter’s use of the term “insidious effect” is particularly telling. The \textit{Oxford English Dictionary} defines “insidious” as “full of wiles or plots; lying in wait or seeking to entrap or ensnare; proceeding or operating secretly or subtly so as not to excite suspicion; sly, treacherous, deceitful, underhand, artful,

\textsuperscript{33} Caddy, “Variations on the Dance of the Seven Veils,” 51-2.
\textsuperscript{34} Said, \textit{Orientalism}, 207.
cunning, crafty, wily.”

Perhaps a group of women, particularly ones that were impersonating Salome, were not to be trusted if no man was allowed to monitor their actions. The delegates spoke of the party in “horror stricken accents” and cited “public immorality” (even though they spoke of a private party). The Chairman of the conference prematurely stopped a debate about this issue to “preserve international peace.” Male authority figures viewed Salome with a sort of phobia, whereas the females impersonating her seemed to have a different perspective.

The hiding of the orchestra “behind a fortification of palms and flowers” could have served more than one purpose. One would be to give the effect that Salome was the only performer, and the music existed only in the minds of the perceivers, thus adding to the allure of the dance. It would also hide the obviously Western instruments, so that the disembodied sounds could be envisioned as emanating from exotic “Eastern” instruments. Finally, assuming that the orchestra consisted of all or mostly men, their eyes would have been functionally blind to the female-only party.

Salome’s identity as a femme fatale and as an exotic Other gave many women a context to develop a strong-willed and independent female. Female performers and audience members appropriated Salome—either by performing professionally, as Allan did, or by dressing as Salome, as the attendees of the party did—and used her character as a sort of avatar to empower themselves.

In retrospect, the Salomania trend may have served as a precursor to the feminist movement. Feminism, or at the very least an awareness of women’s issues, was on the horizon in 1908. Margaret Sanger began publishing her newspaper *The Woman Rebel* in New York.

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York in 1914. The paper was aimed at middle-class women and educated them about “birth control,” a term coined by Sanger and Otto Beibsein. It seems that women in the West were taking the first steps to female empowerment in the beginning of the twentieth century, and Salome provided them a with a model of independence and liberation.

In *Dancing Across Borders*, Anthony Shay discusses the influence of the sexual revolution in the United States during the 1960s and ’70s on female views of belly dance. He notes that belly dancing appealed to women who wished to “control . . . the male gaze, rather than feeling that they were subjected to it.” The specific attributes of Wilde’s Salome, discussed in chapter one of this thesis, made it possible for women to use the character for this purpose. As film critic Laura Mulvey explains, normally the “male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly.” Mulvey bases her film analyses on the work of psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, who pioneered the concept of the gaze in his work. Had Salome been a tool of her mother’s will, as in previous accounts, she may have been subjected to Herod’s gaze. Since Wilde’s Salome controls Herod’s gaze in order to serve her own purposes, women could then use the character to empower themselves.

By adopting the identity of an Oriental woman, Allan represented a dangerous personality, therefore attracting criticism from conservative critics. In 1918 she was the plaintiff in a libel suit against Noel Pemberton-Billing, the founder of a British newspaper called the *Imperialist* (later the *Vigilante*). Billing wrote that those who attended Maud Allan’s private performances were members of “The Cult of the Clitoris,” and Allan sued

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36 Rachel Galvin, “Margaret Sanger’s ‘Deeds of Terrible Virtue,’” *Humanities* 19, no. 5 (1998). Galvin points out that Sanger printed the newspaper for six months only, at which point she was indicted for obscenity and fled the United States.

37 Shay, *Dancing Across Borders*, 125.

him for obscene libel. His argument, of course, was that only doctors and perverts knew what a clitoris was, so it was not really obscene to the general public.\textsuperscript{39} Despite this and other objections to her morals, however, Allan’s act remained popular and successful.

Allan seemed to be wholly aware of women’s issues. She capitalized on them by appearing to conform to conservative viewpoints on women’s issues in her autobiography. In one chapter titled “A word about women,” Allan curiously argues against women’s suffrage. She quotes a letter from a suffragist, apparently responding to a comment that Allan wrote in the \textit{Daily Mail} stating that she was against women’s suffrage. The suffragist writes, “we have to live under and obey laws in which we have had no voice, and many of these laws are most unfair to women.”\textsuperscript{40} Allan responds by arguing that “a woman can do more from an elevated position in the world of art, by bringing all that makes home beautiful into her husband’s and children’s lives, than she could by casting a dozen votes.”\textsuperscript{41} She qualifies her viewpoint by discussing women’s education, and arguing that every woman has “an absolute right to the fullest development of her mental facilities.”\textsuperscript{42} One benefit of an educated woman, says Allan, is that “she cannot be a real wife to her husband, or a real mother to her children . . . unless she is intellectually and educationally on a level with them.”\textsuperscript{43} It seems that Allan, certainly no housewife herself, tried appealing to the more conservative public by calming fears that she was a dangerous woman like the character she portrayed.

\textsuperscript{40} Allan, \textit{My Life and Dancing}, 110.
\textsuperscript{41} Allan, \textit{My Life and Dancing}, 111.
\textsuperscript{42} Allan, \textit{My Life and Dancing}, 113.
\textsuperscript{43} Allan, \textit{My Life and Dancing}, 114. In this same paragraph, Allan concedes, “Perhaps I . . . am sufficiently old fashioned to believe that the rightful destiny of every woman is to be the wife and mother.”
The placement of what was perceived as a Middle Eastern dance into this time period suggests a notion that whatever twentieth-century perceptions existed about Middle Eastern dance could be transplanted to events that occurred 2000 years in the past. The “timelessness” often ascribed to the Middle East is evoked by the fact that a modern conception of Arabic dance occurs in an ancient time period. Edward Said explains that “in no people more than in the Oriental Semites was it possible to see the present and the origin together. The Jews and the Muslims . . . were readily understandable in view of their primitive origins.” The Middle Eastern dance, then, was misconceived on two levels: the practical and the temporal. It was wrongly interpreted as sexual and seductive, and then relocated to the past.

Isadora Duncan, a dancer contemporary with Allan, also marketed herself as a “classic” dancer and romanticized ancient Greek and Roman ideas. She was criticized for her style of dancing, a drastic departure from classical ballet. One dancer from the Opéra Comique, Carlotta Zambelli, condescendingly commented: “What Isadora Duncan does is not very difficult; one has only to move the legs freely. We could perform her work easily, but the reverse is not true.” Her dances were also seen as highly sexualized, especially when it came to the costumes. A 1922 story in The Sioux City Journal reported on one of Duncan’s performances in Boston:

[The] dance program . . . shocked and disgusted the vast audience because of the lack of costume to such an extent that more than three-quarters of them left the hall, amid the taunts of the daring performer. Many of the audience were young boys and girls, students in nearby colleges and schools of music and art.

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44 Said, Orientalism, 234.
Even the musicians in the Orchestra, accustomed, as many of them are, to audacious dancing, expressed astonishment that nothing was done to curb the performance or that the police did not interfere.

Miss Duncan came on the stage to dance Tschaikowsky's symphony No. 66 [sic.]. Her costume was exceedingly scant, as before stated, and the upper part persisted in slipping down. Later, as the contortions and writhings of the dancer became even wilder, it slipped down only to remain down. The crowd held its breath, for it seemed the dancer would leave behind what little she had left on her body.

It was in the finale of this number that Miss Duncan overstepped all bounds. She came out in a dark transparent gown which left absolutely nothing to the imagination. No attempt was made on her part to add to this gown and hide the extreme nudity when the lights were turned up at the conclusion of this number.46

One of Duncan’s dances, reconstructed and transcribed to Labanotation by Hortense Kooluris, is called “Tanagra Figures.” This dance utilizes Arcangelo Corelli’s Folie d’Espagne (op. 5, no. 12) as its musical backdrop.47 Duncan choreographed this dance, which seems to consist of a series of poses rather than a continuous fluid movement, by using posturings from actual Tanagra statues. Duncan and Allan seem to have developed the idea of classic dancing around the same time, although Duncan’s performing career took flight while Allan was still growing her wings.48 At the time of Duncan’s first classical-oriented dance recitals, Allan was still studying piano with Ferruccio Busoni in Berlin.

Audiences were apt to see the dances they perceived to be of ancient Greece in a positive light. John Ernest Crawford Flitch, in his 1912 study Modern Dancing and Dancers, put forth that to appreciate the curious poses of the ancient dances of India and Egypt it would be necessary to understand the exact spiritual meaning of which those attitudes and gestures were but the symbol. But the dances of ancient Greece,

46 The Sioux City Journal, 23 October 1922.
47 The references to this item cite it as from Corelli’s op. 15 (a work that does not exist), suggesting that it may have been misprinted on program notes at some point, and not caught by the scholars studying Duncan. See Nadia Chilkovsky Nahumck, Isadora Duncan: The Dances (Washington, DC: National Museum of Women in the Arts, 1994), 23, 192-196.
48 A helpful resource is the chronology of Duncan’s career in Loewenthal, The Search for Isadora, 191-200.
by their supreme beauty of movement and their power of rendering all the
gamut of human emotion, are of universal appeal.49

These perceptions of ancient Greek dancing were one reason that Duncan and Allan aligned
themselves with a classic Greek image. The timeless appeal of ancient Greek dance was
thought so powerful that it could transcend all cultural preconceptions. By studying
sculptures and images on Greek artifacts, dancers like Duncan and Allan could present
themselves as continuing “classic” dance in an authentic and unbroken tradition.

Allan romanticizes the idea of timelessness in her autobiography My Life and Dancing
(1908), perhaps to justify her new and provocative dance style. Indeed, the book opens with
a number of rhetorical questions:

“How came it about that you adopted the classic methods of dance?”
“How did you set about acquiring the art of antique dancing?”
“What gave you the idea of reviving the style of the ancients in your dances?”
These are the earliest questions of the curious critic.50

She again emphasizes the idea of timelessness, while ratifying it, in her introductory
chapter:

When I first came to London, one of my earliest friends . . . said to me, “You
danced, I think, in Syracusian groves, and on the slopes of Mount Etna, for
the pleasure of Dorian and Ionian immigrants, when Sicily was a peaceful
colony of ancient Greece. You danced while Theocritus read his idylls in the
Mediterranean twilights, and then you went to sleep—and have wakened
again just now. But you have not forgotten how you danced to the wailing
and the laughter of Sicilian flutes and to the command of Sicilian tabors.”51

Allan responds to this praise (which she probably wrote herself anyway) by praising herself
(again) and emphasizing her constancy as a performer:

50 Allan, My Life and Dancing, 1. My emphases. The reporter from the previously cited account from The New
York Times (23 August 1908) concerning the Salome dinner dance also uses the word “classic” three times to
describe Maud Allan’s dancing. The British delegates of the Berlin conference concluded that “classical dances
make for public immorality.”
51 Allan, My Life and Dancing, 10.
I think I can see the boats from Argolis, seven hundred years before Christ, landing their companies upon the Trinacrian [sic.] sands. I can skip five hundred years, and stand at the theatre in Taormina, as it was then, listening to the tired voice of Theocritus . . . reciting the Idyll, compelling my limbs to sway to the music of his thought, whilst the chorus took up the burden of his tale. . . . The Sicily of Theocritus was crushed [in the Carthaginian wars], its groves were hushed and dead, and I—I think they laid me in a little niche beside a stream under the hedges of cactus, and the geraniums strained by the sun-rise—and I waited—waited!


What a wild fancy! and yet—I do sometimes think that I was one of those ancient dancers whose duty in life was to express in motion the hopes, fears, passions, regrets, which rose in men’s and women’s hearts, and found expression in movement when the world was younger, and simpler.

Allan’s writing is a treasure trove of veritable exotic fantasies. She positively assesses immutability by referring to a “younger” and “simpler” world. She even associates herself with idyls—poetic depictions of rustic or rural life—because of the simplicity and pastoral settings they imply. The maudlin “simple existence” of the Other is a common Orientalist trope, notably embodied in the idea of a “noble savage.” The sentiment of the noble savage, a common way for Westerners to view Native Americans in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, romanticized the Native Americans’ “simple” way of life. The notion implied that “humans in the ‘natural’ state . . . were basically good, and that what corrupted such goodness was the influence of civilization itself. . . . The noble savage was naturally dignified, poetic, serene, generous, essentially egalitarian . . . and living in harmony with nature.”

It did not matter that Allan alluded to ancient Greece instead of Native Americans because the values ascribed to timelessness were the same. Ever-aware of the public’s ideals, she used them to her advantage when promoting the “classic” appeal of her dancing.

52 Allan, My Life and Dancing, 11.
Allan’s narrative in the introduction of *My Life and Dancing* mirrors that of Edward William Lane’s *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836). In this book, Lane adopts the role of an “objective” observer of Egyptian culture. In actuality, he was an Orientalist who visited Egypt and wrote as if he understood the entire history of the culture. Lane comments on aspects of Egyptian life such as festivals, laws, magic, and domestic life. Edward Said argues that in *Modern Egyptians*, “the narrative voice is ageless; his subject, however, the modern Egyptian, goes through the individual life-cycle…. [Lane endowed] himself with timeless faculties and [imposed] on a society…a personal life span.” The fundamental difference in the texts, of course, was the goal of each writer. Whereas Lane sought to document a culture and create what Said dubs an “encyclopedia of exotic display,” Allan merely used allegory—certainly nobody thought her Rip-Van-Winkle-esque account to be true—to promote her reputation as a performer. The important connection, though, is that both authors availed themselves of the public’s fascination with the exotic by adopting an omniscient narrative and connoting that the past and present were fundamentally the same.

The International Dance Congress in Berlin, discussed above in the 15 August 1908 article from the *New York Times*, had a specific agenda: to save the waltz, which the conference-goers saw as threatened. The following *New York Times* article, published nearly four weeks before the Salome Dinner Dance report, demonstrates the aim of the conference.

The first international dance congress opened in this city to-day. Delegates from seventeen countries are present, and the main object of the gathering is international action to save the dreamy waltz from falling into disuse.

Representatives of a dozen dancing nations are prepared to introduce evidence that the most beautiful of dances is threatened with extinction. It is

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said composers are driving the waltz into oblivion by writing melodies which are not calculated to preserve the dance in its historic rhythmic beauty.\textsuperscript{55}

With this aim taken into consideration, the conclusions reached by the end of the conference become more poignant. The delegates saw Maud Allan’s dance as threatening, particularly against the waltz. The author of the Dreamy Waltz article mentions the threatened music specifically, but barely implies that the concert focused on the physical portion of the dance. (The Dinner Dance reporter, on the other hand, mentions the physical aspects of Allan’s set more than the music.) It may be safe to assume that the music that accompanied Allan was discussed, in addition to the corporeal accompaniment, which implies a connection between Allan and the waltz. The connection may be Strauss’s “Dance of the Seven Veils,” which could have been seen as a perversion of traditional dances such as the waltz. The music projected erotic and therefore dangerous Oriental qualities that threatened the traditional waltz.

**Strauss’s “Dance of the Seven Veils”: An “Arabic Dance”**

Strauss composed at least one other “Oriental” piece before *Salome*: the one-movement *Arabischer Tanz* for piano quartet. He wrote the piece in 1893 while visiting Egypt for five months. His uncle-in-law Georg Pschorr, to whom the piece is dedicated, sponsored the trip. Apparently, Strauss did not think very highly of Egyptians or their culture. Boyden notes that many of Strauss’s letters contain “dismissive references to [the] ‘backwardness’ of Egypt.”\textsuperscript{56} He criticized almost everything he saw and thought of, and romanticized the past, especially ancient Greece. In one letter, however, he told Hans von Bülow that: “[staying in Egypt] has done me a wonderful lot of good; soul and body gained strength in the glorious clear air of Egypt, the former acquired a wealth of unimagined new ideas, the latter a

\textsuperscript{55} *The New York Times*, 21 July 1908.
\textsuperscript{56} Boyden, *Richard Strauss*, 81.
solidity which I hope will again stand up to the many storms of the north.” In spite of Strauss’s mixed experiences in Egypt, the trip undoubtedly influenced his compositions of *Arabischer Tanz* and “The Dance of the Seven Veils.”

Strauss’s letter to Bülow demonstrates that the trip fortified both his mind and body. Strauss became sick with pneumonia in 1891, which later resulted in a case of pleurisy. The dry air in Egypt helped clear his infection which might have worsened had the composer instead experienced a German winter. Additionally, Bryan Gilliam categorizes Strauss’s voyage to Greece and Egypt as “a kind of Bildungsreise,” or educational journey, that marked “a critical turning point in his career.” Strauss studied, among other philosophical writings, Schopenhauer’s *World as Will and Representation* and completed Act III of his first opera, *Guntram* (premiered 1894). In the opera’s final act, Guntram abandons his Christian brotherhood to pursue his individual path: an idea inspired by Strauss’s reaction to Schopenhauer. This anti-*Parsifal* ending, according to Gilliam, signals Strauss’s abandonment of Wagnerian metaphysics.

*Guntram* failed to receive critical acclaim. The letdown of Strauss’s operatic assay prompted him to seek a different subject matter: the erotic. He teamed with playwright Ernst von Wolzogen to create *Feuersnot* (1901), which roughly means “fire famine.” At first glance, this opera seems to be a satirical mirror-image of *Salome* where the female, Diemut, rebuffs the advances of the male, Kunrad. Diemut publicly humiliates Kunrad, a magician who seeks revenge by extinguishing all the fires in the town. The fires can only be rekindled if Diemut surrenders to him. After their sexual union in the darkness, fire erupts from

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Diemut's posterior and the magic is lifted from the town. The erotic content of *Feuersnot* caused it to be banned in a number of venues, but it was a success where it was staged in Germany. Bryan Gilliam has recently emphasized the connection between *Feuersnot* and *Salome* by pointing out that Strauss originally intended the latter to be a one-act companion piece to the former. *Feuersnot*’s Bavarian dialect restrained its potential success outside of Germany. *Salome*, on the other hand, employed images and stereotypes that would have been easier to understand. The two most commonly referenced events in the opera were Jochanaan’s decapitation and “The Dance of the Seven Veils.”

As Bryan Gilliam has shown, Strauss’s Egyptian vacation not only sparked a chain of events that led to *Salome*’s creation, but permanently changed Strauss’s world-view. Around this time, he developed a taste for the erotic, and his next two operas had plenty of sexual tang. His *Arabischer Tanz* also shows that he developed ideas about what constituted Oriental music, ideas that found their way into *Salome*.

Typical Oriental markers pervade the musical texture in *Arabischer Tanz*. The piece is in D minor, and consists of one short movement (it takes less than two minutes to perform). The piano part consists of two pitch-classes, D (♭) and A (♯) throughout the entire work. The cello and viola parts similarly play as if they were drones for almost the entire work. Each of these three instruments plays a repetitive rhythm which interlocks with the other parts while the violin adds seemingly improvisatory passages (possibly suggesting

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61 Gilliam, *The Life of Richard Strauss*, 56-108. Gilliam notes the similarities and differences of Strauss’s first four operas, all of which show preoccupation with “the post-Nietzschean notion of an individual in struggle with his or her outer world.” Ibid., 90.
Example 2 shows the opening of the piece, complete with the dedication, and demonstrates that each of the drone instruments rhythmically locks with the other drone parts by repeating a short rhythmic figure. For these parts, the rhythm is more important than the static pitches. Strauss emphasizes this idea by terracing the entrance of each instrument, which makes the listener more apt to perceive the interlocking parts. He also terraces each entrance two measures apart, which clarifies the two-measure grouping that pervades most of the piece.

\[^62\] Luigi Boccherini (1743-1805) used this sort of texture quite often in his compositions, although on a much smaller scale; his “static harmonic modules” usually lasted for 8-16 measures, and employed quasi-periodic or sentential phrasing. The difference is important because whereas Boccherini’s static harmonies alter and demarcate the structure, Strauss’s (in this piece) pervade the entire piece and create a framework to accompany the “improvisatory” melody.
The two-measure grouping prominently appears in the interlocking drone parts.

Each part has a repeating two-measure cycle that corresponds with the others. (The piano part only repeats one measure, but in addition with the other parts, may be heard to match with them in two-measure groups.) The violin employs mostly two-measure groupings, with some one measure groups. Example 3 demonstrates some melodic fragments played by the violin. The lowered second scale degree played by the violin implies Phrygian mode but, strangely, the E-flat resolves upwards instead of down, and is inflected to an E-natural on the descent. The rhythms, consisting of quick flurries of notes, also serve as exotic markers.
Often, fragments of the melodic groups appear, only to be interrupted by rests and then starts again, but continuing to form a “more complete” melody. (The fragment beginning in the pickup to measure 6 is one instance of this; it is later heard as the beginning of a two-measure group.) This technique imparts a sense of improvisation on the music, as if the player is working out ideas as s/he is playing them. Since only drones accompany the violinist, there might be a sense that s/he is able to work out ideas in this fashion in what might have been heard as a less sophisticated musical texture. Strauss possibly may have demonstrated his perceived value of Arabic or Egyptian music when he wrote this piece.

**EXAMPLE 3** Strauss, *Arabischer Tanz* (selected melodic fragments)

One-measure groups:

mm. 6-7

![One-measure group 1](image1)

mm. 32-33

![One-measure group 2](image2)

Two-measure groups:

mm. 8-10

![Two-measure group 1](image3)

mm. 55-56

![Two-measure group 2](image4)

As the piece nears its conclusion, the viola acquires a melodic profile as opposed to a drone. In response to the viola’s first melody, the violin plays an identical melodic line (example 4). Four measures later, however, the instruments engage in a back-and-forth dialog as they emphatically repeat melodic fragments (example 5). The entrance of each instrument soon overlaps with the other, and the voices gradually lose independence. The
overlapping of the instruments in this final section implies a heterophonic texture, which would have been heard as exotic.63

EXAMPLE 4 Strauss, *Arabischer Tanz* (selected parts), mm. 83-91

EXAMPLE 5 Strauss, *Arabischer Tanz* (selected parts), mm. 95-111

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63 Donald Mitchell, for instance, points out that in “Der Abschied” from *Das Lied von der Erde*, Mahler uses “counterpoint in which one voice is trailed by its replica [heterophony], projected above static harmony” to evoke Chineseness. Donald Mitchell, *Gustav Mahler, Songs and Symphonies of Life and Death: Interpretations and Annotations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 62.
*Arabischer Tanz* musically resembles “The Dance of the Seven Veils.” Both works employ stylistic markers that were typically used to represent musical exoticism. *Arabischer Tanz* is more reminiscent of the beginning and end of Salome’s dance. The quartet is marked as *schnell* and maintains a driving energy all the way through. The end itself is marked *immer schneller*, gaining tempo and intensity much like the end of Salome’s dance.

These musical features are not necessarily “authentic” Arabic features. Strauss may have imitated music that he heard while in Egypt, but it is just as likely that he wanted to thank Pschorr by writing a piece that the sponsor of his trip would have understood to be “Arabic.”

The music of “The Dance of the Seven Veils” is the only portion of *Salome* that is “self-contained,” with its own internal structure. There are numerous musical markers of cultural difference in the dance, many of which are distinct Middle-Eastern markers. The orchestration is telling of the difference of the music. Melodies and motifs that are given Oriental treatment are for the most part played by the oboe and the flute. The melody often shifts to notes of shorter value unexpectedly, and the oboe and flute are treated somewhat soloistically in certain sections (see example 6). The very beginning of the dance employs the same ostinato technique of *Arabischer Tanz*, with instruments playing interlocking pedal tones or repeated two- or three-note gestures. Given the similarities between the pieces, Strauss may have intended for the dance to be heard as Arabic.
Example 6, the beginning of Salome’s dance (save the fast introduction), shows two recurring motives; one played by the oboe and the other by the flutes and viola. The oboe part uses a minor mode but with a Lydian inflection (raised $\hat{4}$). This creates an augmented second between $\hat{3}$ and $\hat{4}$ and is also enharmonically equivalent to the lowered $\hat{5}$ played by
the flutes and viola. These two motives combined strikingly resemble the opening melody of *Arabischer Tanz* (see example 2). Both melodies have modal inflections and quick flurries of notes. The more esoteric resemblance is the three-note rising figure in both pieces. Each figure rises quickly into a rest and is repeated until the concluding part of the phrase. Both figures use a prominent inflected note that signifies an exotic scale. (The note is E flat in both cases, although a different scale degree in each context.)

The two-measure melodic fragment shown in example 7 is often repeated in the fast sections of the dance. It first appears in the viola eleven measures after the beginning. Like the small melodic fragments of *Arabischer Tanz*, it is often repeated immediately after its first statement at least once. It also gives the impression of ascending to an unresolved note.

**EXAMPLE 7** Strauss, melodic fragment from “The Dance of the Seven Veils”

Using Ralph Locke’s Exotic Style Only Paradigm (see Introduction), I have pointed to some of the more striking similarities between these two pieces. Strauss conformed to stereotypical musical treatment of the Orient with these pieces and the musical profiles are strikingly similar. It is plausible to suggest that Strauss either had his *Arabischer Tanz* specifically in mind when he composed Salome’s dance, or that while in Egypt he developed particular notions about Arabic music which he recalled for this opera. Strauss’s penchant for eroticism developed at the same time and may have influenced his perceptions of the Orient. Using Locke’s Full Context Paradigm, “The Dance of the Seven Veils” also reveals the dangerous side of Salome. Given the context, the implication is that her treachery arises from her Otherness.
Near the end of the dance, the stage directions instruct Salome to “halt an instant in visionary attitude near the cistern where Jochanaan is imprisoned.” The music here foreshadows Salome’s request for Jochanaan’s head and her final monolog (see example 8). This musical idea leitmotivically appears in various transposed forms and is almost always in the woodwinds, with a few appearances in the brass. Some other notable points where it occurs are immediately after Salome demands Jochanaan’s head (the half-step trill figure only), when Herodias steals the “Death Ring” from the First Soldier’s finger, in various points during Salome’s final monolog, and when she kisses the severed head. Judging from its recurrences, this motive is linked with Jochanaan’s death as well as Salome’s deadly lust. The conspicuous appearance of this musical idea at the end of her dance conflates her eroticism with her dangerousness, recalling the trope of the dangerous Other.

EXAMPLE 8 Strauss, Salome excerpt (concert pitch, selected parts), “Dangerous Motif”

The erotic aspects of Salome conflict with Strauss’s later assertion that she be a “chaste virgin . . . played with the . . . most restrained of gestures.” Strauss recognized the malleable aspect of Salome’s personality and revised his conception of the character in later years. Allan, on the other hand, stressed Salome’s timelessness and appealed to female viewers in order to gain reputation. She also allied her act with those of popular “classic”

64 “Salome verweilt einen Augenblick in visionärer Haltung an der Cisterne, in der Jochanaan gefangen gehalten wird.” See the section of Salome’s dance marked Etwas langsamer.
65 Strauss, Recollections and Reflections, 151.
dancers such as Isadora Duncan. Strauss and Allan used Orientalist discourse to shape their individual conceptions of Salome, highlighting the fact that the Other could be constructed in any way and still maintain its Oriental status.

In Chapter 3, I expand my view of the opera to include the other Oriental characters who have escaped critical assessment under this context. I have shown that Salome’s identity was always shifting, and that some of these identities formed sharp contrasts with one another. Chapter 3 will demonstrate that the other characters of the opera were constructed and understood by means of alterity, or in other words, sharp contrasts of identity, an idea that harkens back to G.W.F. Hegel’s conception of identity.
CHAPTER 3: IDENTITY AND ALTERITY IN SALOME

In this chapter, I demonstrate how particular characters (Jews, the Nazarenes, and John the Baptist) in Strauss’s Salome contrast with each other. Specifically, I show how Jews are delineated as Others through the musical discourse, the text itself and the alterations Strauss made to the original textual material. Each group in the opera displays its own identity, and this identity is partly defined by the contrast with at least one other character or group of characters. The contrasts between Jochanaan, the Jews and the Nazarenes uncover Strauss’s and his audience’s attitudes towards Jews. Strauss’s portrayal of these characters ultimately conforms to widely-believed cultural stereotypes that were present in Germany at the time.

Despite being racially Jewish, neither Salome nor her family are portrayed as Jewish. The common belief that Salome’s family was not practicing Judaism may have prevented them from being musically portrayed as such. Herod was educated in Rome (his father, Herod the Great, was a Roman citizen), and did not ethnically identify himself as Jewish. As portrayed in the Bible, Herod Antipas (the Herod in Salome) was fascinated with the mysticism of religious figures, but did not seem to have firm religious beliefs (see for instance Luke 9:7-9 in the appendix).

Herod was known for reconciling the beliefs of the Jews with those of the Romans, who allowed him to rule. Theologian Morten Jensen demonstrates that this idea of dual appeasement appeared in early twentieth-century scholarship. Walter Otto’s 1913 entry in the Paulus Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft reports “Hellenistic and

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1 For an overview of Herod’s life, see Harold W. Hoehner, Herod Antipas (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1972). Pages 12-17 outline Herod’s ascension to power and concludes that his rule “needed to be ratified by the [Roman] emperor.” The city Tiberias, founded by Antipas ca. 20 C.E., was modeled after Greek cities, named after a Roman emperor, and angered Jews of the region because it was forcibly populated and built atop a cemetery. See Hoehner, Herod Antipas, 91-109.
Jewish elements in the reign of Antipas.”² For instance, the official currency did not depict Herod’s face, as was customary, because this would have violated the second commandment (as interpreted by Jews at this time).³ They instead depicted a palm branch, or myrtle, which holds significance in the Jewish faith in association with Sukkot.⁴ Interestingly, myrtle is also associated with Aphrodite, so Herod may have intended to appease both pagan and Jewish beliefs at the same time.

Whether grounded in fact or derived from the few accounts of Herod’s life, retrospective views of the tetrarch generally depicted him as an ineffective ruler who owed his power to Rome. A pseudo-authentic representation of Herod’s court materialized in Salome’s staging. The stage design for the premiere was “by the court theatre artist, Emil Rieck, [and] was strangely historical, with a marked architectural emphasis.”⁵ One important feature of the stage design was the lion statue located on the banister of the palace staircase. Historically, the lion was the symbol of the strength of the Jewish state. The symbol may also allude to Greek origins such as the famous lion gate at Mycenae from 1250 B.C.E.⁶ Roman architecture circa 30 C.E. (when this story takes place) saw Greek influence, and upper-class Romans as well as Jews often spoke Greek. This staging, then, may have

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² Morten Hørning Jensen, Herod Antipas in Galilee: The Literary and Archaeological Sources on the Reign of Herod Antipas and its Socio-Economic Impact on Galilee (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 37-38. Otto listed several factors that imply a mixing of Jewish and pagan beliefs, including the ways that Tiberias was built and governed. See ibid.
³ According to tradition, Jews were unable to depict living things, or they would risk violating the second commandment. This tradition changed as time passed; fauna was eventually allowed to be depicted, followed by animals and imaginary creatures (e.g. humans with bird heads), and eventually humans.
⁴ Baruch Kanael, “Ancient Jewish Coins and Their Historical Importance,” The Biblical Archaeologist 26, no. 2 (1963): 51. During Sukkot, Jews would traditionally make pilgrimages to the Temple in Jerusalem. The myrtle was a symbol for one of the Four Species that Jews used to construct Booths while wandering the desert after the Exile. The lulav and etrog are two of the Four Species that are more commonly known today.
⁵ Rudolf Hartmann, Richard Strauss: The Staging of his Operas and Ballets (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 33. For a color sketch of the stage design, see ibid.
alluded to the Roman influences on Herod’s rule in Judea. This is the same relationship represented by Herod’s coins.

The lion symbolism present in Rieck’s staging highlights that, although Herod ruled over Judea, he owed his power to the Roman Empire. Perhaps the biblical subject matter inspired interpreters of the Salome legend to make veiled historical references to give the story a flair of “authenticity.” This would also account for Wilde’s biblical-sounding language that may have reminded audiences of the “truth” behind the play. This may have contributed to the perception of the characters in Salome as truly exotic figures, not merely creations by modern Europeans.

It is worth noting that the Romans, perhaps the most hegemonic characters in the opera, stay silent throughout. Strauss was aware that their presence on the stage would still have an impact on the dynamics of the drama. In 1942, Strauss wrote:

Herod in particular must remember, amidst the comings and goings of the hysterical crowd, that he should endeavour, oriental parvenu though he is, to preserve his dignity and composure before his Roman guests, in imitation of the greater Caesar in Rome, notwithstanding all momentary erotic misdemeanour.7

Strauss’s comment confirms the perceptions that Herod owes his power to the Romans, and was a lesser ruler than his Roman counterparts. Morten Jensen notes an 1873 German study that depicts Herod as “slack, lazy, and extremely phlegmatic.”8 This sort of depiction was common and found its way into Wilde’s Salomé.

In Wilde’s play, Caesar’s ambassador, Tigellinus, speaks a few incidental lines. This character did not survive Strauss’s cut. His lines portray him as boastful and cavalier, fitting characterizations for an aristocratic figure in a position of power. Herod, on the other hand,

8 Jensen, Herod Antipas in Galilee, 35-36.
seems hungry for the ambassador’s approval of his own opinions. Commenting on the suicide of the young Syrian, Tigellinus and Herod hold the following dialog:

**Herod:** That [the Syrian’s suicide] seems strange to me. I had thought it was but the Roman philosophers who slew themselves. Is it not true, Tigellinus, that the philosophers at Rome slay themselves?
**Tigellinus:** There be some who slay themselves. They are the Stoics. The Stoics are people of no cultivation. They are ridiculous people. I myself regard them as being perfectly ridiculous.
**Herod:** I also. It is ridiculous to kill oneself.
**Tigellinus:** Everybody at Rome laughs at them. The Emperor has written a satire against them. It is recited everywhere.
**Herod:** Ah! He has written a satire against them? Caesar is wonderful. He can do everything. It is strange that the young Syrian has slain himself. I am sorry he has slain himself.⁹

Although the Romans lack lines in Strauss’s version, they were present on the stage as evidenced from photographs of the premiere (see figure 5). In a way, their presence is a powerful way to demonstrate their hegemony. While the antics take place between the other characters, the Romans remain serious and do not get involved. This contrasts with Herod, the ruler of the court whose incompetence leads to the political error of Jochanaan’s execution. Herod’s goal to preserve his dignity and composure fails because, as Strauss says, he is a parvenu.

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⁹ Oscar Wilde, *Salome*, translated by Lord Alfred Douglas, in *The Importance of Being Earnest and Other Plays* (New York: Oxford University, 1995), 76.
At least one Roman can be seen sitting on Herod’s left. There may possibly be two behind Herod as well. Also notice the blackface actors under the archway. See detail below (figure 5a). Photograph available at <http://www.isoldes-liebestod.info/Isolden_ohne_Liebestod/Wittich_Marie.htm> (accessed 30 November 2010). See similar photographs in William Mann, *Richard Strauss: A Critical Study of the Operas* (London: Cassell, 1964), insert between pages 74 and 75. Also Derrick Puffett, ed., *Richard Strauss: Salome* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 6. No attribution is given in either source, and the pictures are clearly from the same series as Figure 5.
FIGURE 5a Detail of the Original Dresden Production
Herod's Oriental court also had characters that Germans particularly saw as outsiders. Wilde's play depicts the Jews and the Nazarenes as prone to arguing amongst themselves. Strauss's music aptly portrays the arguing Jews (but not the Nazarenes) in a part of the opera called the “Jew Quintet.” Here, each of the five Jews takes a different stance on some part of biblical lore. When they argue, their text is set to music in such a way that the individual diatribes are incomprehensible. In Germany, the rhythmically complex and dissonant music would have been heard as modernist and hence, as Karen Painter argues, Jewish. The prophetic Nazarenes, on the other hand, sing in conventional harmony with each other instead of nonsensically arguing about different interpretations of the Bible. This contrast, an invention of Strauss's not present in Wilde’s play, made the idea of an Oriental court more believable to audiences that saw Jews as Others.

The portrayal of the Jews in *Salome* reflects Strauss’s anti-Semitic attitude, which he developed early in his life. In 1880, when he was only sixteen, he signed a petition stating that “German Jews should be categorized as second-class citizens.” In 1891, Strauss wrote to Cosima Wagner about *Parsifal* suffering from the “services” of Hermann Levi, the Jewish conductor of Bayreuth. He even wondered if the opera would ever “be let out of the Jewish torture chamber.” At this point in his life, Strauss may have ascribed to the surrounding notion that Jews were not capable of the same feats as gentiles.

Strauss had long and successful relationships with Mahler and Hofmannsthal, Jews who did not observe Jewish practices. As Boyden points out, when Strauss heard of Mahler’s death, he wrote in his calendar “The Jew Mahler could still find elevation in

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Christianity.” Despite his anti-Semitic attitude, Strauss held at least some respect for Mahler, perhaps partly because of Mahler’s willingness to surrender his Jewish identity. Strauss may have been willing to set aside his prejudices if he could benefit from his relationship with a Jew.

Audiences, especially those in Germany, understood Strauss’s negative portrayal of Jews in Salome. Karen Painter argues that the “Jew Quintet” in Salome (shown partly in example 10 and discussed below) spawned “anti-Semitism and the debate over Jewish-German identity.” This was largely due to the modernist counterpoint in the quintet, which stood in stark contrast with traditional compositional methods. In particular, German audiences associated Schoenberg and Mahler with this style. Critics rebuked their music (and by relation, the composers themselves) in anti-Semitic terms.

The German premiere of Schoenberg’s First String Quartet (op. 7) occurred in Dresden in 1907, with Salome appearing in the same music festival the night before. The “Jew Quintet,” particularly the counterpoint used therein, inspired audiences to criticize Schoenberg as a Jew. Painter argues that the “rhythmic differentiation of contrapuntal lines” in op. 7 contributed to the contemporary perception of Schoenberg using modernist or “Jewish” counterpoint.

An example of the rhythmic differentiation that Painter may have been referencing can be seen below (example 9), where each part is seemingly independent. Especially prevalent is the triplet figure in the first violin paired against the dotted-eighth and –

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16 Painter, “Contested Counterpoint,” 205.
sixteenth figure in the viola (mm. 72-73). Audiences may have heard similarities between
Schoenberg's complex-sounding counterpoint and the counterpoint associated with the Jews in *Salome*.

**EXAMPLE 9** Schoenberg, String Quartet no. 1 (op. 7), mm. 69-73

Schoenberg performed popular cabaret music from 1901 to 1903 with the *Überbrettl* cabaret company, which was active in Vienna and Berlin. He also composed the *Brettl-Lieder*, cabaret songs, in 1901.  

This influenced the public to see him as a “non-assimilated” Jew. Mahler, who also received criticism that referred to his Jewish status, was still seen as an “assimilated” Jew. Critics cited Mahler’s Sixth Symphony, the Viennese premiere of which occurred two weeks before Schoenberg’s opus 7, as representative of the composer as an assimilated Jew. In 1906, Friedrich Brandes wrote that Mahler’s “talents bring him no inspiration but ideas and combinations.” Brandes thus depicted Mahler as a stereotypical Jew being intellectual and unemotional. Strauss’s music for the Jews in *Salome* reveals

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18 He also converted to Protestantism, which was popular in Northern Germany, but in Vienna Catholicism dominated. This contributed to Schoenberg still being seen as unassimilated.
these same traits. It is rhythmically complex and perhaps an exercise in compositional rigor, and would have therefore been heard as Jewish.

During the “Jew Quintet,” which occurs while the party has assembled on the terrace, five Jews engage in an exaggerated theological argument. Each Jew gives his own interpretation of some archaic subject related to God and disagrees with the previous statement. Herod sparks the argument by saying that John the Baptist has seen God, and the First Jew responds to him.

**First Jew:** That cannot be. No one has seen God since the Prophet Elijah. He was the last one who saw God face to face. . . .

**Second Jew:** In truth nobody knows if Elijah in reality has seen God. Most probably, it was only the shadow of God that he saw.

**Third Jew:** God is at no time hidden. He shows Himself at all time and in all places.

. . .

**Fourth Jew:** You shouldn’t say that, it is a very dangerous doctrine coming out of Alexandria. And the Greeks are Pagans.

**Fifth Jew:** Nobody can tell how God works. His ways are very dark. We can only bow our heads to His will, for God is very mighty.  

Although he eliminated nearly 40 percent of the play’s text, Strauss chose to keep this scene, which does not serve to advance the plot in any way. Perhaps this is an indication as to just how deliberate Strauss’s characterization of the Jews was meant to be.

After each Jew has his say, all five sing their contrasting opinions in comically indiscernible unison (see example 10 below). Here, Strauss constructs an identity for the Jews using musical markers that specifically treat them as Others. Strauss drew one marker from *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, where Wagner “scored the Jewish caricature Beckmesser as a baritone while forcing his voice into the realms of the Heldentenor.”  

Strauss’s quintet consists of four tenors and a baritone, each singing high, rapid notes and counterpoint.

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21 Translation in Nico Castel, *Four Strauss Opera Libretti* (New York: Leyerle Publications, 2002), 314-316. Castel provides a literal translation, and I changed the word order in some parts to make the text idiomatic (this applies to all translations from Castel).

intended to be “comical” and representative of Jewishness. The high range alluded to the femininity associated with Jews (as a result of circumcision, which mistakenly was equated with castration).

While the Jews sing notes that are dissonant together, the strings sustain a D-flat dominant-seventh harmony and the winds play a figure that chromatically descends, then leaps up and descends again. Each part is rhythmically and melodically independent, a trait that came to represent Jewishness in music during the early twentieth century. There are disjunct melodies and chromatic inflections that also serve as markers of Jewish identity. The hurried rhythms in the wind instruments might evoke a sense of anxiety or unease. One telling musical marker is the drone bass, which was used not only to represent Jews, but nearly any non-European other at the turn of the century, in accordance to the ideology of the German and Austrian audiences of the time. Jews were seen as outsiders, or impostors, in Europe, so using familiar musical markers that normally depicted non-Europeans (of nearly any variety) was a natural way to construct and undermine Jewish identity.

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EXAMPLE 10 Strauss, Salome excerpt (concert pitch, selected parts), rehearsal 200

In addition to their internal squabbling, the Jews in Salome are also portrayed as outsiders when other characters refer to them. One instance is when Salome leaves the party and enters the scene on the terrace. She relishes in the “sweet air” and feels that she can now “breathe freely.” While she sings this, the music is lyrical and consonant, capturing her feeling of refreshment and freedom. Immediately after this, she comments on the guests at the party, starting with the Jews (rehearsal 26). She says, “There are the Jews . . . ripping
one another apart over their foolish sacred rites.”

The music at this point is quite contrasting. When she sings about “ripping one another apart,” the music is dissonant and disjunct, and the harmonies are not tonally functional (see example 11 below). This example displays some of the same characteristics as example 10, including a drone bass, disjunct melodies, chromatic inflections, and hurried rhythms in the winds. (Not pictured below are the rhythmically distinct contrapuntal lines which sound in the measures following this example.) In addition to these surface features, a deeper musical symbolism can be established by analyzing the harmonies and voice leading of this example. The features of this music again serve to construct an identity for the Jews which, as we will see, contrasts with the music of the “Christian” Nazarenes. Pitch class set theory lends itself well to highlighting the voice leading, prominent intervals and musical grouping and I will use it to highlight the characterization of the Jews.

**EXAMPLE 11** Strauss, *Salome* excerpt (concert pitch, selected parts), rehearsal 26

In the orchestra, the tetrachord [59T0] (an F-major chord with an A sharp added, first heard on beats 1 and 2 of the first measure in example 11) moves to the tetrachord

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[68E2] (a G-sharp half-diminished seven chord, first heard on beats 3 and 1 of the first and second measures respectively). The voice leading between each tetrachord is designed to highlight the more dissonant interval classes. Furthermore, each tetrachord is divided into two dyads, stressing the dissonant interval classes within each harmony. Finally, Strauss draws attention to these dyads by constructing the first dyad of each tetrachord from set-class (03) and the second dyad from (04).

The first tetrachord, [59T0] or (0237), has an interval class vector of <111120>. The most dissonant of these intervals, interval class 1 (the minor second and/or major seventh), is highlighted because pitch-class \{T\} is sustained in the bass while the next pitch-class above it is \{9\}. This pitch-class is also repeated in the second dyad (while \{T\} is still sustained in the bass), so interval-class 1 is sounded with both dyads. Also, sustaining \{T\} in the bass while doubling \{9\} allows Strauss to stress interval classes 3 and 4. This minor-third/major-third relationship is the most salient feature of this tetrachord. Strauss stresses these intervals not only by constructing each dyad from (03) and (04), but also by the movement between each dyad. The bottom pitch of the first dyad is transposed up a minor sixth (interval-class 4) to create the bottom pitch of the second dyad. The top pitch of the first dyad is transposed up a major sixth (interval-class 3) to the top pitch of the second dyad. Therefore, not only are interval classes 3 and 4 present between the vertical pitches of each separate dyad, but they are also present in the voice-leading between dyads. This highlighting of the major-third/minor-third connection, which connotes a polytonal relationship, may suggest the divisions present between the beliefs of each Jew.

The second of these tetrachords, [68E2], also suggests the highly divided theology presented by the Jews. First, neither tetrachord shares a common pitch class. Also, the
interval class vector of the second tetrachord is <012111>. When comparing the interval class vectors from both chords, the most dissonant interval from the first tetrachord (interval class 1) is omitted, but another dissonant interval (interval class 6) takes its place. Thus, each tetrachord contains one of the two most dissonant intervals possible. This contrast may suggest not only that the beliefs of the Jews are divided, but that these beliefs are “wrong” either way they are interpreted.

Finally, when both tetrachords are combined, they create an octachord from set class (01345679). This octachord has a fuzzy relationship with the octachord (01245679), with a small difference of one half step. This octachord is abstractly complementary to the tetrachord (0237), or the first tetrachord. So, taken as a whole, this octachord displays an interval class vector that is proportionally related to the first tetrachord. The intervals sounding as a whole resemble the intervals that accompany the individual tetrachord. Using this relationship as a metaphor, the music suggests that the combined beliefs of the Jews in this scene are just as divided and ridiculous as their individual beliefs.

Immediately following the “Jew Quintet,” the music of the Jews is sharply contrasted with the music of the Nazarenes. The Nazarenes, followers of Jesus and therefore as “Christian” as anyone could be circa 30 C.E., sing in consonant harmony when discussing their beliefs. They sing, “The Messiah has come and performs miracles everywhere. He changed water into wine at a wedding in Galilee.”\textsuperscript{26} Their music is proud and heroic, lyrical and expressive. The short interjection of the Jews, “[The Messiah] has not come!” (referring to the belief that Jesus did not rebuild the temple, therefore he cannot be the Messiah), is more like a shout than a melody. Also, Herod’s interjections, expressing

\textsuperscript{26} Castel, \textit{Four Strauss Opera Libretti}, 318.
his mistrust of a man that can raise the dead, are far from lyrical. The Nazarenes begin their
dialog a short time after the Jews have finished with their quintet. The distinct musical
styles, and their proximity to each other, again construct a Jewish identity by highlighting
the alterity between the Jews and the Nazarenes. By characterizing the Nazarenes in a
positive light, the music draws a line between which characters are Others and which are
not.

Strauss differentiates Jochanaan from the other characters by giving him more noble
music. The prophet’s music is very similar to that of the Nazarenes. His first entrance
(rehearsal 11) is signaled with timpani, and his singing is accompanied with lush sonorities
in the trombones and horns. The brass section accompanying Jochanaan may be
functioning as a “halo” to signify his holiness, in a way similar to what Leonard Bernstein
has identified in Bach’s *Saint Matthew Passion*, where Jesus is always accompanied by a
“halo of strings.”27 The sustained harmonies can be seen just in the few measures of
example 12. It is one of the few times in the opera where a character’s melodic line is
accompanied by a homophonic texture. The brass section plays harmonies that are drawn
out over several measures while the prophet sings consonant pitches. In contrast to the
surrounding music, the harmonic rhythm of this section is much slower. Jochanaan’s
melody is also more conjunct than those of the characters around him. Although there are
secondary harmonies emphasized, the passage does not modulate, it stays firmly in A-flat
major. In order to demarcate Jochanaan’s morality, Strauss abandons the constantly
modulating contrapuntal texture that is present throughout almost the entire opera. This

27 In his recorded discussion of the music (the final track of the compact disc), Leonard Bernstein refers to the
strings accompanying Jesus’ recitatives in Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* as a “halo of strings” to signify His
holiness. J.S. Bach, *St. Matthew Passion*, dir. Leonard Bernstein, 2 compact discs, Sony Classical B00000I0W3,
1999.
This excerpt is also distinguishable because it is more like an aria than part of an endless melody. Jochanaan is not having a dialog with the other characters; he is preaching. The beginning and end of his prophecy are clearly delineated. His melodic line even ends on the tonic of his “aria” and is emphasized by a suspension (see example 12 below). The implications of this kind of treatment can be interpreted a couple of different ways. One is that the music is highlighting the “out-of-placeness” of Jochanaan himself. In an opera where every character has some sort of perverted characteristic, he is the one admirable character. In contrast to this idea, the music may also be pointing out the absurdness of Jochanaan’s holy preaching in this opera. The characters themselves comment on this absurdity. After Jochanaan is done preaching, a soldier comments “it is impossible to understand what he says.” Jochanaan’s preachings fall on deaf ears, as his prophecies are deemed absurd and ignored by the other characters.

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28 Castel, *Four Strauss Opera Libretti*, 287.
EXAMPLE 12 Strauss, *Salome* excerpt (concert pitch, selected parts), rehearsal 14

The musical characterizations in *Salome* form distinct identities for the Jews, Jochanaan and the Nazarenes. The alterity displayed between the Jews and the followers of Jesus is an important part of defining an identity for each: one identity is understood partly through another contrasting identity. Since these specific contrasts were not present in Wilde’s play, it is evident that Strauss created these relationships himself in order to negatively characterize the Jews. To accomplish this, he used musical markers with which his German audience would have been familiar.
CONCLUSION

Salome’s intersection with the fin-de-siècle ideas of decadence and the femme fatale caused a resurgence of popularity that lasted well into the twentieth century. The story’s alignment with Oriental attitudes began with Gustave Flaubert’s Hérodias. Wilde and Strauss incorporated this into their versions, which differed from Flaubert’s because of the varied characters they included. The numerous retellings of the story demonstrate its propensity to illustrate different identities for the same character.

As has been shown in Chapter 1, Wilde drew his characters from a colorful literary tradition where the motives and relationships between the members of Herod’s court were subject to varying interpretations. The many accounts of the story demonstrate that Salome’s degree of innocence in the act of John’s beheading seems not to matter when she is punished for the deed. The erotic tension between Salome and Herod is an ever-present factor due to the seductive intentions of her dance. The strange sexual attraction of Salome to John the Baptist, often thought to be the invention of Wilde, appears as early as Nivardus’s medieval poem. It is evident from these facts that inklings of early twentieth-century characterizations, often thought to be original to that time, can be found in earlier accounts.

In the late nineteenth century, Salome’s newly-acquired Oriental identity made her an apt subject for the gaze of audiences hungry for the exotic. The sexually-charged “Dance of the Seven Veils” became the focal point of Salome’s representations. Maud Allan’s international success, Vision of Salome, appealed to different populations for different reasons. As evidenced by the commentary of Allan and her critics, she allied her act with the in-vogue style of “classic dancing,” further evoking the faraway times and places of
antiquity. Strauss had a different idea, constructing his Salome to fit the archetype of a Middle Eastern seductress not unlike Flaubert’s personal Egyptian sex machine Kuchuk Hanem. This confirms my assertion that, although Salome was clearly seen as Oriental, her identity was still in a state of flux during the early twentieth century.

Using binary concepts found at the core of Orientalism—identity and alterity, Self and Other—Strauss constructed the rest of Herod’s court to resemble appropriate stereotypes. My analysis shows that the hegemonic Romans contrasted with the depraved rule of Herod, and the prophetic Nazarenes formed the antithesis of the squabbling Jews. The former idea was present in Wilde’s play while the latter was invented by Strauss, obviously betraying the German perceptions of Jews at the time. Even though Salome was a Literaturoper, Strauss still portrayed the characters as he interpreted them. From the earliest accounts to Strauss’s opera, one important aspect of the story holds constant; the identity of each character shifted as easily as the wind-caressed sands of a desert dune.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX: BIBLICAL ACCOUNTS OF ST. JOHN’S BEHEADING

Matthew 14:1-12:  
1 At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the report about Jesus.  
2 "This is John the Baptist!" he told his servants. "He has been raised from the dead, and that's why supernatural powers are at work in him."  
3 For Herod had arrested John, chained him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife,  
4 since John had been telling him, "It's not lawful for you to have her!"  
5 Though he wanted to kill him, he feared the crowd, since they regarded him as a prophet.  
6 But when Herod's birthday celebration came, Herodias' daughter danced before them and pleased Herod.  
7 So he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask.  
8 And prompted by her mother, she answered, "Give me John the Baptist's head here on a platter!"  
9 Although the king regretted it, he commanded that it be granted because of his oaths and his guests.  
10 So he sent orders and had John beheaded in the prison.  
11 His head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother.  
12 Then his disciples came, removed the corpse, buried it, and went and reported to Jesus.

Mark 14:14-29:  
14 King Herod heard of this, because Jesus' name had become well known. Some said, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that's why supernatural powers are at work in him."  
15 But others said, "He's Elijah." Still others said, "He's a prophet—like one of the prophets."  
16 When Herod heard of it, he said, "John, the one I beheaded, has been raised!"  
17 For Herod himself had given orders to arrest John and to chain him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married.  
18 John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife!"  
19 So Herodias held a grudge against him and wanted to kill him. But she could not.

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because Herod was in awe of John and was protecting him, knowing he was a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard him he would be very disturbed, yet would hear him gladly.

21 Now an opportune time came on his birthday, when Herod gave a banquet for his nobles, military commanders, and the leading men of Galilee. 22 When Herodias' own daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask me whatever you want, and I'll give it to you." 23 So he swore oaths to her: "Whatever you ask me I will give you, up to half my kingdom." 24 Then she went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" "John the Baptist's head!" she said. 25 Immediately she hurried to the king and said, "I want you to give me John the Baptist's head on a platter—right now!"

26 Though the king was deeply distressed, because of his oaths and the guests he did not want to refuse her. 27 The king immediately sent for an executioner and commanded him to bring John's head. So he went and beheaded him in prison, 28 brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. 29 When his disciples heard about it, they came and removed his corpse and placed it in a tomb.

Luke 3:19-20: 19 But Herod the tetrarch, being rebuked by him about Herodias, his brother's wife, and about all the evil things Herod had done, 20 added this to everything else—he locked John up in prison.

Luke 9:7-9: 7 Herod the tetrarch heard about everything that was going on. He was perplexed, because some said that John had been raised from the dead, 8 some that Elijah had appeared, and others that one of the ancient prophets had risen. 9 "I beheaded John," Herod said, "but who is this I hear such things about?" And he wanted to see Him.