Two Beheadings and a Haircut:

The (Mis) Treatment of Biblical Women in *Belle Époque* Painting

Katie Louise Sproull

MA (Hons)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MTh.

Theology and Religious Studies

Word Count: 39935

School of Critical Studies

College of Arts

University of Glasgow

September, 2017

ABSTRACT

This thesis is playfully entitled "Two Beheadings and a Haircut" due to my focus on three biblical women: Salome and Judith, who each belong to a 'beheading narrative' and Delilah, who hacks off a man's hair. Throughout this thesis, I examine nine diverse paintings from the *Belle Époque* period and analyse why artists from an assortment of cultural movements approach these characters similarly; eroticising and vilifying them as femmes fatales. I will consider the artists' respective motives for the (often drastic) modifications of biblical narratives and investigate why they emphasised or ignored specific facets of the characters' pretextual and metatextual personalities.

I will explore the biblical texts of each respective figure and her on-canvas life using three case studies per woman. I also approach these paintings while foregrounding the historical, social, and political contexts of each artist, and the influence such conditions had on their perceptions of women. This thesis is interdisciplinary in nature and I have conducted research into each artist's life, the social movements and political situations of their countries, and their influences from literature, theatre, and other artists.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

particular Elena Schroll who met with me to discuss their *Battle of the Sexes* exhibition and helped me access their research material.

The University of Glasgow's Theology and Religious Studies department has been my second home for five years now – through my undergraduate degree, and now my MTh. I want to thank the staff across the department for their continuous support and enthusiasm – it is a fantastic department to conduct research in, full of passionate and committed people. I would like to give a special thank you to Doctor Samuel Tongue and Doctor Scott Spurlock for their enthusiasm regarding my research, for building my confidence in academia, and for our engaging, entertaining conversations over the years!

Finally, I want to thank my parents Daniel and Michele, and my girlfriend Fiona, for their constant love and enthusiasm. This thesis would not be complete without them cheering me on (and thankfully not questioning my research route.) I will always be grateful for their encouragement and the support they provided during the past two years.

LIST OF PLATES

1. *The Apparition*, Gustave Moreau, 1876. Watercolour, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.
2. *Salome*, Henri Regnault, 1870. Oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
3. *Salome I*, Franz von Stuck, 1906. Oil on canvas, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich.
4. *Salome*, Max Oppenheimer, 1913. Oil on canvas, private collection.
5. *Judith I*, Gustav Klimt, 1901. Oil on canvas, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna.
6. *Judith*, Jean-Joseph Benjamin-Constant, approx. 1885-1886. Oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.
7. *Judith*, Gustav-Adolf Mossa, 1904. Watercolour and pen on paper, private collection.
8. *Samson and Delilah*, Gustave Moreau, 1882. Watercolour, Musée National Gustave Moreau, Paris.
9. *Samson and Delilah*, Max Liebermann, 1902. Oil on canvas, Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main.
10. *Samson Taken Captive,* Lovis Corinth, 1907. Oil on canvas, Landesmuseum, Mainz.

Disclaimer: As several of my paintings are not public domain and I cannot obtain copyright permission, I have elected to remove all images from the electronic/print thesis submitted to the University of Glasgow library. I will provide a link to each work in their respective sections.

INTRODUCTION: HERE'S TO THE WOMEN WHO WHIP

The art of the *Belle Époque* (1871-1914)[1] was bursting with women who stab, bite, dominate, and induce intense pain on the men with whom they share their canvas. Many of these figures were direct interpretations of biblical characters due to an extensive range of textual sources which feature powerful women thriving among, and often overpowering, the blessed-by-the-LORD masculine heroes and tyrannical antagonists. The characters were particularly susceptible to mistreatment by male artists if she triumphed over a man, regardless of her original framing as villainous or heroic. As this thesis suggests, I examine three biblical narratives which feature *something* being chopped off – either flesh or hair. Women do the cutting, while men suffer under their hand, and are set up to lose in a highly gendered fight. The biblical "Battle of the Sexes" is either intellectual; guided by the female character's wit and cunning, or driven physically through her violent or (sexual) actions. In this thesis I analyse the femme fatale trope and why it became particularly significant in the *Belle Époque*. I will explore the histories, inspirations, and motivations of the European artists who chose to mould biblical women into femmes fatales. Using nine case studies from a variety of artistic movements, I examine the male appropriation of heroines and independent women, and why artists transform these characters into "women who whip." I argue these paintings should not be regarded as simply pornographic, and that there are socio-political, religious, and even bigoted motivations which exist beyond the face value fetishisation.

During the *Belle Époque*, there was a development of several cultural movements, and artists often took inspiration from mythological and religious source material, especially in

---

[1] The *Belle Époque* or beautiful era is regarded as the period from the end of the Franco-Prussian war in 1871 to the start of World War One in 1914.

regard to beautiful, deadly women. This was especially common in the Symbolist movement, which Norbert Wolf describes as 'a spiritual cult of beauty that stood in opposition to the prevalent materialism and utilitarianism of the day.'[2] The Symbolists were concerned with spirituality and reacted against the realism of their culture.[3] Their art reflected these intentions, as they 'refused objective representations of the world, employing fantasy, myth and allegory as their chosen subjects.'[4] They represented biblical subjects to a heightened extent; setting their narratives in altered realities, while emphasising their female characters' beauty and exhibiting them erotically. These biblical women were otherworldly fantasies – untouchable, yet still threatening due to the power they exude. Helen Hansen and Catherine O'Rawe comment that in Symbolist art of the nineteenth century, 'representations of fatal women drawing upon the archetypes of religion and myth – Judith, Delilah, Lilith, Salome, Circe, Medusa – proliferated.'[5] These particular characters were not selected randomly; the artists wanted to display dangerous and fatal women for their fantasies. While Symbolists addressed the trope of the femme fatale regularly, it was not restricted to the movement: French Academic Painters, Orientalists, Impressionists, and Expressionists also were known to produce work which featured this eroticised, often vilified figure.[6] The femme fatale manifested in a variety of forms, from orientalist princesses and Amazonian warriors to vapid fashionistas and dominatrices. Each of these women were gifted with a wealth of power, confidence, and a strength which was either intellectual and cunning, or physical and brutal. However, as an accompaniment they were also cursed with a relentless mistreatment which I will explore as this thesis unfolds.

---

[2] Norbert Wolf. *Symbolism*. Cologne: Taschen, 2016. 9.
[3] E.g. work produced by nineteenth century French academics.
[4] Jess Sully. "Challenging the Stereotype: The Femme Fatale in Fin-de-Siecle Art and Early Cinema." In *The Femme Fatale: Images, Histories, Contexts*, edited by Helen Hansen and Catherine O'Rawe. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. 48.
[5] Helen Hansen and Catherine O'Rawe. "Cherchez la femme." In *The Femme Fatale: Images, Histories, Contexts*, edited by Helen Hansen and Catherine O'Rawe. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. 3.
[6] I address paintings from each of these movements throughout this thesis and detail what the movements were in their respective sections.

Before introducing the characters I have selected as case studies, I will first turn my attention to a woman who must not be ignored in any study of the femme fatale. The character in question is Eve: the apple of every misogynist's eye, as classical interpretations of her narrative allow them the opportunity to blame women for practically everything. In Genesis 3, Eve and Adam are dwelling in the Garden of Eden post-creation, when a snake tempts Eve to eat fruit from the one tree God prohibited them from:

> The serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. (Gen 3: 2-6.)[7]

This passage is a significant reason for the condemnation of women and serpents alike, with the latter subsequently viewed as a physical manifestation of evil. The close association of Eve with the serpent also caused the reptile to become a major motif of femmes fatales. An artist from chapter one, Franz von Stuck, had a proclivity for wrapping women in snakes, and one of his most popular paintings, *The Sin* (1893) features an Eve-like figure embraced by a sinister serpent. The textual Eve listened to the serpent which resulted in her expulsion from the Garden, and problems for future generations such as painful toiling for men, and agonising childbirth for women. Elizabeth K. Menon notes that 'the common understanding of Eve as a femme fatale who caused mankind's downfall through her voice and sexuality was not a notion put forward in the Bible; rather, it evolved gradually through the writings of successive theologians.'[8] The text does not mention Eve's sexuality, however the encouragement she gives Adam to eat the fruit

---

[7] Throughout this thesis I will use NRSV translation unless stated otherwise.
[8] Elizabeth K. Menon. *Evil by Design: the Creation and Marketing of the Femme Fatale*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006. 18.

propels her into a temptress role. Tempting has connotations of sexuality, perhaps through its synonymy with seducing. Menon produces various examples of early judgments of Eve such as that of Augustine, who recast Eve 'as lacking the moral character to discern the devil's disguise'[9] and Tertullian who 'had already extended Eve's guilt to all women with the statement "Do you not know that every one of you is Eve?".'[10] Menon also notes John Milton's additions to the narrative in *Paradise Lost*: Eve's physical hunger and beauty which seduces Satan.[11] By grounding her desires in human physicality, this adds a new dimension to the narrative and to subsequent condemnations of women: beautiful women are sinfully appealing.

Eve does not disappear from culture at any point, and remains a persistent figure in the twenty first century; presented with plenty of snakes and apples to accompany her. The snake represents evil in popular culture, supported by modern fantasy novels such as the *Harry Potter* series where the serpent is a symbol of villainous characters.[12] Apples are the most common "forbidden fruit" given to innocent people by dangerous women, as seen in the Brothers Grimm's *Snow White*. Furthermore, in Jerome's Latin *Vulgate*, the word *malum*, translated as 'evil' in Genesis 3, can also be translated to 'apple', meaning the two words became heavily associated from as early as the late fourth century.[13] Menon stresses the importance of Eve in the *Belle Époque*, stating that 'the motif of the *fille d'Eve*, or "daughter of Eve," became a charged symbol in nineteenth-century France. In one sense, all women were considered metaphorical daughters of Eve. The nineteenth-century use of the term did not simply refer to a biblical episode, but rather carried a connotation of

---

[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] In particular Voldemort's "Dark Mark" has a tongue-like serpent protruding from a skull. See J.K Rowling. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000. 115.
[13] Paul J. Kissling. *Genesis Volume 1*. Joplin MO: College Press, 2004. 193.

evil.'[14] Characters (and real women) who shared similar qualities to the cultural Eve were called daughters of Eve, although the term was also used to describe women in general, not just femmes fatales. I will reference Eve throughout this thesis, but instead of the mother femme fatale, I will focus on successive biblical temptresses; women who are found in the same category as Eve. These textual *filles d'Eve* trigger the downfall of men and are presented as alluring, sexual, and ultimately dangerous.

Biblical Characters: Narrative Summary

The three women I have chosen to study in this thesis are Salome, Judith, and Delilah, each classified as a femme fatale in the period of the *Belle Époque*. My first chapter will focus on Salome, a character who appears in two locations: Matthew 14 and Mark 6, although she only emerges for a couple of verses in each as an unnamed girl. These passages present the events leading up to John the Baptist's death. The Baptist condemned the marriage of King Herod and his wife Herodias, but Herod would only imprison him as he feared the public's reaction of John's execution. Herod's birthday celebrations mark a textual turning point, as he was so pleased by his stepdaughter's dance, he 'promised on oath to grant her whatever she might ask' (Mt 14:7). Herodias, who despises John the Baptist due to his criticisms, then prompts her daughter to request the head. Gail Corrington Street writes, 'there is in Matthew and Mark the story of a wily and powerful woman who has the ability to seduce a ruler into doing evil despite his apparent intention: that woman is Herodias.'[15] The villainess of this narrative is Herodias, however she is almost forgotten by artists in the nineteenth century in favour of her daughter, who is given the name Salome.[16] I will

---

[14] Menon. *Evil*. 17.
[15] Gail Corrington Streete. *The Strange Woman Power and Sex in the Bible*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997. 149.
[16] I will explain the origins of Salome's name in chapter one.

explore what attracted *Belle Époque* artists to Salome and why her personality was twisted to include a sadistic sexuality. Salome dominated culture during this period, with the creative obsession (entitled *Salomania* by Nancy Pressly)[17] rising due to the interest of the French Symbolists. Furthermore, the popularity of Salomania was solidified as artists from a variety of movements were enamoured with her and wanted to retell her narrative in their own way.

The second chapter will focus on a woman called Judith, who also belongs to a beheading narrative. The Book of Judith is deuterocanonical and features a heroine who is one of the most frequently painted biblical women.[18] The book recounts the story of a widow named Judith who entered an Assyrian (enemy) camp, intending to kill the general Holofernes, who had been leading a campaign against her city Bethulia. Judith is emphasised as a strong, intelligent, and spiritual woman, who shows initiative when she instructs the Elders, ʿstand at the town gate tonight so that I may go out with my maid; and within the days after which you have promised to surrender the town to our enemies, the Lord will deliver Israel by my hand' (Jdt. 8:33). At this point, Judith prays for God's protection and power, and then the narrative shifts to her "mission" in Holofernes' camp. Through her beauty and charm, Judith is treated as the guest of Holofernes, attends his banquet, enters his tent and after Holofernes passes out from drink, she makes her move:

> She went up to the bedpost near Holofernes' head, and took down his sword that hung there. She came close to his bed, took hold of the hair of his head, and said, "Give me strength today, O Lord God of Israel!" Then she struck his neck twice with all her might, and cut off his head (Jdt. 13:6-8).

With the strength of God on her side, Judith kills the enemy general by beheading him, and quickly returns to display Holofernes' head to the citizens of Bethulia. Kevin R. Brine

---

[17] See: Nancy L. Pressly. *la belle dame sans merci*. San Antonio: San Antonio Museum of Art, 1983.
[18] Deuterocanonical books appear in the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Old Testament but are not part of the Hebrew Bible nor Protestant Christian scriptures. (See New World Encyclopaedia).

notes that 'the author of the Book of Judith makes it amply clear that the beheading of Holofernes was an act of war and uses the celebratory scene of the presentation of the head to establish Judith as a military heroine.'[19] She is recognised as a powerful woman in the narrative and her act of beheading is traditionally regarded as more heroic than villainous.

Judith is often compared to Jael (Judg 4-5), who invites the commander Sisera, an oppressor of the Israelites,[20] into her tent with the intention of killing him. Sisera was seeking a place of solace and instead meets his brutal end when Jael drives a tent peg into his skull: another "headache" case. I chose to focus on Judith over Jael as Judith's pictorial appearances were abundant during the *Belle Époque*, and Jael was not painted much. This period also saw the rise of Judith as a femme fatale; this trope overpowering her earlier characterisation on canvases. Artists and scholars attach both the femme fatale (seductive) and the femme forte (strong) labels to the pair, but prior to the nineteenth century Judith was more forte than fatale. Both women appeared on canvases as femmes fortes during the Renaissance and Baroque periods, however artists in these eras (such as Salomon De Bray)[21] also applied characteristics of the femme fatale to Jael, most likely because textually she has no clear motive for the murder.[22] Judith was celebrated in the sixteenth century for her military actions and her piety, while Jael existed on a precarious position between fatale and forte, as her narrative was emphasised as being 'about a woman's use of sexuality to overmaster a man.'[23] Judith does not experience this fatale/forte dualism to

---

[19] Kevin R. Brine. "The Judith Project." In *The Sword of Judith: Judith Studies Across the Disciplines*, edited by Kevin R. Brine, Elena Ciletti and Henrike Lähnemann. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2010. 8.

[20] See Judges 4: 2-3. Sisera was a commander under King Jabin of Canaan and their regime is described as cruelly oppressive.

[21] J. Cheryl Exum. "Shared Glory: Salomon De Bray's Jael, Deborah, and Barak." In Between the Text and the Canvas: The Bible and Art in Dialogue, edited by J Cheryl Exum and Ela Nutu. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009. 11-37.

[22] Jael's husband Heber had an alliance with Sisera's King (Judg. 4: 17) and this may have left them vulnerable to imprisonment if they did not prove their allegiance to the victor of the battle; the Israelites. See Exum. "Shared Glory." 19.

[23] Pamela Tamarkin Reis. "Uncovering Jael and Sisera: A New Reading." In *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*, 19:1 (2005): 24-47. 24.

the extent Jael does during the Renaissance and Baroque periods, and artists become relatively disinterested in the pair in subsequent centuries. However, during the *Belle Époque* Judith resurges more prominently than Jael and the femme fatale label is swiftly applied to her.

My final chapter will feature Delilah from Judges 16, who is infamous for her actions against the biblical strong-man Samson. Delilah is an independent woman who defies the biblical norm of introducing a woman through her connection with a man; i.e. 'daughter of', 'wife of' or perhaps 'mother of.'[24] Even if the female figure is the protagonist of the narrative, such introductions mean that a woman is usually still associated with a lesser known male. Delilah is a mysterious figure from the Valley of Sorek, who has no origin narrative nor family, and only appears for a limited portion of Samson's chronicle, which extends from Judges 13 through to 16. As Exum reminds us, 'the entire biblical story of Samson and Delilah consists of a mere 18 verses, and just over 300 words in the Hebrew.'[25] Despite this, Delilah's narrative remains culturally significant across all artistic mediums, from visual art and film, to music and theatre. The Samson and Delilah story is often interpreted as a tempestuous love-hate tale full of violence, betrayal, and vibrant sexuality. The reality of the text is that Delilah is employed by the Philistines, Samson's enemies in the narrative, to discover the secret to Samson's strength: 'the lords of the Philistines came to her and said to her, "find out what makes his strength so great, and how we may overpower him, so that we may bind him in order to subdue him"' (Judg. 16:5). In a series of attempts, Delilah coaxes out "answers" about the secret of his strength from Samson, only to discover that he was lying each time. Through her 'nagging' (Judg. 16:16), Delilah learns that Samson's hair had never been shorn and he reveals, 'if my head

---

[24] Mieke Bal. *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987. 50.
[25] J. Cheryl Exum. *Plotted, Shot, and Painted: Cultural Representations of Biblical Women*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996. 180.

were shaved, then my strength would leave me' (Judg. 16:17). Delilah waits until Samson is asleep and (with a man's help)[26] she shaves his hair to weaken him and make him vulnerable. The consequence of Delilah's actions is that Samson is captured, has his eyes gouged out, and is made to grind in a mill until he is summoned to the temple to entertain his enemies. Samson prays to God to regain his strength and uses leverage against pillars to pull the temple down, crushing everyone inside, including himself. The only person who has an ambiguous fate is Delilah. She disappears from the narrative after Samson is captured and it is not known whether she is killed in the temple, or has returned to the Valley of Sorek.

Delilah is the lone "hairdresser" among the "beheaders" of this thesis; there is no decapitation, nor does the dagger penetrate Samson's skin, but he still loses a vital "organ" in his narrative. Samson's hair is the source of his strength, and its loss renders him vulnerable to his enemies' attack and death becomes an inevitability. In the case of Judges 16, a sharp knife to the hair is symbolic for a sword to the neck: both result in death, either instantaneous or eventual. Bram Dijkstra comments, 'given the poor muscle man's fate, she might as well have lopped off his head at the same time and thus spared the foolish womanizer his humiliating consciousness of his emasculation.'[27] For Dijkstra, Samson's haircut is an ordeal symbolic of castration which occurs prior to his final demise. Exum notes that there is psychoanalytic symbolism in the Samson narrative, with a 'connection between cutting the hair and castration established by Freud.'[28] This castration connection is a significant reason Delilah's plot is associated with Salome's and Judith's. All three

---

[26] 'Person' in NIV and 'man' in NRSV and KJV. Generally interpreted as a soldier or servant by artists.
[27] Bram Dijkstra. *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986. 375.
[28] J. Cheryl Exum. *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub) versions of Biblical Narratives.* Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993. 77.

narratives feature sharp weapons being used to cut off something; whether flesh and bones, or hair.

Development of Biblical Sexuality with Regards to the Femme Fatale

Belle Époque versions of the biblical characters have significantly wilder and more thriving sex lives compared to any of their predecessors; textual or pictorial alike. Regardless of whether there is any intercourse in the biblical narratives, artists created a variety of intensely erotic interpretations in this period.[29] Dijkstra notes, 'the painters show Delilah crawling like a panther to her prey, appreciatively pawing Samson's mane in anticipation of her success, or otherwise simply as a regal figure enthroned, the ideal image of a dominatrix.'[30] In the nineteenth century Delilah (along with Judith and Salome) all enter a new profession; they become dominatrices. Representing biblical women as sex workers was not uncommon prior to this period,[31] but depicting them as dominatrices was a new concept. This was related to the rising interest in alternative sexual practices, and the production of erotic novels such as *Venus in Furs* (1870) by Leopold Sacher-Masoch.[32] Prior to the *Belle Époque*, there was evidence of sadomasochistic behaviour; for example Kathy Sisson comments, 'medical literature from seventeenth-century Europe referenced flagellation as a means to shorten the male refractory period and as a remedy for erectile

---

[29] E.g. Frank Eugene, *Adam and Eve*, 1898/99., Max Klinger, *Eve and the Future/The Serpent*, 1880., Jeanne Mammen, *Salome*, 1908-14., Lovis Corinth, *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife*, 1914., František Drtikol, *Salome*, 1924.
[30] Dijkstra. *Idols*. 375.
[31] E.g. Exum's description of *Samson and Delilah* (1609-10) by Peter Paul Rubens in *Plotted, Shot, and Painted*, 1997. 192.
[32] An Austrian writer who regularly addressed the theme of sadomasochism. The term 'Masochism' is derived from his name – coined by the German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing in *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886).

dysfunction and female lack of desire.'[33] Flagellation in association with sexuality was becoming increasingly common and well documented between the seventeenth and nineteenth century,[34] however it was the transforming social sphere of the *Belle Époque* which meant social interest in dominance and submission paradigms proliferated. Sisson documents that the movement from 'agrarian to urban social organisation provided individuals with newfound anonymity, privacy and contact with diverse populations and behaviours. Industrialization gave rise to dramatized power relations.'[35] Urbanisation and industrialisation, along with the growing interest in sexology from scholars and scientists, contributed to an increased interest in alternative sexuality.[36] I discuss paintings which are a product of this upsurge in every chapter of this thesis.

Venus in Furs offered up a protagonist who not only had erotic fantasies about masochism and submission, but also explicitly fantasised about *biblical* women. Sacher-Masoch and his protagonist Severin were particularly enamoured with Judith, which David Biale observes: 'Venus in Furs commences with the author reading the Book of Judith and halting over the verse: "God punished him and delivered him up to the hands of a woman" (a reference to Holofernes' bloody death).'[37] Judith, Delilah, and Salome all participate in narratives which feature a dominant woman and a man who suffers, and this attracted artists looking to replicate that paradigm on their canvases. Dijkstra suggests a link between Sacher-Masoch's magnum opus and the sexualisation of danger: 'Sacher-Masoch had already signalled out the story of Judith and Holofernes, and the painters rushed in to show why. They tried to document every stage of her encounter with man, the enemy, from

---

[33] Kathy Sisson. "The Cultural Formation of S/M: History and Analysis." In *Safe, Sane and Consensual: Contemporary Perspectives on Sadomasochism*, edited by Darren Langridge and Meg Barker. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan Basingstoke, 2007. 13.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid. 14.
[36] Ibid.
[37] David Biale, "Masochism and Philosemitism: The Strange Case of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch." *Journal of Contemporary History*, 17:2, (1982): 305-323. 319.

the moment she raised her sword in full splendour of her perfidious nudity.'[38] It was less common for artists to include a bloody head in paintings of Judith,[39] and unlike Baroque representations, the sword does not slice through Holofernes' neck, but rather exists as a signifier of violence and pain. While discussing the iconography of sadism, Stefano Zuffi notes, 'these images seem to represent a secret male nightmare or subtle erotic desire, that of falling victim to love, losing one's supremacy and independence, becoming the docile slave of the beloved, no longer hunter but prey.'[40] The paintings of the *Belle Époque* often neglect to show the extreme reality: blood spraying from a fatal wound and agonising pain. The paintings of Salome in this era occasionally feature decapitated heads, and yet this does not seem to deter the sexual interpretations. This is perhaps connected to the necrophilic climax of Oscar Wilde's *Salome* when Salome lifts the severed head of John the Baptist and kisses it. I will argue that death does not equate to concrete physical death in these paintings, but rather the death of male sexual dominance, which is both a fantasy and a phobia of the artists. This "death" is also conclusively connected to the patriarchal fear of losing control in social and political contexts.

Femme Fatale as an Archetype

The concept of the femme fatale as a literary and artistic archetype originated during the mid-1800s. Menon notes that while it is not popularised until the early twentieth century, 'it appears at least as early as 1860 in J. de Marchef-Girard's *Les femmes: leur passé, leur présent, leur avenir*.'[41] While the technical term was not coined prior to the nineteenth century, the idea of dangerous and dominating women has been a fixture across art and

---

[38] Dijkstra. *Idols*. 376.
[39] Although it is not unheard of. See: Gustav-Adolf Mossa in chapter two.
[40] Stefano Zuffi, *Love and the Erotic in Art,* translated by Stephen Sartarelli. Milan: Mondadori Electa S.p.A., 2008. 267.
[41] Menon. *Evil.* 20.

literature. In response to the question of whether the femme fatale is new or old, Virginia M. Allen proposes that 'since many of the names such as Astarte, Salome, Cleopatra, given to the femme fatale a century ago, are drawn from ancient myth and legend, has she not existed perennially in some form, from antiquity?'[42] This is a valid argument, as these figures have permeated culture for thousands of years, however Allen also proposes a counter-case: that the eroticism of the characters intensified in the nineteenth century. They are no longer Titian's or Rubens' nudes; non-fatal sex objects.[43] I would hardly refer to female biblical characters from sixteenth and seventeenth century art as "non-fatal." There are still undertones (and often overtones) of sexuality in paintings which feature violent scenes and dangerous women. In the Dutch Peter Paul Rubens' *Samson and Delilah* (1609-10), sexuality is signified on the canvas through a variety of elements such as Delilah's rumpled clothing and exposed breast, Samson's post coital exhaustion, and a background which is reminiscent of a brothel.[44] Nevertheless, I agree there is an intensified eroticisation of danger in the *Belle Époque*,[45] and the artists' presentation of objectified biblical women showcase the fatal, rather than neglect it. The characters' sexualities are often at the foreground of these paintings; present before, during, and after violent acts are committed. A semi-nude Judith is lost in pleasure, her fingers grasping Holofernes' hair while she orgasms,[46] and a fully nude Salome straddles the tendrils extending from a decapitated head.[47] It is common for a biblical femme fatale to have her narrative altered or textual features omitted by artists to further emphasise the characters' threatening, yet alluring aura. Neither of the above mentioned works accurately portray moments from biblical pretext; nowhere in Matthew or Mark does Salome put herself in a position of necrophilic pseudo-cunnilingus.

---

[42] Virginia M. Allen. *The Femme Fatale: Erotic Icon*. Albany: Whitston Publishing Company, 1983. 6
[43] Ibid. 10.
[44] Exum. *Plotted*. 192.
[45] Allen. *Femme Fatale*. 6.
[46] See Chapter Two: Klimt.
[47] See Chapter One: Oppenheimer.

Iconography of Biblical Femme Fatale Art

One of my main methodological approaches in this thesis is reading the paintings; analysing the setting, the presentation of the characters, and the iconographic features the artists chose to include. Cheryl Exum and Ela Nutu suggest that 'in analysing a visual representation of a biblical text we might, therefore, want to ask what specific textual clues an artist picks up on in order to present a particular interpretation.'[48] The artists from the *Belle Époque* sometimes attempted a biblical-inspired background, including setting and secondary characters which were heavily inspired by the text (e.g. Lovis Corinth), whereas others created new scenes that either related to their personal historical context (Gustav Mossa), their fantasies (Gustav Klimt), or were a particular feature of their artistic movement (Franz von Stuck.) There were also artists who stylised their characters in clothing, hairstyles, and even accessories which were typical of the *Belle Époque* while others attempted to replicate 'biblical' guises by borrowing prints and patterns from a range of Asian and African countries.

There are several iconographic features in paintings which signify the character presented is a femme fatale. Nudity, either partial or full, is an obvious and common feature of these works. Artists may exhibit their femmes fatales' bodies completely on display, or perhaps paint them draped in translucent material. Veils wrapped around a woman's body are often perceived as erotic, as it sparks the imagination about what is hidden. Zuffi suggests, '*I see you, and yet I don't see you*: the diaphanous veil hides and reveals, it alludes and invites.'[49] Therefore a veil wrapped around the woman is as erotic as, if not more than, a traditional nude. The artist may occasionally paint their femme fatale fully clothed, but there will

---

[48]J. Cheryl Exum and Ela Nutu. 'Introduction.' In *Between the Text and the Canvas: the Bible and Art in Dialogue*, edited by J. Cheryl Exum and Ela Nutu. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009. 1.
[49] Zuffi. *Love*. 69.

often be sexual coding in her accessories, the cut or style of the dress, the material, and any weapon she may be holding. Furthermore, the physical position the artist paints his female character in is often indicative of a femme fatale. The pose may not be explicitly sexual, but her body is often twisted into an uncomfortable posture to draw the viewer's attention to certain features of her body. This becomes especially apparent in paintings of Salome which represent her "Dance of the Seven Veils," as her dance pose may appear unnatural to the viewer. The shape of the character's body is intended to show her desirability and indicates why men have fallen into her trap. Exum writes that Delilah, in a seventeenth century painting, is 'displayed for the pleasure of the male spectator, her voluptuousness accounts for Samson's inability to resist'[50] and this can be applied across centuries of visual art, when a woman's body is emphasised as desirable. The setting the artist chose to display her is also significant. Several artists elected to paint their femme fatale in the bedroom to indicate the seduction and sexual qualities of the characters. Zuffi notes, 'a bed with immaculate sheets […] is the very symbol of domestic order, modesty, and chastity. By contrast, a confused tangle of bedcovers eloquently synthesizes a passionate, lively relationship.'[51] While untidy sheets are used to indicate that the characters have engaged in intercourse, there is also the symbolic meaning to consider. These characters are not domestic in *Belle Époque* interpretations, and are neither modest nor chaste; their passion is often extremely violent and a tempestuous bedroom-setting signposts similarly stormy sexuality.

---

[50] Exum. *Plotted*. 190.
[51] Zuffi. *Love*. 98.

Historical Background

My second methodological approach is a thorough analysis of the socio-political context of the artists; their lives, their cultural movements, and their interests and beliefs. I will investigate the *Belle Époque* in Germany, France, and Austria-Hungary to understand why the femme fatale motif was developing, in particular politics (imperialism, rivalries between neighbouring countries, and connection with religion), society (the increased social freedom of women and beginning of female emancipation), and culture (theatre, literature, and art movements). I selected France because the Symbolist femme fatale has its roots in French art and literature. *Les Fleurs du Mal* (The Flowers of Evil, 1857), a series of erotically themed poems by the French decadent poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), has been cited as influential to Symbolism in France.[52] The poems are used as an explanation for the negative attitudes toward women in nineteenth century France through their subversion of 'flower imagery to indicate a fear of powerful new women, whether feminists or prostitutes.'[53] Baudelaire is among several writers who were inspirational to the Symbolist movement and the creation of the femme fatale. Another notable literary influence to the femme fatale is Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848-1907), who also belonged to the French decadent movement. His anti-naturalist novel *A rebours* (*Against Nature*, 1884) created 'a sensation little short of perverse in the art scene in France and rapidly, too, in the whole of Europe.'[54] In the novel, the protagonist Jean des Esseintes renounces in his bourgeois life in pursuit of intellect and artistry. Both literary works are categorised as decadent, and each was influential to Symbolist artists, and the development of the femme fatale trope – a fact I will explore in chapters one and three respectively.

---

[52] Sully. "Challenging." 47.
[53] Menon. *Evil*. 127.
[54] Wolf. *Symbolism*. 7.

I will also address Germany, as artists active in Berlin and Munich focused heavily on the characters' sexualities, often to a darker extent than their French counterparts.[55] Robin Lenman, in her discussion of religious iconography by German artists, notes the 'stripped martyrs painted by Keller, Max and their imitators had obvious sado-masochistic and necrophilic undertones'[56] The biblical characters were frequently painted in a twisted version of their narratives, as the artists sought to create the perfect sadomasochistic fantasy.[57] As I have already stated, the appearance of sadomasochistic content on *Belle Époque* canvases is attributable to urbanisation, industrialisation, and the developing "sexology" field. However, for certain German artists, the use of this motif often appears in relation to the anti-French atmosphere which escalated 'dramatically during the nineteenth due to the Napoleonic invasions, the territorial dispute over Alsace-Lorraine, the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1, and the dominant position of French culture in Europe.'[58] For artists such as Lovis Corinth, the fatal woman, with all her sadistic tendencies, began to represent cultural and political threats to Germany.

A variety of social reasons contribute to the intense production of the femme fatale figure, and Hanson and O'Rawe suggest 'male anxiety regarding the lower classes, foreign invasion and feminism'[59] are particularly influential to *Belle Époque* artists. Artists and intellectuals became increasingly obsessed with themes of gender, sexuality, and the social roles of women. This was particularly due to the development of feminism and the way women began to cultivate new roles for themselves in society. In late nineteenth century

---

[55] For Symbolist artists see: Karl Wilhelm Diefenbach, Max Klinger, Franz von Stuck. Other German artists with similar themes include: Lovis Corinth and Thomas Theodor Heine.

[56] Robin Lenman, *Artists and Society in Germany: 1850- 1914.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997. 88.

[57] See Dijkstra. *Idols,* particularly chapter eleven: "Gold and the Virgin Whores of Babylon; Judith and Salome: The Priestesses of Man's Severed Head."

[58] Robin Lenman. "Art and National Identity in Wilhelmine German." In *Art, Culture, and National Identity in Fin-de- Siecle Europe*, edited by Michelle Facos and Sharon L. Hirsh. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 119.

[59] Sully. "Challenging." 46.

France, Menon argues that women were 'making significant progress in terms of personal freedoms, playing a variety of roles in an increasingly modern society. No longer exclusively restricted to being wives and mothers, women entered the public arena through work and leisure activities, including shopping and participation in feminist organizations.'[60] This interrupted women's restricted social routine and made them more visible outside the domestic sphere. The social independence of women correlated with the rise of the New Woman trope; a term applied to the increasing number of feminists and career women in this society. The concept was not solely used by women, and an important example of male engagement with the New Woman is the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906), who filled his plays with self-sufficient, well written women. However, as Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst argue, 'the icon of the New Woman was double-coded.'[61] They propose there was anxiety surrounding the concept of the New Woman; people were aware of the improvements the archetype could produce for women, such as sexual freedom, democratic progress, and independence. While this was positive progress, there was also a collective fear that the New Woman was a 'warning of the dangers of sexual degeneracy, the abandonment of motherhood, and consequent risk to the racial future of England'[62] and across Europe. Artists began reacting to the concept of the New Woman, parodying, ridiculing, and sexualising it. Lenman notes that 'artists returned constantly to the vampire/femme fatale theme and, with fresh stimulus from Strindberg, Munch and Wedekind, and perhaps with anxieties about the "New Woman" in the background, it lived on in art, literature and eventually cinema.'[63] There is evidence of a correlation between Feminism and the New Woman, and the popularity of femme fatale, which I will explore throughout this thesis. Amidst apparent social upheaval, male artists

---

[60] Menon. *Evil*. 94.
[61] Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst. *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History c. 1880- 1900*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. xvii.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Lenman. *Artists*. 90.

developed and reproduced this archetype with the intent of objectifying women, whilst simultaneously warning unsuspecting men about female power.

The final location which will undergo my methodological scrutiny is Austria-Hungary, due to its cultural link with Germany through shared language, and the status of Vienna as an intellectual hub. The diverse population of Vienna, the city's intellectual community in the *fin-de-siècle*, and its associated anti-Semitism and misogyny, are all important factors to this thesis. In Vienna, a population boom due to immigration, coupled with the highly polarised wealthy-impoverished citizens created an uneasy social situation, as Jill Lloyd argues:

> The extreme contrast between the prosperity of the educated bourgeoisie and the impoverished, illiterate proletariat, together with the heterogeneity of this ethnically mixed population, gave rise less to a melting pot than a "battlefield of national chauvinisms, of ethnic and social opposites, and ultimately, of all kinds of racisms and of anti-Semitism."[64]

This growth in population created a xenophobic climate as criticism of minority groups was unrelenting – especially as theories such as social Darwinism were propagated by intellectuals. Throughout this thesis, I will frequently return to the philosopher Otto Weininger (1880-1903) who produced an influential philosophical book entitled *Sex and Character* (1903). The reception of *Sex and Character* was sharply divided between those who celebrated its content, and those who furiously condemned it. The text has anti-Semitic tones, despite Weininger being Jewish himself, and it is deeply misogynistic. Margarita Stocker summarises that to Weininger:

> Will, force, and intellect were masculine characteristics, whilst passivity and feeling were feminine. In this determinist model of gender, he identified Man as 'form' to Woman's 'matter'; therefore all human beings of whichever sex contained both genders. On the other hand, it was clear that Woman included the

---

[64] Jill Lloyd. "The Viennese Woman: A Community of Strength." In *Klimt and the Women of Vienna's Golden Age 1900- 1918*, edited by Tobias G. Natter. New York: Prestel Neue Gallery, 2016. 17.

lower, Man the higher, characteristics. Man was Will to Woman's Involition, and these Ideas were reflected in the behaviour of real men and women.[65]

Furthermore, he advocated against female emancipation, 'whereby "true feminist" would be antithetical to emancipation and women would assume their "proper" servile place.'[66] I will delve further into Weininger's theories as this thesis progresses, as his views were influential to later treatments of the character Judith.[67] During the *Belle Époque,* Vienna was at the forefront of the field of psychology, as 'scientists and psychologists began to offer new theories of human behaviour and perceptions.'[68] It was also home to Sigmund Freud who, while acknowledging that 'nervousness in women was associated with excessive sexual repression among the Victorian middle classes, […] also believed the psychosexual development of feminists was arrested, suspecting them of bitter jealousy of men and a failure to overcome penis envy.'[69] Freud's theories on gender and sexuality have been applied frequently to the characters in this thesis, in particular castration theory.[70] Although I will not address this, it is important to regard Freud's writing and theoretical output in Vienna, and the influence he had on European artists and thinkers.

The femme fatale archetype is more complicated than meets the eye, as Jess Sully asserts.[71] At base level, it is a trope which resulted from artists producing work with similar themes – sexual, dominant women, who are perhaps exotic. In the case of the biblical femme fatale, no matter what the original text states, she must be shaped to be dominant in her sexuality, strikingly beautiful, and alluringly dangerous. The American John Singer Sargent did not use any biblical pretext when he created his (in) famous femme fatale in

---

[65] Margarita Stocker. *Judith Sexual Warrior: Women and Power in Western Culture*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998. 129.
[66] Lloyd. "Viennese Woman." 20.
[67] Weininger directly wrote on the character of Judith. See chapter two.
[68] Susanne Kelley. "Perceptions of Jewish Female Bodies through Gustav Klimt and Peter Altenberg." *Imaginations* 3:1 (2011) 109-122. 110.
[69] Lloyd. "Viennese Woman." 20.
[70] Brine. "Judith Project." 7-8.
[71] Sully. "Challenging." 47.

The Portrait of Madame X (1884). Singer Sargent submitted the painting to the Paris salon in 1884, and where it received a controversial reception. Sully argues that, 'in Academic art, the femme fatale's depravity provided an excuse to portray a lascivious woman, often nude, whilst her mythical origins allowed the artist to do so without incurring charges of obscenity.'[72] Thus, artists began to flock to classical writing and biblical texts to find characters to represent their fantasies. Exum and Nutu question 'does a painting attempt to represent the biblical story or to reshape it to fit certain interest?'[73] In the case of this thesis, most paintings reshape biblical texts and characters for personal interest. The artists often take the characters and twist them until they are unrecognisable, and may even borrow narrative features and iconography from other biblical texts with similar themes to reinforce their views; the more "deviant" and "dangerous" women they can associate their character with, the stronger their point will be. The on-canvas figures are a mix of cultural stereotypes of women: daughters of Eve who tempt men, narcissistic women who prioritise their vanity, and those whose independence threatens the patriarchal way of life.

It cannot be neglected that the artists refused to sever the connection between character and name, however. They are not simply femmes fatales inspired by the characters' previous personalities (textual and artistic), and they remain "named and shamed." There are several reasons why this is the case: as I stated, using mythological and religious source material lessened the chances of obscenity charges, and artists may have a strong connection to the biblical pretext, such as Sacher-Masoch's desire for Judith. A further point to note is the strange place religion held during the *Belle Époque*, as the 'belief in science and social progress gradually replaced Christianity as a normative guideline'[74] and yet in cities such

---

[72] Ibid. 49.
[73] Exum and Nutu. "Introduction." 1.
[74] Yvonne Maria Werner. 'Studying Christian Masculinity: An Introduction.' In *Christian Masculinity: Men and Religion in Northern Europe in the 19th and 20th Century,* edited by Yvonne Maria Werner. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2011. 7

as Munich, there was still religious censorship against "immoral" themes in art.[75] While I do not directly address the fact that religion appears at the intersection of culture, politics, and social views during this period, it is implicit throughout my chapters. While secularisation was becoming increasingly popular across Europe, many of these artists were influenced by their religious backgrounds. Their works were known to protest the dominant religion of their city, reflect their religious and moral views, or even exist at the intersection between nationalism and religion, which 'frequently intermingled to produce […] nationalist religions and religiously shaped nationalisms.'[76]

As I have stated, one of my main methodological approaches will be the analysis of the socio-political context of the artists, along with their biographies and cultural influences. This approach does not allow for reading against the grain or 'resistance, interrogation and undermining of the dominant ideologies expressed.'[77] While I take a feminist approach during my close reading of biblical narratives and actively critique the misogynistic implications, I do not attempt to deconstruct the images. Andrew Davies writes that 'authors of texts have rhetorical strategies, plans by which they attempt to encode certain ideologies in texts, by a particular means which will give the text in itself what we might label determinative force – the power to influence its readers'[78] and this remains the case with visual artists. Artists have encoded ideologies in their works of art and the purpose of this thesis is to analyse where these views manifest and for what purpose.

I chose nine different (male) artists from a variety of movements: Henri Regnault, Franz von Stuck, Max Oppenheimer, Gustav Klimt, Jean-Joseph Benjamin-Constant, Gustav-

---

[75] See Chapter Three: Corinth.
[76] Werner. "Masculinity." 9.
[77] Andrew Davies. *Double Standards in Isaiah: Re-Evaluating Prophetic Ethics and Divine Justice*. Leiden: Brill, 2000. 13.
[78] Ibid. 18.

Adolf Mossa, Gustave Moreau, Max Liebermann, and Lovis Corinth. I specifically selected artists from a range of dates, movements, and countries to reinforce that the archetype of the biblical femme fatale is not restricted to one particular area, although the artists' motivations and their treatment of the characters can vary. Not all paintings are pleasant and several carry deeply misogynist or racist undertones – products of their era and environment. The *Belle Époque* was the Beautiful Era and the biblical femmes fatales were often beautiful to their artists; however their beauty was deadly, and the canvases carried implications of eroticism, anti-Semitism, nationalism, imperialism, and anti-feminism.

1 SALOME: I WILL KISS THY LIPS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

During the *Belle Époque* Salome underwent a significant personality change in her artistic depictions. The "Seven Veiled" dancing Salome, notorious for seducing and destroying men, was a product of the era although this interpretation was non-existent in the biblical texts; an unnamed girl does dance, but the performance is not necessarily erotic or sensual. Matthew 14 and Mark 6 give a meagre insight into the events which preceded the death of John the Baptist, detailing a royal couple - Herod the Tetrarch and Herodias - who are anxious about the Baptist's condemnation of their 'unlawful'[79] marriage. Herod refused to execute John and instead imprisoned him, which did not satisfy Herodias. The subsequent narrative which paved the way for the Baptist's beheading was Herodias' scheme, committed using a specific tool: her unnamed dancing daughter, culturally known as Salome, due to scholars from later centuries equating her with the girl from Josephus' first century texts.[80] Salome dances at the banquet and earns Herod's approval, along with the chance to wish for anything, resulting in the execution. The dance is interpreted as seductive because Herod rewards her after the performance, however Alice Bach disagrees with the notion of eroticism in the text, arguing 'there is no hint of eroticism or sexuality either in the report of the dance or in Herod's reaction to the young girl.'[81] Herod was pleased with the dance, although it is unclear whether his approval signifies his arousal. The Matthew text states: 'the daughter of Herodias danced before the company, and she

---

[79] Herodias was Herod's brother's wife, and John had told Herod "it is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife" (Mk 6:18).
[80] See Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* XVIII. 5. 4.
[81] Alice Bach. *Women, Seduction, and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. 213.

pleased Herod so much that he promised on oath to grant her whatever she might ask' (Mt 14-6-7). No further detail is offered in either gospel account, however an eroticised dancing Salome is created centuries later in the visual arts.

Prior to the *Belle Époque*, Salome is scarcely seen as a dangerous vamp, however she had been condemned during particular eras. This is generally due to two factors: the primary role of Herodias, and the government, religious, or social reception of (and attitude towards), dance. Helen Grace Zagona comments that 'the first three and a half centuries of the Christian era did not produce stories in any way branding Salome immoral. In this period the guilt of John's death still lay with Herodias, as it had in the Scriptures.'[82] The Gospel texts explicitly make reference to Herodias' influence on Salome; e.g. in Mark, Salome specifically inquires to her mother 'what should I ask for?' (Mk 6:24). Demanding John the Baptist's head was Herodias' idea, and she was regarded as the narrative's main villain prior to the fourth century. Herodias had a more developed background in the sparse texts and a clear reason to dislike John the Baptist.[83] Her marriage to Herod was condemned by John the Baptist and she was the one who nudged Salome toward the idea of beheading. Zagona notes that church leaders (such as St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. John Chrysostom, and St. Jerome) were among the earliest to condemn Salome, 'in their disapproval of dancing, the Church fathers used the Salome story as an example of the evils to which this diversion might lead.'[84] It was this attitude toward dance which caused a shift in Salome's morality: Herodias does not dance, but Salome does. During the fourth century, Salome became a scapegoat for people to condemn while they advocated their anti-dance rhetoric. However, the condemnation of Salome began to dissipate during the

---

[82] Helen G. Zagona. *The Legend of Salome and The Principle of Art For Art's Sake*. Genéve: Droz. 1960. 20.
[83] See Matthew 14: 3-5.
[84] Zagona. *Legend*. 20.

medieval period,[85] though her dance remained and she was frequently stylised as a gymnast. Toni Bentley summarises that 'during the Middle Ages she was an androgynous acrobat, during the Renaissance an exemplar of virgin beauty, and to clerics throughout the centuries, she demonstrated the evil that ensues from a woman who dances.'[86] The socio-religious condemnation of dancing resurged during the sixteenth century, when reformers such as John Calvin emphasised the conviction that dance is sinful. Ann Louise Wagner remarks that Calvin 'continued the centuries-old belief that the devil enticed people to sin through their fleshly nature. In addition, he decried provocative song lyrics that prompted people to dance.'[87] The dance component was an important reason for Salome's vilification; theologians endorsed the view that those who dance were not 'modest, sober, and of sound mind'[88] and therefore Salome was reworked to be immodest, with an insatiable desire which overpowered her rationality.

No era has been as intensely obsessed with Salome as the *Belle Époque*. Artists from different countries and movements participated in "Salomania" and the character appeared across a variety of visual media, from Gustave Moreau's nineteen paintings on the subject to Max Klinger's sculpture *Die Neue Salome (The New Salome,* 1887-88). One of the most significant influences on *Belle Époque* artists is Oscar Wilde, who reinterpreted the narrative in his 1893 play *Salome*. Bach argues that Wilde 'seemed irritated by the "docility" that drives the biblical character of Salome, who demands the head in obedience to her mother.'[89] Wilde abandoned Herodias' influence on Salome, and in his interpretation she was driven by her own motives. Salome is attracted to John the Baptist (Iokanaan) in Wilde's theatrical rendition, although there is no textual basis for this in the Gospels. Her

---

[85] Ibid. 21.
[86] Toni Bentley. *Sisters of Salome*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002. 19.
[87] Ann Louise Wagner, *Adversaries of Dance: From the Puritans to the Present*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997. 27.
[88] Ibid. 28.
[89] Bach. *Women, Seduction, Betrayal*. 239.

desire to kiss Iokanaan is constantly present throughout the text, and she achieves her goal after his beheading.

Wilde's play also offered a newer, seductive interpretation of Salome's dance. Bentley writes 'forever altering her legend, Wilde gave Salome the Dance of the Seven Veils […] Instead of a gymnastic, circus dance on her hands, or a gleeful, maiden dance with a ribboned tambourine as in her medieval renditions, Wilde assigned Salome nothing more - or less - than a striptease.'[90] The "Dance of the Seven Veils" is a startling moment in Wilde's *Salome*, and it demonstrates that she knows exactly how to manipulate Herod. Earlier in the play, Herod had demanded that Salome dance for him, but both Salome and Herodias refused:

HEROD. Dance for me, Salome.

HERODIAS. I will not have her dance.

SALOME. I have no desire to dance, Tetrarch.[91]

Throughout the subsequent scene, Herodias repeatedly asks Salome not to dance for Herod, deviating from the biblical texts. Salome agrees after realising the extent of Herod's desire to watch her dance; Herod pleads to her, 'dance for me, Salome, and whatsoever thou shalt ask of me I will give it thee, even unto the half of my Kingdom.'[92] Salome confirms multiple times with Herod that he will grant her (unrevealed) wish, and asks him to swear it. Herod gives an impassioned speech, celebrating Salome for agreeing to dance, and he declares that this has made her happy. The scene progresses without Salome revealing her wish, a dramatic device which builds suspense with the audience. Kimberly Stern notes that Salome 'becomes a powerful artist who is able to manipulate the actions

---

[90] Bentley. *Sisters*. 30.
[91] Oscar Wilde, *Salome*, edited by Kimberly J. Stern. Tonawanda. New York: Broadview Press, 2015. 73
[92] Wilde, *Salome*. 75

and desires of others.' [93] Salome is aware of Herod's desire, and once his commitment to the oath is confirmed, she proceeds to dance for him – granting him what *he* desires. Herod does not know what he has agreed to, and once the performance ends she reveals *her* desire; Herod is locked into his oath, and he cannot disagree. He must behead Iokanaan.

Wilde's play was influenced by visual interpretations of Salome, and he inspired further artistic renderings of the character. Stern comments that Wilde rejected versions of Salome by artists such as Rubens and da Vinci, 'preferring instead the paintings of Gustave Moreau, who seems to have shared Wilde's obsession.' [94] The classical artists provided demure, even docile characterisations of Salome which did not attract Wilde, as Moreau's provocative interpretation had. Gustave Moreau (1826-1898) was a French Symbolist artist who approached the theme of Salome in twenty six paintings (and at least one hundred and fifty drawings.) I analyse Moreau properly in chapter three, but here I will briefly discuss one of his most admired versions of Salome, *The Apparition* (*L'Apparition*, 1876). [95] This work was first displayed in the Paris Salon of 1876, along with its counterpart *Salome Dancing Before Herod*. Bentley notes that Moreau 'exhibited two startling images of Salome that took Paris by storm and drew over half a million spectators.' [96] *The Apparition* was the more popular of the two paintings, as it offered viewers an alternative portrayal of the Gospel narrative. Michelle Facos writes that 'it represented the unprecedented image of the head of St. John the Baptist levitating in the palace of King Herod.' [97] A levitating head is not found in either of the Gospel accounts, and in Salome iconography the decapitated head is usually being lowered onto a platter, if not already resting on it.

[93] Kimberly J. Stern. "Introduction." In *Salome*, edited by Kimberly J. Stern. Broadview Editions. Tonawanda, N.Y.: Broadview Press, 2015. 10.
[94] Ibid. 22.
[95] Image can be viewed at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gustave_Moreau_-_The_Apparition_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg
[96] Bentley. *Sisters.* 24.
[97] Michelle Facos. *Symbolist Art in Context*. Los Angeles: University of California Press. 2009. 61.

The Apparition features Salome in the foreground, elegantly positioned with her left arm extended upwards. Her body is slightly twisted toward the viewer and her right foot is reminiscent of a ballet pointe. Wolf comments that Salome allows 'her veil to fall within a palace chamber of extravagant oriental splendour. Her graciously extended leg and alabaster eroticism of her body are skilfully emphasized by filigree ornament.'[98] Her costume is specifically styled to be attractive, as she is covered in carefully placed jewels. Brad Bucknell comments that 'her remaining ornamentation has the effect of drawing the viewer's attention to her genitals and breasts, thus outlining what they would conceal while framing the thighs and stomach.'[99] The placement of the jewels and ornaments emphasise her eroticism, which is further accentuated by her exhibitionist position; she is in the process of tempting through her dance. However, Moreau merges two important narrative moments as he includes the head of John the Baptist while Salome dances.

Symbolists were generally unimpressed with naturalism and strove to enhance their paintings with spiritual themes. Moreau set out to alter the *natural* death of the Baptist, which was rooted in the gruesome reality of a beheading, to a super-natural moment. The gore remains (blood dripping from the levitating head) but it is detached from realism: there is no weapon to remind the viewer of the execution, and nor a dead body present. The head of the Baptist emits an ethereal glow, described by Bentley as 'a halo of sexual radioactivity,'[100] which contrasts the pallid, lifeless heads of Baroque art. Salome is not sexualised in the Gospels, but Moreau presents her as a sensual woman. Rodolphe Rapetti writes, 'Moreau's attention to subject matter is crucial – among the writings that fill his notebooks are many ideas for paintings. Some were quite concise, while others were more

---

[98] Wolf. *Symbolism*. 68.
[99] Brad Bucknell. "On 'seeing' Salome." *ELH*, 60:2 (1993): 503-526. 513.
[100] Bentley. *Sisters*. 24.

developed, testifying to research of a literary type.'[101] Moreau did not haphazardly add details to his work, rather he perfected what he wished to display through his writing: he scripted a scene for his canvas. Moreau carefully cultivated *The Apparition*, adding elements of sexuality (Salome's position and costume) and fantasy (the glowing head) to an account which remains entirely unremarkable among the miracles of the wider Christ chronicle; John the Baptist is not resurrected, however Moreau allows him the opportunity to judge Salome posthumously.

Moreau's *The Apparition* was influential on writers and artists alike in the *Belle Époque*. Artists such as the Symbolist Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer[102] were inspired by his treatment of John the Baptist's head. Oscar Wilde is the most notable literary example, as he wrote *Salome* 'while living in Paris, ensconced in the world of the French Symbolists, several of whom played an active role in the play's development.'[103] Wilde cited Moreau's vision of Salome as important to his own interpretation of the character, as did Joris-Karl Huysmans. Huysmans (1848-1907) was a decadent writer who referenced Moreau heavily in his novel *A Rebours* (1884) when 'readers are told that the artist who most ravishes Des Esseintes' senses is Gustave Moreau.'[104] Huysmans' protagonist Des Esseintes purchases *The Apparition* in the novel, and he provides excessive commentary and praise for the work. The novel was described by Wolf as a 'seductive textbook of decadence, as an antidote to the prevailing naturalism of the day.'[105] Moreau had rejected naturalism on his canvas, preferring to create a fantastical version of the character, and this attracted Huysmans.

---

[101] Rodolphe Rapetti, *Symbolism*, translated by Deke Dusinberre. Paris: Flammarion, 2005. 42.
[102] See Chapter One: Oppenheimer.
[103] Stern. "Introduction." 13.
[104] Anne Hudson Jones and Karen Kingsley. "Salome: The Decadent Ideal." *Comparative Literature Studies*, 18: 03 (1981): 344-352. 344.
[105] Wolf. *Symbolism*. 7.

In chapter one I will address three versions of Salome from vastly different artistic movements, beginning with Henri Regnault's *Salome* (1870). Regnault perceives her as a dangerous Princess, and she is orientalised and vilified on his canvas. This version was completed six years before Moreau's *The Apparition*, and twenty three years before Wilde finished his play. Wilde did not appreciate Regnault's vision, and he viewed this Salome as 'a vulgar, coarse seductress rather than the elegant princess of his imagination.'[106] However, I discuss Regnault's *Salome* because it is one of the earliest nineteenth century instances of Salome's characterisation as a fatal woman. I then address the Symbolist Franz von Stuck's depiction, *Salome I* (1905-1906). This painting is post-Moreau, post-Wilde, and establishes her as an erotic figure who dances to seduce. Finally, I will analyse a more obscure artist, the Austrian Expressionist Max Oppenheimer, who creates a violently sexual (and uncomfortable) version in *Salome* (1913). Each artist presents his Salome as threating and carnal, and while these qualities manifest in different formats, they each contribute to Salome's characterisation as a femme fatale.

---

[106] Sully. "Challenging." 48.

1.2 HENRI REGNAULT: THE RISE OF SALOMANIA

The *Belle Époque* began at the end of the Franco-Prussian war in 1871, and around this time the cultural obsession with Salome began. *Salome* (1870) by Henri Regnault,[107] was completed outside the typical dates of the *Belle Époque* (1871-1914), however this 'symphony in yellow major'[108] was instrumental to later artists, as I will soon explain. Therefore, I will refer to this painting a visual precursor to Salomania: gifting later artists an abundance of themes which had seldom been used previously in relation to Salome. Alexandre-Georges-Henri Regnault (1843-1871) was a French painter who belonged to Academicism: art produced by those who attended, were connected to, and were influenced by the European Academies of Art. Regnault specialised in Orientalism, a term which is generally applied to the work of nineteenth century artists who reproduced Asian and North African cultures on their canvases. *Salome* possesses an Orientalist style, visually striking due to Regnault's use of golden tones in the background and on Salome's dress. The work is also brimming with references to a variety of Asian cultures – evident through the background décor and Salome's costume. In this section, I analyse the roots of Orientalism and the influence this movement had on the development of Salomania and the biblical femme fatale.

Salome: **Analysis**

Regnault portrays Salome as a young woman who eagerly awaits the execution of John the Baptist. There is no question about her characterisation on this canvas: she is not the

---

[107] Image can be viewed at: https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/16.95/.
[108] Peltre playfully uses this phrasing in reference to the golden tones of the canvas. See Christine Peltre. *Orientalism in Art,* translation by John Goodman. New York: Abbeville Press, 1998. 229.

innocent daughter of the "wicked" Herodias, nor is she conflicted by her deed – Salome is a woman witnessing her plans come to fruition. Regnault painted his Salome with a vast golden platter resting on her lap: her wish has been granted, but the execution has yet to happen. This is indicated by the absence of John the Baptist's head, and the presence of the execution weapon. The moment displayed on canvas is also post-performance, demonstrated by her dishevelled clothing; unkempt due to the intensity of her dance movements. Her shimmering golden dress falls off her shoulder, the bodice is crumpled, and the skirt falls limply between her spread thighs. Salome's feet are angled in a dancer's stance, positioned carefully to remind Herod *why* she deserves her reward. Instead of exhibiting Salome's dance, Regnault chose to have Salome perch on an ornate box with gold accents, and on the floor rests a fur rug, placed on top of a multi-coloured carpet. These background furnishings are features of Regnault's Orientalism – placed to remind the viewer that the painting's setting is not France. Another Orientalist touch is Salome's costume: her gold garment differs from the fashion of the French public. A deep emerald thread is woven through the fabric of her dress and this matches the serpent bracelet wrapped around her upper arm. The snake motif has connotations with evil, cunningness, and femininity. Menon analyses the connection between women and snakes, arguing 'the association of woman with the devil evolved from interpretations of Genesis that identified the serpent as Satan in disguise. What had originally been a dialogue between Eve and a snake became a conspiracy between Eve and the devil.'[109] Eve and the snake are both associated with evil, which arouses a connection between the creature, other "biblical bad girls," and mythological women such as Medusa. Salome is described as a *fille d'Eve* in the nineteenth century and Regnault's use of a serpent motif strengthens the intertextuality between her narrative and Genesis 3.[110]

---

[109] Menon. *Evil*. 227.
[110] The Fall narrative.

Orientalism: Historical Background

The nineteenth century saw the rise of 'armchair travel'[111] among artists and writers: those who vividly imagined foreign cultures without travelling to any non-European locations. Donald A. Rosenthal argues 'Orientalist art should not be confused with Orient art: it represents the European artist's view of an unfamiliar culture, rather than a view of that culture from within.'[112] The settings were the artists' visions and generally not accurate representations of the cultures they were attempting to portray, as 'few of the Orientalist painters spent a significant portion of their lives in the Near East, and it may be questioned whether any knew its culture really well.'[113] Even those who visited countries outside of Europe were not fully immersed in the cultures, and were tourists who had the prerogative to pick and choose what they wished to portray on their canvases. Furthermore, the setting the painters chose was not usually one particular culture or country, but a fusion of several. Christine Peltre comments on the countries generally used (and mixed) for the Orientalist vision: 'the Ottoman Empire, from Turkey to Egypt and the Danubian Principalities, North Africa, and Persia comprise this more cultural than geographic "Orient," an amalgamation of the Levant (the countries bordering the eastern shores of the Mediterranean) and the Maghreb (the countries of northwest Africa.)'[114] In his relatively short career, Regnault enjoyed creating interpretations of these cultures, and although he personally did not travel beyond Granada, his *Salome* displays his Orientalist vision. The popularity of Orientalism in the Academies was directly related to French Colonialism. Rosenthal comments 'the flowering of Orientalist painting, then was closely associated with the apogee of European colonialist expansionism in the nineteenth century. Many of the French Orientalist painters

---

[111] Peltre. *Orientalism*. 14.
[112] Donald A. Rosenthal. *Orientalism: The Near East in French Painting 1800-1880.* Rochester, New York: Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester. 1982. 8.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Peltre. *Orientalism*. 14.

undoubtedly agreed with the ideals of colonial officials, soldiers, and adventurers in the Near East.'[115] Furthermore, Udo Kultermann pinpoints the rise of Orientalism to Napoleon, stating 'since Napoleon's military campaigns in Egypt and Syria at the beginning of the century, a fascination with oriental cultures from the past influenced much of the European culture.'[116] This campaign took place 1798-1801, and after this period, the presence of Orientalism in French painting increased, as it was 'an aspect of Romantic escapism that continued to thrive long after Romanticism had lost its vigor, because the Near East in fact continued to provide an escape for the restless and adventurous in spirit throughout the century.'[117]

Orientalism and Regnault's *Salome*

Orientalist artists commonly utilised biblical characters to represent their thematic interests, and Regnault's *Salome* is a typical example. Bentley comments, 'by the 1870s Salome was resurrected in an unprecedented glory of paint, poetry, and prose. This return to renown is inseparable from the prevailing passion for the Orient in late nineteenth-century Europe.'[118] Regnault's work was completed at the beginning of the decade of resurrection for Salome, and his Orientalist themes were influential to the femme fatale archetype. Peltre notes that Regnault's *Salome* 'revived interest in the theme and gave it a new currency. Its combination of an Oriental setting, […] with the model's tempting smile suggests new possibilities.'[119] Regnault introduced Salome's sadism and arrogance, and the added sensuality was uncommon before this period. It is necessary to note that

---

[115] Rosenthal. *Orientalism.* 9.
[116] Udo Kultermann. "The 'Dance of the Seven Veils.' Salome and Erotic Culture around 1900." *Artibus Et Historiae*, 27:53 (2006): 187-215. 190.
[117] Rosenthal. *Orientalism.* 8.
[118] Bentley. *Sisters.* 23.
[119] Peltre. *Orientalism.* 229.

Regnault did not initially plan to interpret Salome's narrative; the title was debated during a period of indecisiveness in which Regnault applied several names to the work. Hoffman-Curtius observes Regnault 'considered naming the picture "Hérodiade" (Herodias), then "Femme Africaine" (The African Woman), "Esclave favorite" (The Favorite Slave) and "Poétesse de Cordoba" (The Poetess of Cordoba), before deciding on "Salome".'[120] Each potential name is rooted in Orientalism and 'it was no matter whether she was Spanish or Middle Eastern, queen or slave, only that she was Exotic.'[121] This painting was intended to incorporate the fantasy of exoticism, and Piya Pal-Lapinski states that 'the artist's obsession with renaming the painting […] clearly echoed the metamorphic potential of his exotic subject; a potential expressed through Salome's defiant and enigmatic smile as she balances a sword delicately on her knee.'[122] The name Salome was an almost arbitrary decision: selected as it was the name of a woman from another culture. This particular woman needed to possess a dangerous sexuality and a desire to commit evil deeds, and to Regnault, Salome fitted the mould. The Gospel narratives are used as pretext, and although the woman could have multiple names, Regnault added the sword and platter, both 'relatively late additions to the composition,'[123] to emphasise that she was indeed the New Testament Princess. Regnault wanted to create an exotic woman, but the biblical texts were present in his mind, and thus this painting is firmly a "Salome."

---

[120] Kathrin Hoffmann-Curtius, "Constructing the Femme Fatale: A Dialogue between Sexology and the Visual Arts in Germany around 1900." In *Women and Death – Representations of Female Victims and Perpetrators in German Culture 1500- 2000*, edited by Helen Fronius and Anna Linton. Rochester: Camden House, 2008. 164.
[121] Sully. "Challenging." 48.
[122] Piya Pal-Lapinski. *The Exotic Woman in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction and Culture: A Reconsideration.* Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2005. 7.
[123] Rosenthal. *Orientalism.* 85.

Salome as a Precursor

Regnault's *Salome* is a dangerous woman, capable of stimulating violence and inciting murder through her dance. However, the canvas is a clean version of the narrative, as palpable violence is absent from the scene. However, the lack of direct violence does not negate Salome's sadistic personality. Zagona argues 'Regnault's painting of the dancer was one of the first to interpret the subject in terms of sadistic self-indulgence. Callous and thoroughly sensual, Salome is seated, her dark hair flowing over her smiling face, anxiously awaiting the head of the Baptist.'[124] Regnault's *Salome* is a sadistic Salome who takes pleasure in the violent result of her exploits, and this painting is one of the first which undertakes this type of characterisation. Furthermore, while the inclusion of a fur rug is primarily to emphasise the foreign setting, Hoffman-Curtius asserts 'Regnault also references the animalistic as her feet rest on a tiger skin.'[125] Salome's characterisation is dangerous to the point of feral and, for Regnault, the character is driven by her sexuality and her 'desire to murder.'[126] The animalistic attributes present in paintings of biblical women, such as Regnault's *Salome*, are reminiscent of those being utilised in paintings of mythological femmes fatales such as sphinxes. Salome challenges the gaze of her viewers by staring directly at them, like a predator assessing her prey, and her expression reveals neither horror nor regret. Salome's posture is as confident as her gaze: her hand rests on her hip and her thighs are parted, referencing the power she wields through her seduction. Hoffman-Curtis argues that 'the composition of the painting is such that the viewer is situated as the object of desire for the beautiful harbinger of death. Inevitably, the viewer finds himself faced with the seductive threat of a lascivious demon of biblical origin.'[127] Salome is seductive and those who look upon her all have the potential to become her

---

[124] Zagona. *Legend.* 91.
[125] Hoffmann-Curtius. "Constructing." 166.
[126] Ibid.
[127] Ibid.

victim. If Salome is able to exert her power and influence over a King, then she is a threat all men should fear.

1.3 FRANZ VON STUCK: SALOME'S DANCE OF DREAMS

German artists found themselves attracted to the character of Salome, not unlike those across the border in France. Franz von Stuck (1863-1928) was a German Symbolist who worked with a variety of mediums, from painting and sculpture, to architectural design. Stuck was an active member of the Munich art scene, and a founding member of the Munich Secession.[128] The German Symbolists maintained the same interest in religious, and mythological subjects as their French counterparts and these artists frequently painted biblical scenes. Stuck himself was no exception, and some of his most iconic works were thematically religious; he painted powerful angels (*The Guardian of Paradise*, 1889), eerie crucifixion scenes (*Golgotha*, 1917), and even a version of Lucifer (*Lucifer*, 1890).

Franz von Stuck drew from texts with themes specifically related to gender and sexuality, and was particularly attracted to the theme of *Geschlechterkampf* (Battle of the Sexes). Characters of different genders are found struggling against each other on Stuck's canvases, both physically and psychologically, and his frequent insertion of the snake motif was used to 'communicate the deadly nature of a woman.'[129] Franz von Stuck visually interpreted the narratives of Eve, Salome, and Judith, among others, manipulating the characters to be the perfect antagonists of his gender battles. Tumbling into Symbolist Salomania, as per his contemporaries Lovis Corinth and Wilhelm Trübner,[130] Stuck desired to complete his own interpretation of the character, and he eventually painted three versions of Salome. It was common for Stuck to create multiple versions of the same

---

[128] The Secessionists were a group of artists in Munich (later Berlin and Vienna) who broke away from the mainstream academies.

[129] Menon. *Evil*. 229.

[130] Von Stuck, Corinth, Trübner (among others) were closely tied, as they were founders of the 'permanent "secession" group, its aim being to engage in savant-garde action and help to organize regular exhibitions to display and support an art that was to be independent of authority and of official criticism.' Robert L. Delevoy. *Symbolists and Symbolism*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1978. 102.

character; there are at least two versions of his Judith, and although he infrequently uses the name 'Eve' in the title of his paintings, *The Sin* (1893) and *Sensuality* (1891) have thematic links to Genesis. I will discuss Franz von Stuck's *Salome I* (1906),[131] as it is the largest of his Salomes at 115.5 × 62.5 cm, and is fully accessible to the general public at Lenbachhaus, Munich (the second Salome was 45.7 × 24.7 cm, whereas the third was lost during World War II.[132]) *Salome I* offers a dancing, exuberant version of the character, who is highly eroticised and is represented unquestioningly as a fatal woman.

Salome I: **Analysis**

Stuck's Salome is characterised as a femme fatale who dances and tempts; aware of her eroticism, and she understands exactly how to wield it. Most of the conventional iconography of Salome is featured in this painting: the head of John the Baptist is present, resting on a platter, which is offered up by palace servant,[133] and Salome is performing her dance semi-nude, with her bare chest at the centre of the canvas. Stuck chose to depict Salome in a skirt which partially fans out from her body, indicating she has twirled as part of her routine. Salome's dance has the sensuality of the newly established Wildean "Dance of the Seven Veils" despite the lack of veils on Stuck's canvas. She dances with a dazzling costume, Orientalist jewellery, and a vivacious grin. There are clear links between Stuck's Salome and Wilde's, particularly related to Salome's sexual attraction to John the Baptist. With reference to the Salomes of Stuck and his contemporaries, Nadine Sine argues that 'overwhelmed by sexual excitement she loses self-control in these works, some of which

---

[131] Image can be viewed at: https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/salome/zAFMUUYyQJazIg
[132] Lenbachhaus.de. "Salome." In *Lenbachhaus Research*. http://www.lenbachhaus.de/the-museum/research/restoration/franz-von-stuck/?L=1 Accessed September 12, 2017.
[133] To the modern eye, the servant's portrayal is horrifying due to the explicit racism.

must have been influenced by Wilde's characterization.'[134] Salome has lost control of her emotions and her dance is aggressive, fast, and unrestrained. Furthermore, Salome's expression 'suggests that her sexual excitement results from acquiring the head. By conflating the events, Stuck has forced us to view Salome as a woman who takes her pleasure at the expense of a man's life.'[135] Stuck selected moments from various parts of the narrative to indicate Salome's excitement at the beheading, as she dances while the head is already present. In the Gospels, the performance finishes before Salome requests the head from Herod. For Stuck, Salome either repeats her dance, due to her feelings of triumph and excitement, or he has combined the two moments to reveal more of the narrative than a static pictorial interpretation would allow.

Salome's position is unnatural, made obvious through the angle of her breasts which contrast with her turned away stomach, creating an uncomfortable tautness. This position is beneficial to the viewer/voyeur, who is granted full view of Salome's breasts at the expense of her comfort. She raises one arm exuberantly and rests her free hand on her hip, which juts out provocatively. In the process of the dance, Salome's head tilts to expose more of her neck. The strain of her limbs during the performance is a purposeful attempt to expose several of Salome's erogenous zones simultaneously, to signify her eroticism. In the case of Stuck's Salome, her dance is important to the painting, as 'the liberating, erotic dance is linked to an irrepressible sensuality, with the head of John the Baptist as the object of the woman's lust.'[136] The dance is not a sanitised performance, nor an acrobatic spectacle reminiscent of the images featured in medieval manuscripts or on stained glass

---

[134] Nadine Sine. "Cases of Mistaken Identity: Salome and Judith at the Turn of the Century." *German Studies Review*. 11: 1 (1988) 9-29. 12.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Edwin Becker. *Franz Von Stuck 1863- 1928: Eros and Pathos*. Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum; Zwolle Waanders, 1995. 22.

windows.[137] The dance on Stuck's canvas is the type condemned by theologians such as John Calvin, William Perkins, and Lambert Daneau.[138] There is the ever present fear that as Salome attracts attention with her dance, she will enchant her audience and pollute their faith with her "evil" movements. This is a risk many men were willing to take, including Stuck who harboured the need to control the "uncontrollable."

The setting is as performative as the dance itself, with a dreamy aura that is dark and mystical. The painting has a dark background which is scattered with stars, and Salome's body is contrastingly pale. Her flesh is purposefully light to contrast the background and draw the viewer's gaze, utilising the chiaroscuro technique to an extent. Her skin is an unnatural white shade with a blueish tint, which is unrealistic in relation Salome who, as a woman from the Middle East, might be more appropriately represented with a darker complexion. Becker argues that there is an antithesis 'between body and spirit: Salome's seductive body set against the head of John the Baptist surrounded by a sky-blue halo. Both antipoles stand out brightly against the backdrop of a dark, infinite starry night which elevates the scene to a void, as it were, to a realm above reality.'[139] The "otherworldly" nature of her flesh only heightens the element of fantasy, as does the addition of the halo, which draws the viewer's gaze to the otherwise muted, sallow head of John the Baptist. The significance of fantasy and dream-like elements on Stuck's canvas is important to my argument, as I shall now explain.

---

[137] Zagona. *Legend.* 21.
[138] Wagner. *Adversaries.* xi, 27-28.
[139] Becker. *Franz Von Stuck.* 23.

Dream Dancing: Control of the Psyche

Symbolist artists were intrigued by fantasies and the supra-natural, and it was commonplace for dream/nightmare motifs to be present in their work. In a painting where the subject (Salome) is so active and alert, the dreamy sensuality of Symbolism may be unnoticeable at first glance. However *Salome I* is rooted in dreams: visually through the on-canvas background, and also on a personal note, through Stuck's real life inspirations. The first point I wish to discuss is the visual setting of Stuck's *Salome I*. As I have previously mentioned the background is purposefully dark to make Salome's pale skin more prominent. Across the vast space of the background, Stuck painted a nightscape of stars, scattered and shining, which elevate the moment from the real: there is no palace scene as Salome has transcended beyond the natural. The night sky behind Salome incites the viewer to read the painting as dreamier, and 'warns against imminent danger: the girl's glamour seems close but is out of reach, and there is only cold, deep darkness beyond.'[140] The infinite expanse of space behind Salome may appear heavenly, but it is an empty void in which those enchanted by Salome's dance will become lost.

Franz von Stuck's personal fascination with the spiritual and supernatural was also a significant factor in the production of this painting. Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker notes that Stuck's 'interest in dreamlike or trance states was documented in 1904, however, when […] psychiatrist Dr. Albert von Schrenk-Notzing invited the "dream dancer" Madeline Guipet to perform at Munich's Schauspielhaus theatre.'[141] Madeline Guipet was known as a dream dancer; discovered after undergoing treatment from magnetist Emile Magnin for

---

[140] Maarten Levendig, "Fatal Attraction." *Rijksmuseum Amsterdam Blogspot*. April 10, 2013. http://rijksmuseumamsterdam.blogspot.co.uk/2013/04/franz-von-stuck-salome-1906-stadtische.html. Accessed September 19, 2017.

[141] Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker. "Carnal Logic: Franz von Stuck." In *Battle of the Sexes: From Franz Von Stuck to Frida Kahlo*, edited by Felix Krämer. New York: Prestel Publishing, 2017. 82.

her chronic headaches. Corinna Treite writes, 'Magnin discovered that by putting her under hypnosis and playing Chopin waltzes on the piano, he could induce Guipet to dance.'[142] This mystical talent was put on display for the public and 'a number of artists, among them Keller and Stuck, were in attendance and observed the dancelike movements Guipet made while in a somnambulant state.'[143] Dance and Dream became one and the same: Stuck saw a woman who was capable of dancing in her subconscious, which was a fundamental influence for his dancing Salome. The exhibition of Madeline Guipet occurred only two years before Stuck completed his first Salome painting, and Stuck was so mesmerised by Guipet that he, along with fellow artist Albert von Keller, 'composed a joint statement praising the Georgian-born dream dancer.'[144] Stuck was able to preserve the dream-fantasies of the Symbolist movement, and adapt them to focus on a character who has a narrative rooted in dance. Stuck utilised the dream dance as a method of subduing Salome's dangerous performance, whilst allowing it to retain its eroticism. He was attracted to the theme of the Battle of the Sexes, and 'seduction and sexual temptation, is epitomized by female figures such as *Salome* […] - lethal temptresses and femme fatales.'[145] Stuck did not allow his femmes fatales to be unrestrained, and bondage-via-serpent was particularly common on his canvases. Stuck's women were dangerous, but their power and movements were usually subdued to some extent. The dream dance was a restriction that Franz von Stuck placed on Salome: she danced for Stuck's viewers, eroticised and emphasised as dangerous, but the dreamy atmosphere meant that the threat would never become a reality. Just as Giupet was controlled in her somnambulant state by her male pianist, Salome is eternally controlled by Stuck, and trapped in his fantasy. John the Baptist's life has ended, but the viewer will never succumb to the true horrors of the

---

[142] Corinna Treite. *From A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004. 116.
[143] Danzker. "Carnal." 82.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Margot Th. Brandlhuber. "'The Most Modern of the 'Modernists' Franz von Stuck's Impact: his Archetypes and Myths in Vienna." In *Sin and Secession: Franz von Stuck in Vienna*, edited by Agnes Husslein-Arco and Alexander Klee. Vienna: Belvedere, 2016. 91.

narrative: there is no punishment for the audience's voyeurism, for Salome cannot break free of the dream.

Salome I: **Identity and Racial Issues**

Identity, class, and race issues all are present in Stuck's vision of Salome, and the work serves as a reflection on Munich society. While most of the paintings in this thesis, including Stuck's, relate to female emancipation, religious beliefs, and politics it is also important to note the relationship between the racist overtones of *Salome I* and early twentieth century German society. The height of *Salome I's* racism resides in the contrast between Salome and her servant. Salome's paleness is over exaggerated,[146] and she is tended to by a black servant, whose facial features have been twisted to resemble a gorilla. Constance A. Clark comments, 'from the very beginning of European awareness of gorillas in the mid-nineteenth century, for example, these gentle animals often carried sensational, even salacious metaphoric freight – and racial connotations – in European popular culture.'[147] Due to the tone of the servant's skin, Stuck has created a dichotomy between the two figures in terms of their respective races and classes. One woman is in a position of power as the Princess, and the other is lower, both physically in her posture (she is crouched behind Salome), and also in her social status. Margot Th. Brandlhuber argues that in this era, 'the French term race, referring to the genealogical lineage of royal houses, also came to be applied to the differentiation of peoples and their skin colors. Stuck addressed this subject in only a few paintings such as *Bacchanalian Procession* (1897), the

---

[146] It goes without saying that Salome has been thoroughly whitewashed in *Salome I,* which was common in European art. Furthermore, the majority of Hollywood films do not hire Black or Asian actors to play biblical characters. Recent examples would be Russell Crowe as Noah (*Noah*, dir. Darren Aronofsky, 2014) and Christian Bale as Moses (*Exodus: Gods and Kings*, dir. Ridley Scott, 2014.)

[147] Constance A Clark. *God or Gorilla: Images of Evolution in the Jazz Age*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008. 3

Dionysian *Roundelay* (1910) […] and Salome (1906).'[148] The development of race as a term coincided with the production of evolutionary theories and the resulting social Darwinism. Lloyd argues that in this era 'science was dragged into the fray to give dubious corroboration to slanderous attacks on women; the idea that women were inferior beings, for example, was often justified by a brand of social Darwinism that set out to prove how women, children, and non-Aryan races necessarily occupied a lower rung on the evolutionary ladder.'[149] By depicting a black servant as physically animalistic, Franz von Stuck is endorsing societal racism, suggesting the servant is lower on that evolutionary ladder. Patricia Mathews comments that 'the determinist bigotry of social Darwinism helped produce a sense of impending peril, competitiveness, fear, and prejudice that permeated social discourse.'[150] Social Darwinism was racist and misogynistic, and created a culture of prejudice and fear toward minorities. The sexism of the era and prejudice against racial minorities were intertwined, as Emma Liggins argues 'evolutionary fears about racial decline, however, revived concerns about the old maid's childlessness and limited social function.'[151] It was necessary for Salome to be desirable to men, so she would not be categorised as a "spinster," a stereotype associated with the growing "New Woman" trope. Although a fatal, dancing Salome is a prime example of the women society feared, her power is reduced to a fantasy; she is degraded through her presentation and rendered relatively harmless. Stuck's Salome is not an old maid, but a young woman who exists for men to lust over.

The caricatured servant is degraded due to her gender and her race. Her presentation on canvas is a reflection of social attitudes toward minorities, and this work, along with

---

[148] Brandlhuber. "Impact." 97.
[149] Lloyd. "Viennese Woman." 20.
[150] Patricia Mathews. *Passionate Discontent: Creativity, Gender, and French Symbolist Art*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999. 30.
[151] Emma Liggins. *Odd Women? Spinsters, Lesbians and Widows in British Women's Fiction, 1850s-1930s*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014. 77.

Stuck's repertoire, was dangerously influential. Franz von Stuck was an artist who was celebrated by Adolf Hitler, and Peter Adam writes 'in these much loved painters Hitler and many of his contemporaries found the embodiment of everything that was true and real in Germans. They represented virtues to emulate.'[152] The racism on Stuck's canvas is connected to the attitude that one particular group is better than the rest, and this is reminiscent of the horrific persecution and genocide that would occur several decades later. The most outrageous comparison can be made with the guide to *Entartete Musik* exhibition *(Düsseldorf, 1938)*. The exhibit was to display and condemn what the Nazi party viewed as degenerate music. The cover of the guide featured a caricature of the character "Jonny" from the opera *Jonny Spielt Auf (*English: *Jonny Plays,* first performed in 1927) by Ernst Krenek. Marita Berg writes 'Jonny had been mutated into a monkey, bearing the Star of David rather than a carnation in his buttonhole. It would become a prominent figure within Nazi propaganda and the symbol of "degenerate" music.'[153] The image is a conflated caricature of black people (in particular Jazz musicians) and Jewish people. Both minorities were criticised, parodied, and ostracised by Stuck's society, and on his canvas, he presented a caricature of a black woman alongside a fetishised Jewish woman.

Stuck's femmes fatales were highly influential across Europe, and his work should be carefully considered whilst analysing the development of the archetype. Margot Th. Brandlhuber comments that 'Stuck's painting influenced many of his contemporaries: Edvard Munch's *Madonna* (1893-94) is known to have been inspired by *Sin* (1892), Félicien Rops's lithograph *Serpent Auréole* (1890) by Stuck's etching *Sensuality* (1889), and Fernand Khnopff's landscape *In Fosset: Still Water* (1894) by Stuck's *Trout Pond*

---

[152] Peter Adam. *Art of the Third Reich*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, inc., 1992. 109.
[153] Marita Berg. "The Nazis' take on 'Degenerate Music'." *DW*. May 2013. http://www.dw.com/en/the-nazis-take-on-degenerate-music/a-16834697. Accessed September 20, 2017.

(1890).'[154] Munch, Rops, and Khnopff all are significant contributors to the field of symbolist art in this period, and each created their own dangerous women in their respective countries of Norway and Belgium.[155] Stuck's snake-bound women have been notably influential due to the connotations with Eve, and his dancing Salome also has claimed her place in the Salomania hall of fame. Salome's dance is presented as seductive by Stuck, although his interest in the psychological dream dance signifies a condition in which Salome tempts, but cannot dominate fully. Stuck will always be in control of his female figures – no matter how dangerous he designs them to be. After Stuck's treatment, Salome's moral alignment cannot be questioned: Salome dances, Salome tempts, and Salome kills.

---

[154] Brandlhuber. "Impact." 84.

[155] This reveals that the femme fatale was not restricted to the three locations of this thesis. For further reading, I recommend the Battle of the Sexes exhibition catalogue. Also, for work related to the Femme Fatale, see Rop's *Pornocrates* (1878), Khnopff's, *Caresses* aka *Sphynx* (1896), or Munch's *Vampire* (1895). Whilst none of these are strictly biblical, each feature thematic elements which contribute to the construction of the trope, such as dominant women or dangerous supernatural beings.

1.4 MAX OPPENHEIMER: A NECROPHILIC SALOME?

The presence of necrophilic content in artistic retellings of Salome's narrative was inevitable, especially in a post-Wildean era. In his widely performed play, Oscar Wilde's decision to have Salome kiss John the Baptist's severed head was highly influential, prompting visual artists to replicate this additional feature which is absent in the biblical text. Aubrey Beardsley's (1872-1898) illustrations of Wilde's play serve as examples of this new element, in particular *the Climax* (1893), an ink drawing of an euphoric moment between Salome and the head, both of whom are levitating. Lucien Lévy-Dhurmer (1865-1953), a prominent French Symbolist, also provided an example of Salome kissing John the Baptist's severed head five years after Wilde's play. Facos argues Levy-Dhurmer 'forced the viewer into an intimate confrontation with female sadism in his 1896 pastel *Salome Embracing the Severed Head of John the Baptist.*'[156] At surface level, the moment is deceptively gentle; Salome's arms cradle his head, and her fingers do not grip or pull his hair aggressively. Salome's eyes are closed, while she enjoys the moment *she* perceives as tender. The severed head may go unrecognised if the painting were regarded with a quick glance, due to the placement of Salome's arm. Upon further analysis the viewer will see that the head rests on a platter and there is a blade present. While there is no blood or immediate violence, John the Baptist is dead in this pastel rendering, and Salome is ultimately aware of this.

The Wildean narrative provided artists with an opportunity to take the sexual violence of Salome's narrative, now culturally present across the arts, one step further. At the climax of Oscar Wilde's Salome, the dancer lifts the decapitated head of John the Baptist and

---

[156] Facos. *Symbolist Art*. 130.

kisses his lips. In a monologue addressed to Iokanaan (John the Baptist), Salome exclaims: 'Ah! Thou wouldst not suffer me to kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan. Well! I will kiss it now. I will bite it with my teeth as one bites a ripe fruit. Yes, I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan.'[157] Salome fulfils her heated desire in a swift necrophilic act, and is subsequently executed on Herod's orders; crushed by the shields of soldiers. Prior to her death, Salome speaks 'I have kissed thy mouth. There was a bitter taste on thy lips. Was it the taste of blood? … But perchance it is the taste of love. They say that love hath a bitter taste… But what of that? What of that? I have kissed thy mouth Iokanaan, I have kissed thy mouth.'[158] The sexual desire Salome has for Iokanaan is created in Wilde's narrative, and Salome's repetitious announcement of her kiss only serves to emphasise the importance of the action to the audience. There is no kiss in the Gospel narratives, nor any foundation for Salome's sexual attraction toward John the Baptist. Even if subsequent artists do not include a relationship between Salome and John, the sexual element emphasised by Wilde remains a modern iconographic feature. At this point, I will analyse a work which simultaneously serves as an example of Wildean-inspired Salome-as-necrophile sexuality, whilst challenging and perhaps subverting it: Max Oppenheimer's *Salome* (1913).

Max Oppenheimer: Biography

Max Oppenheimer (1885-1954) was a Viennese painter who worked primarily in the Austrian Expressionist movement at the beginning of the twentieth century. Despite his strong connection with Vienna (due to his love of the musical and orchestral community and relationship with artists such as Egon Schiele), Oppenheimer spent time working in

---

[157] Wilde, *Salome*. 83.
[158] Ibid. 85.

Paris and Zurich.[159] In 1938, due to his Jewish identity and the persecution he faced from the Nazi party, he was forced 'into an exile from which he would never return.'[160] Oppenheimer (also known as 'Mopp' from his painterly signature) always hoped to return to Austria and the music scene, and according to Regine Schmidt, 'his interest in music derived from the "old world," and, in his case, an uprooting was devastating. Eventually Mopp died isolated and almost forgotten in New York in 1954.'[161] Oppenheimer hardly managed to re-establish his career in America, and as a result, his work is relatively unknown compared to his Austrian contemporaries Egon Schiele or Gustav Klimt. Mopp's[162] artistic style was closer to Schiele's, rather than Klimt's decorative work. All three men were active in the Austrian visual art scene, but while Klimt was a member of the Symbolist and Art Nouveau movements, Schiele and Mopp were Expressionists. Frank Whitford describes Expressionism at its base level as a reaction against the Impressionists who 'attempted to reproduce the image of Nature that was reflected on the retina of their eye'[163] and it was 'a term applied to the work of those artists who believed there was much more to the world than simply what their eyes saw.'[164] Expressionism was primarily a German movement, its country of origin, but it spread into Austria, where a variant style was refined by the members of Mopp's circle. John Czaplicka argues that the Austrian style is distinguishable as it 'is analytic in tendency, using the gestural and material representation of human figuration as a primary vehicle to probe the human psyche.'[165] This description is certainly apt and one I shall observe when analysing Mopp's work in

[159] John Czaplicka. "Memory, Identity, and the Conditions of Exile." In *Emigrants and Exiles: A Lost Generation of Austrian Artists in America 1920 – 1950*, edited by John Czaplicka and David Mickenberg. Illinois: Mary and Leigh Block Gallery, Northwestern University, 1996. 133, 148.
[160] Ibid. 133.
[161] Regine Schmidt. "Rupture and Departure: A Survey of Austrian Artists in American Exile." *In Emigrants and Exiles: A Lost Generation of Austrian Artists in America 1920 – 1950*, edited by John Czaplicka and David Mickenberg. Illinois: Mary and Leigh Block Gallery, Northwestern University, 1996. 243.
[162] I will refer to Oppenheimer primarily as Mopp.
[163] Frank Whitford. *Expressionism*. London: Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1980. 12.
[164] Ibid.
[165] John Czaplicka. "Emigrant and Exiles: An Introduction to the Topic." In *Emigrants and Exiles: A Lost Generation of Austrian Artists in America 1920 – 195*, edited by John Czaplicka and David Mickenberg. Illinois: Mary and Leigh Block Gallery, Northwestern University, 1996. 16.

this section of chapter one. The painting I discuss, *Salome*, is the most violent depiction of a femme fatale in this thesis: while most work neglect to include blood and keep their violence subtle, Mopp's *Salome* is the exact opposite.[166] Bloody, erotic, and uncomfortable to view, this visual retelling neglects any biblical pretext, and focuses on an invented moment of necrophilic sadism, carried out by Salome.

Salome: **Analysis**

Oppenheimer's *Salome* (1913) successfully adapts an already dark narrative into one which is powerful and unnerving, with the capacity to shock and horrify the viewer. Mopp's artistic style is described by Antonia Hoerschelmann as 'typical of Viennese expressionism, with its exaggerated representation of the subject, dynamic use of colour and extreme perspectives.'[167] This version of Salome is certainly an exaggerated portrayal of the character's sexuality, and an extreme perspective of the theme. The painting shows Salome perched before John the Baptist's head, with her thighs spread and vulva pressed against the bloodied mess at the base of his now severed-neck. Salome gazes down at John, and although her face is not angled toward the viewer, her breasts are. Her body language is open, and her torso is on display for anyone who dares to gaze upon her dangerous beauty. The painting is primarily dark tones - browns and greys – although Salome's body has a golden hue. The other colour involved is a vivid bloody red, which clashes with the muddy yellow tones. While partially (or fully) nude Salomes are not uncommon in this period, it is rare that a painting combines violence and eroticism to such an extreme intensity. Artists generally neglect one of these elements, perhaps choosing to focus on the

---

[166] Image can be viewed at: http://www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/women-and-death/colloquium_three.html.
[167] Antonia Hoerschelmann. "Biographies of the Artists." In *Egon Schiele and His Contemporaries: Austrian Painting and Drawing from 1900 to 1930 from the Leopold Collection*, Vienna, edited by Klaus Albrecht Schröder and Harald Szeemann. Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1989. 292.

danger associated with the character, with just a hint of her sexuality. Alternatively, the artists create sexually explicit Salomes with subtle-to-moderate signifiers of violence, such as the inclusion of weapons, platters, or even a head (these features are generally not bloody, nor are they a focal point of the painting.) It is easier to fetishise Salome's violence if the death appears understated. The male viewers who build a fantasy around Salome's dominance presumably prefer to replicate the gaze of an outsider - a voyeur of the scene, or associate themselves with a man faced with milder or playful danger,[168] rather than the beady lifeless eyes of a defiled, decapitated head.

The biblical text is clear that the dancing girl does not participate in the beheading, and in both Matthew and Mark, Salome is not even present to witness the execution: 'he sent and had John beheaded in the prison. The head was brought on a platter and given to the girl' (Mt 14:10-11). Furthermore, the painting is set in private chambers, as indicated by the sheets Salome kneels upon, while the text primarily takes place during Herod's birthday celebrations. The Mark account is clear that Herod refused to deny Salome's request 'out of regard for his oaths and for the guests' (Mk 6: 26) and that the guards were sent 'immediately' (Mk 6: 27) to the prison. The birthday celebrations resumed in a great hall, not granting Salome the opportunity to be alone with the head in her chambers. The final textual point that would counter Mopp's vision is that the girl brought/gave the head to her mother (Mt 14:11, Mk 6:28). If Mopp's concept was that Salome disappeared from the festivities with the head still in her possession, then this is an embellishment, as the text explicitly affirms Salome handed John's head to Herodias. The disconnection of Mopp's canvas with the Gospel accounts indicates that he regards the Bible as a pretext. He wanted to use the character of Salome and the beheading of John the Baptist, but did not seek to create a direct retelling of the narrative.

---

[168] See the treatment of Samson in chapter three.

The Erotic Body, Martyrdom, and Mopp's *Salome*

The bodily violence present in Mopp's *Salome* is typical of Viennese Expressionism. Klaus Albrecht Schröder describes the Expressionist concept of fleshly awareness, a desire to 'be aware of the flesh, instead of smoothing it out into ornament'[169] and he writes that, 'this craving for sensory awareness represents a licence for the artist to wound, to unmask, to commit acts of violence and to destroy.'[170] Mopp's *Salome* is hyperaware of flesh, whether it is the mortified remains of the Baptist's, or the expanse of sallow skin across Salome's body, further emphasised when compared to the smooth, pale skin painted by Franz von Stuck. Stuck's *Salome I* appears almost unhuman compared to the gritty skin of Mopp's *Salome*. Oppenheimer's Salome evokes a sensory experience where it is all too easy to imagine the texture of the flesh, and the smell of blood and death which permeates the canvas. Salome's sexuality is evident on canvas, especially when considering the proximity of John the Baptist's mouth to her genitals. Salome is not kissing John's mouth, nor is she using it for her pleasure, but her nudity and her hand on his mouth both work to signify that she will attempt a necrophilic act. Mopp's Salome appears to represent an abnormal sexual perspective of the character, however this is not necessarily the case. Whilst the sexuality of Salome is extreme and dangerous, there is another facet which is heightened, this time associated with John the Baptist: his intense suffering. The artist-as-martyr theme was popular among Viennese Expressionists, appearing in the works of Schiele, Gerstl, Kokoschka and Oppenheimer, to name a few. In particular, there was a strong association of self-portraiture with Christ, and Albrecht Schröder notes how 'the symbolism of the suffering of Christ and his saints migrates from its religious context into

---

[169] Klaus Albrecht Schröder. "Not Blind to the World: Notes on Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele." In *Egon Schiele and His Contemporaries: Austrian Painting and Drawing from 1900 to 1930 from the Leopold Collection, Vienna*, edited by Klaus Albrecht Schröder and Harald Szeemann. Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1989. 20.
[170] Ibid.

the stigmatized bodies of the Expressionists, where it takes root as a mark of socially conditioned martyrdom.'[171] The Expressionists used Christ, Saints, and other martyr figures as symbols of their own suffering. Mopp's *Salome* is not a self-portrait; however, I will argue that a connection can be made between the artist's suffering and pain experienced by John the Baptist at the hands of Salome.

Mopp's association with the Expressionist movement resulted in him producing multiple works related to 'the theme of the artist as martyr and victim of society.'[172] In particular, Albrecht Schröder cites his Ecce-Homo self-portrait as an important example.[173] This work, entitled *Der Blutende* (The Bleeding Man, 1911), is a self-portrait which evokes Christ, from the faint trace of a halo to his bloodied hands and torso - recalling his wounds. Furthermore, like other Austrian Expressionists, Mopp 'considered universal problems and emphasized archetypal figures rather than individual situations or personalities.'[174] Instead of depicting figures from real life, he selected the character of Salome to represent his commentary on society, social expectations, and the hardships he himself faced. At this point, Salome had been painted by Moreau, celebrated by Huysmans, staged by Wilde, and been shaped into the archetype of the femme fatale, ready to be used by those requiring a villain to place their blame on. As I have previously mentioned, Mopp paid particular attention to the bodies on his canvas, creating strained and brutalised flesh. The agony that John the Baptist, Salome's victim, feels is a symbol for Mopp's own suffering and the intensity of emotions he felt. As Tolhurst Driesbach writes, 'expressionist painting is often characterized by the artist imposing his personal emotional response on his subject. The intensity of the artist's reaction to landscape, woman or the city may be recorded by the

---

[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid. 21.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Janice Tolhurst Driesbach. *German and Austrian Expressionism.* Indiana: Indiana University Art Museum, 1977. 5.

violence of the palette used or the degree to which form is distorted.'[175] The gritty colour palette, and the dark bodily outline which barely contains Salome's painted skin, is an example of this distortion. Another factor is Salome's blood-covered hand, which presses against John's mouth, and as her fingertips meet John's skin, they become near indistinguishable due to the dark tones. These visual factors signify Mopp's emotional state, and his turbulent attitude toward life and the subject matter.

The viewer is met with a painting which produces reactions from discomfort to disgust; it is not pleasant and Salome is not intended to be an object of desire. *Salome* remains, at base level, the most sexually explicit and violent painting discussed in this thesis, although Mopp framed those qualities as metaphorical; Salome acts sexually on canvas, but her brutal, unsettling exploits have a much deeper meaning. While her breasts were presented in a similar way to Franz von Stuck's *Salome I*, it is hard for the viewer to take the violence out of context; Salome appears as sadistic, but the lack of subtlety does not allow those who view her to become her masochistic counterpart. Men are less inclined to identify with John the Baptist as a fetish, rather they may see their own fear and agony reflected on the canvas.

There are several personal factors which propelled Mopp to utilise Salome's narrative for his artist-as-martyr theme. John Czaplicka comments that 'Max Oppenheimer provides an example par excellence of the *type* of artist who would have been subject to Nazi persecution. He was a modern artist, a homosexual, and a Jew.'[176] Mopp was Jewish, and living in a cultural context where racial tensions were developing and anti-Semitism was rife. Czaplicka remarks in relation to Nazi racial theories, 'perhaps Max Oppenheimer,

---

[175] Ibid. 6.
[176] Czaplicka. "Memory." 148.

with his thick lips, dark hair, and squat nose, came closest to the stereotypical physical makeup attributed to Jews in anti-Semitic caricatures.'[177] *Belle Époque* Vienna was a diverse, but toxic environment which was less than friendly toward minorities, and several writers in that period produced work which had anti-Semitic overtones, for example Otto Weininger.[178] Secondly, Mopp was isolated in his artistic community around the time of *Salome*. Czaplicka writes, 'his attempt at cultural assimilation as an Austrian artist was endangered when in 1911 Oskar Kokoschka accused him of plagiarism, which caused many critics to ostracize him and scholars to ignore him.'[179] For an artist striving for social inclusion and acceptance, being cut off from the intellectual community would be akin to having a limb (or head) chopped off. Finally, there is the case of Mopp's sexuality: deviance from the social norm was met with disapproval, and his personal identity 'may have been threatened by Viennese homophobia.'[180] For Mopp, dangerous and seductive women could easily represent society's enforced heterosexuality. I do not suggest that Mopp was particularly afraid of dominant women, nor do I believe he sought to create a fantasy-nightmare of female sexuality to address the growing concerns of the New Woman. Salome is a metaphor for the oppressive *sexual norm* to which Mopp did not conform, and his painting was a psychological reaction to this social factor. The figure of Salome becomes a vehicle for any oppression Oppenheimer had felt thus far, and his anticipation of what he would face during the course of his life. He did not use Salome to represent the biblical narrative, nor was she a femme fatale for pornographic purposes. This Salome is a product of artistic exploitation, but in a less traditional way: her body may not be exhibited for the viewer's pleasure, nor her actions fetishised, but her danger is

---

[177] Ibid.

[178] Weininger's writing was highly anti-Semitic, despite the fact he was Jewish himself. Allan Janik writes that for Weininger, Judaism 'is the possibility of becoming a mindless conformist […] is that man who mindlessly accepts social conventions including those relating to his sexual role as "satisfying" women. Weininger's Jew is the man who cannot resist exploiting women sexually.' Allan Janik. *Essays on Wittgenstein and Weininger.* Amsterdam: Rodopi Press, 1985. 101.

[179] Czaplicka. "Memory." 133.

[180] Ibid.

enhanced through her newly acquired necrophilia, and she has been modified for Oppenheimer's personal purposes.

2 JUDITH: BY THE HAND OF A WOMAN

2.1 INTRODUCTION

It is a complicated history of cultural interpretation which allows for Salome the Dancer to simultaneously parallel, and contrast with, Judith the Beheader. The characters are not particularly similar: Salome is an unnamed, unmarried princess who appears sparingly in the Gospels, and Judith is an independent widow with an entire book dedicated to her.[181] Salome's main narrative point is her dance in the hope of earning a favour from her stepfather. The Book of Judith establishes the character as an autonomous woman, with no father or husband to influence her decisions. However, despite these differences, they are both female characters who thrive in a death narrative: men lose their heads because of them. This inevitably results in viewers confusing the two characters when their typical iconographic features are not included. Judith is traditionally a symbol of strength, and often stands proudly with her sword, or (rather grotesquely) stabs the sword through Holofernes' neck.[182] Stocker observes that 'in many representations the sword is the only indicator that the woman bearing the severed head is probably Judith the heroine, not Salome the villainess.'[183] By the end of the nineteenth century, the iconography which distinguished Judith from Salome began to disappear, allowing for a hybrid of the characters to appear.[184] Furthermore, *Belle Époque* artists frequently sexualised both characters, forgoing the bloodier features in favour of sensual interpretations, where violence is either hinted at, or created in confluence with their erotic acts. Consequently, it

---

[181] It must be noted that Judith does not appear for the first seven chapters of the Book.
[182] Several of Benjamin-Constant's interpretations of Judith take on the proud stance, and I will discuss one particular version in this chapter. An example of the grotesque stabbing would be Caravaggio's *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (1598-99).
[183] Stocker. *Sexual Warrior*. 18.
[184] See my discussion of Gustav Klimt's *Judith I* (1901).

became increasingly difficult for viewers to identify which woman was depicted: a problem which will be addressed as the chapter progresses.

In this chapter, I will remain focused on the theme of beheading, but switch to a character who is conventionally admired as a powerful woman; Judith. Prior to the nineteenth century, Judith was 'sold as a virtuous heroine, and an asexual one at that.'[185] The death of Holofernes differs from John the Baptist's, due to the textual framing of the latter as a good character, revered by Jesus: '"among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist"' (Mt 11:11). Salome becomes a villainess due to the fact a *good* man is killed by her actions, whereas Judith, who is framed as 'a military heroine,'[186] acts against an enemy force. The beheading of Holofernes is a positive moment, which frames Judith as a heroine, despite the fact, 'Judith's gender, vampishness and homicide defy all the normal canons of received Christian morality.'[187] Judith's narrative revolves around her luring Holofernes into a false sense of security, and her beauty is emphasised in chapter ten:

> She removed the sackcloth she had been wearing, took off her widow's garments, bathed her body with water, and anointed herself with precious ointment. She combed her hair, put on a tiara, and dressed herself in the festive attire that she used to wear while her husband Manasseh was living. She put sandals on her feet, and put on her anklets, bracelets, rings, earrings, and all other jewelry. Thus she made herself very beautiful, to entice the eyes of all the men who might see her (Jdt. 10:3-4).

The descriptive detail of her physical appearance stresses its significance: she had to appear attractive to capture Holofernes' attention. However, Judith's beauty is not the only character trait which contributed to Holofernes' death, as she imparts her intelligence while rationalising her presence in the camp:

---

[185] Ela Nutu. "Framing Judith: Whose Text, Whose Gaze, Whose Language?" In *Between the Text and the Canvas: the Bible and Art in Dialogue*, edited by J. Cheryl Exum and Ela Nutu. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009. 118.
[186] Brine. "Judith Project." 8.
[187] Stocker. *Sexual Warrior*. 4.

> "I am a daughter of the Hebrews, but I am fleeing from them, for they are about to be handed over to you to be devoured. I am on my way to see Holofernes the commander of your army, to give him a true report; I will show him a way by which he can go and capture all the hill country without losing one of his men" (Jdt. 10:12-13).

Holofernes' men do not notice that Judith has constructed an intelligent lie here and they allow her into the camp. Toni Craven writes that despite Judith's lies and murderous actions, 'in no way is she a licentious person. Indeed, in the story no one is more disciplined or more faithful than she.'[188] It is most commonly Judith's gender which frustrates her earlier interpreters. Early Christian fathers struggled with this narrative because, 'their traditional view of Genesis was that man was seduced into the Fall by the dangerous sexual lure of womankind, yet in the Book of Judith God himself was not above using sexuality to vanquish the pagan and save the chosen people.'[189] God not only allows murder to occur, but actively endorses it, demonstrated when Judith exclaims 'the Lord has struck him down by the hand of a woman' (Jdt. 13:15) after slaying Holofernes.

While Judith is viewed as heroic in earlier traditions, perhaps even an icon for early feminism or female justice,[190] her reputation is tarnished in the nineteenth century. Her once heroic actions become blatantly sexual – instead of a woman defending her people, she becomes a woman performing dominance for male interest and fantasy. The artists display only what they wish to show; often they omit blood and gore in favour of nude bodies, phallic shaped weapons, and orgasmic facial expressions.[191] As Brine states, 'in secular contexts, the story of Judith and Holofernes, refashioned in art, discourse, and polemics, was used with widely different connotations: misogynistic, erotic, anti-Semitic,

---

[188] Toni Craven. *Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith*, California: Scholars Press Chico, 1983. 115.
[189] Stocker. *Sexual Warrior*. 3.
[190] Artemisia Gentileschi's *Judith Slaying Holofernes* (1614) is perhaps the most famous painting understood as a feminist interpretation of the narrative. A modern example is Judy Chicago's installation at the Brooklyn Museum N.Y., *The Dinner Party* (1979), which has a place setting dedicated to Judith.
[191] For discussions on the weaponry, see my section on Benjamin-Constant, and for on facial expressions, see my writing on Gustav Klimt.

patriotic, nationalistic, and feminist.'[192] It is not difficult to understand why *Belle Époque* artists were captivated by Judith. While it can be argued that Judith is simply an extension of Salome - a fresh character for artists fatigued with replicating the same femme fatale incessantly - her narrative brims with themes which were relevant to the era.

Judith did not only thrive in *Belle Époque* paintings; like Salome, she had a prominent textual and theatrical presence which contributed to her negative characterisation. Perhaps the most significant theatrical interpretation was Friedrich Hebbel's *Judith: A Tragedy in Five Acts,* (first performed in 1841). Here the Book of Judith is used as a pretext; the sexual subplot was invented for dramatic purposes and to enhance the narrative. Sine writes that Judith 'although a widow, has remained a virgin, and her encounter with Holofernes stirs up ambivalent emotions and a conscious awareness of possibly becoming attracted to her enemy.'[193] Judith did not have sex with her husband prior to his death, which Hebbel emphasised to enhance the fact that 'it is through Holofernes that Judith reluctantly discovers her own sexuality.'[194] Judith is conflicted over her attraction to Holofernes, but 'when he seizes and kisses her, Judith regrets the womanly weakness that allows her to enjoy his sexual attentions and implores God for protection so that she will not revere what she detests.'[195] Furthermore, Hebbel dismantled Judith's traditional power over Holofernes in favour of developing a rape narrative. When Judith regains clarity and protests Holofernes' advancements, he rapes her – a major deviation from the pretext. This adaptation of Judith's narrative is misogynistic, as Hebbel denies her heroism, and focuses solely on her sexuality and virginity. Judith does kill Holofernes, although it is driven by personal revenge, rather than loyalty to her people and God.[196] She beheads Holofernes out

---

[192] Brine, "The Judith Project." 15.
[193] Sine. "Cases." 12.
[194] Theodore Ziolkowski. "Re-Visions, Fictionalizations, and Postfigurations: The Myth of Judith in the Twentieth Century." *Modern Language Review,* 104:2 (2009) 311-332. 319.
[195] Ibid. 317.
[196] Sine. "Cases." 12.

of vengeance, anger, and 'the wounded pride of a very human woman.'[197] This drastic change to the narrative was born out of the playwright's dissatisfaction with Judith's characterisation. Theodore Ziolkowski writes that Hebbel 'noted in his diary that he had no use for the biblical Judith, the widow who ensnares Holofernes through cleverness and deception and rejoices when she has his head in her sack. "Das ist gemein; eine solche Natur ist ihres Erfolgs gar nicht würdig" ("That is vulgar; such a nature is not worthy of her success.")'[198] He believed that Judith's worth correlated with her sexuality - a view propagated by *Belle Époque* artists. Writers such as Otto Weininger supported this retelling, and he referenced Hebbel's interpretation in his novel *Sex and Character* (1903). Ziolkowski writes that Weininger used the refashioned narrative to argue 'that hysteria is woman's reaction against her own sexuality, which she is unwilling to acknowledge.'[199] Hebbel's emphasis on Judith's sexuality therefore proved very influential to artists and writers alike in succeeding decades. Productions of biblical narratives were produced frequently as plays and operas, as demonstrated by Hebbel and Oscar Wilde. Camille Saint-Saens concentrated on Delilah in his opera *Samson et Dalila* (1877), rounding off the triad, which demonstrates that the influence of theatre was not a singular occurrence.

In this chapter, I will address artistic retellings of Judith, with particular focus on the transformation of the pious heroine into an erotic (occasionally villainous) icon. I analyse several case studies of Judith in *Belle Époque* art, starting with Gustav Klimt's infamous *Judith I* (1901). I will then address an earlier work by Jean-Joseph Benjamin-Constant, *Judith* (1885), before finally turning to Gustav-Adolf Mossa and his *Judith* (1904). These three paintings offer vastly different treatments of the character: Judith is portrayed as a dominatrix, an Amazonian warrior, and a Parisian fashionista.

---

[197] Ziolkowski. "Re-Visions." 316.
[198] Ibid.
[199] Ibid. 318.

2.2 GUSTAV KLIMT: THE DOMINANT JUDITH

In this thesis, I discuss artists from Western Europe, some relatively well known, and others obscure to those unfamiliar with *Belle Époque* art. Perhaps the most famous of my artists is Gustav Klimt, the Austrian Symbolist painter (1862-1918). Klimt is known for his highly decorated paintings, including *The Kiss* (1907-1908) and *The Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I* (1903-1907)[200] but he also delved into the biblical subject of Judith twice. His first work was produced in in 1901, and he created another version in of the character 1909. My focus will be on *Judith I* (1901) since although both are examples of dangerously sexual women, *Judith I* harbours a subtle violence, while being more explicit in its eroticism.[201]

As I have demonstrated, the thematic similarities between Salome and Judith inevitably led to the public confusing the pair in their reception of various retellings. In reference to European art of the early twentieth century, Nadine Sine raises the question: 'how might a mature widowed heroine be mistaken for a capricious young princess?'[202] Several of these works did feature bizarre amalgamated figures; women who display the qualities of both the Princess and the Widow. However, in the case of Gustav Klimt, it was predominantly public interpretations which reshaped his pictorial narrative. Klimt's *Judith I* (1901) is one of Sine's main focuses in her article *Case of Mistaken Identity*, and she argues that this work featured a 'sexually-charged woman'[203] who is clearly marked as Judith: 'on the frame designed for this painting, Klimt divulged the identity of the two figures in bold letters: Judith und Holofernes.'[204] Despite this clear indicator, the public were conflicted

---

[200] Although *Adele Bloch-Bauer I* is not a biblical painting, it is very important to my arguments in this chapter.
[201] Image can be viewed at: http://www.klimt.com/en/gallery/women/klimt-judith1-1901.ihtml
[202] Sine. "Cases." 9.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid.

over Klimt's Judith, and many believed her to be Salome as her frank sexuality was uncharacteristic of the heroic Judiths of the Renaissance. The public believed that the character of Judith was not capable of such a cruel erotic act, and despite the artist's intentions, they regarded her as Salome.

Judith I: Analysis

Klimt's *Judith I* is not a dramatic beheading scene, nor a panorama of the heroine's return to her village, when she proudly displays her "trophy head" to an admiring and grateful crowd. The painting is a centralised character study of Judith; the viewer's gaze is restricted to the upper half of her body – her face, breasts, and stomach - although Klimt permits a glimpse of Holofernes' head at the bottom of the work. Judith 'looks out at the viewer lasciviously through half-closed eyes'[205] and this expression is often interpreted as 'erotic,'[206] or more extremely 'orgasmic.'[207] The sexuality of the painting has been attributed to her facial features, which include her heavy lidded eyes, and parted lips. This, combined with the style and transparency of Judith's clothing, creates an overall atmosphere of sensuality. The sheer fabric is draped over her shoulders, simultaneously hiding and hinting at one of her breasts, while the other is uncovered. Judith positively drips with golden jewellery; wearing a high choker which elongates her neck, and bands wrapped tightly around her upper arm. The golden jewellery is reminiscent of the Orientalist treatment of the character, and this, combined with the background, was developed from Klimt's interest in Asian and Middle Eastern cultures. The background is composed of gold foliage, and Frank Whitford comments that 'the trees are derived from an Assyrian relief […] at Nineveh.'[208] Whitford in addition draws the connection between

---

[205] Susanna Partsch. *Gustav Klimt: Painter of Women*. Munich: Prestel Publishing, 2008. 78.
[206] Frank Whitford. *Klimt*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1990. 12.
[207] Stocker. *Sexual Warrior*. 175.
[208] Whitford, *Klimt*. 124.

this and Holofernes' nationality, and argues that the usage of these particular trees was intentional, not an arbitrary selection of amalgamated African and Asian designs.[209] Klimt the Symbolist therefore emulates the earlier Orientalist tradition of utilising non-European content in his paintings, although with perhaps more research and thought than a haphazard selection of "foreign" patterns.

Judith I exhibits her power, although it manifests sexually and not through an act of warfare. Judith is in complete control of the situation: sexually dominant over her submissive "companion." Power radiates from Judith despite the lack of traditional iconographic indicators of her strength. Stocker notes that 'the sword is a vital ingredient in Judith's positive representations. Iconographically, it is usually a sign of retributive justice, of God's fiat.'[210] Klimt's Judith appears without her traditional weaponry, which normally indicates her militaristic nature and piety due to its Godly connection; the lack of sword allows her power to be translated as sexual. Kelley suggests that 'because we do not see a weapon in the image, Judith's partly exposed body and posture exude a mixture of eroticism and power'[211] but she also believes it lacks militaristic strength. Furthermore, the position of Holofernes' head does not indicate whether it is still attached to his body, as his hair covers his neck and shields the potential severed point. There are also no drops of blood, further disconnecting Klimt's interpretation from the standard "beheaded Holofernes" paintings. The viewer of the work does not know whether they are both reclining on a bed, or whether Holofernes is kneeling by her side in a typical submissive posture. Although there is no apparent beheading on the canvas, knowledge of the Judith narrative invites a reading of cruel sexuality: Holofernes' eyes are shut and his body is not in sight, which both signify death, however Judith appears to take pleasure from him

---

[209] Ibid.
[210] Stocker. *Sexual Warrior*. 18.
[211] Kelley. "Perceptions." 113.

regardless. Stocker notes rightfully that Judith is fetishised, arguing that 'in *Judith I*, her face registers an orgasmic joy.'[212] Susanna Partsch cites Klimt's fear and fascination with women from Viennese society as a basis for this characterisation of Judith,[213] which I will address as I progress through this chapter subsection.

When the Studio Becomes the Bedroom

The eroticism of *Judith I* can be traced back to Klimt's personal "interests." As an artist, Klimt was known for pushing the boundaries of acceptability in Viennese society, and was critiqued and condemned for his more obscene creations. Whitford writes 'Klimt was a subject of general curiosity in Austrian society because of his notoriety and because some regarded him as the most brilliant painter of his generation. His work was often controversial and sometimes provoked outrage.'[214] His women-centric paintings, ranged from general portraiture of elite clientele to pornographic drawings, demonstrating that he hardly shied away from provocative themes. Furthermore Partsch notes that while he was 'watched with interest and rewarded by commissions from liberal bourgeoisie, he was all the more sharply rejected by the Academic world after his initial success.'[215] His links to the Secession raises interesting questions in regard to feminist critique of his art, which I will address in the next section. My focus of this section is Klimt's attitude toward the women in his life, and how this influenced his interpretation of Judith. Klimt lived his life surrounded by women, both in and out the studio. Whitford states, 'Klimt always had two or three models at his beck and call. When they were not being drawn, they lounged

---

[212] Stocker. *Sexual Warrior*. 175.
[213] Partsch, *Klimt*. 81.
[214] Whitford. *Klimt*. 18.
[215] Partsch, *Klimt*. 7.

around naked or in their underwear and invariably surprised any visitor who had never been to the studio before.'[216] These women posed for Klimt and it is established that he had sexual relations with them. The line between sexual activity and modelling blurred in Klimt's studio, and the models would often be intimate (between two female models, and also solo masturbation) for the purposes of Klimt's work. Lloyd remarks that 'Klimt is frequently accused of visualizing women merely as objects of male desire, particularly in the numerous erotic drawings of his studio models, who are shown dreamily pleasuring themselves, apparently unaware of the male artist observing them yet unconsciously playing out his fantasies before our eyes.'[217] The accusation of visualisation is correct, as Klimt's gaze is replicated on paper; the viewers of the drawings are invited to spectate just as Klimt had. Klimt reveals what he desires to his audience: moments of performative sexuality enacted exclusively for his artistic benefit. Whitford stresses that 'the women in these drawings have no identity as individuals. They are anonymous and largely passive. They exist only to whet the appetite of the male spectator who is not only a potential lover but also voyeur.'[218] Reading Klimt's *Judith I* with the knowledge of his sexual studio practices reinforces the concept that the character's power is a sexual fantasy for the pleasure of the male viewer. The dominance has been granted by Klimt, who is known for dictating female sexuality in his studio, and this restricts the autonomy of the women both off and on his canvas. Judith, while traditionally an autonomous character, is deprived of her original independence as Klimt crafted her sexuality specifically to his liking.

---

[216] Whitford. *Klimt*. 163.
[217] Lloyd. "Viennese Woman." 30.
[218] Whitford. *Klimt*. 162.

Judith I: **The Dominant Judith**

Although Klimt did not portray Judith wielding her sword, she remains an intense woman on canvas. Judith is not a feminist icon according to him, but rather a pornographic figure whose strength is fetishised. Stocker writes, '*Judith I* is a snapshot of the sado-masochism which finds its intensity in the moment of tension between stasis and ecstasy, the finely judged point at which pain becomes ecstasy.'[219] This controlling Judith is consistent with general perceptions of the character during the *Belle Époque*, which saw the rise of a new interpretation of Judith; to some men, she developed into a dominatrix.[220] Partsch argues 'Klimt produced paintings of woman as aggressive, as a femme fatale, and as an object of desire. In his portraits he deprived women of her body and her intellect.'[221] While Klimt's Judith has more control than the figures in his drawings, she is deprived of her positive textual characteristics such as her intelligence and piety, and instead reduced to an aggressive object. *Judith I* was not the first time she had been interpreted in this manner, and Dijkstra notes that Sacher-Masoch, in his narrative of female dominance, 'singled out the story of Judith and Holofernes.'[222] While discussing interpretations of Judith in the fin-de-siècle, Dijkstra quotes *Venus in Furs (1870)*: 'Severin certainly was not deaf to their siren call. "Reading in the Book of Judith," he admitted, "I envied the grim hero Holofernes because of the queenly woman who cut off his head with a sword, I envied him his beautiful sanguinary end".'[223] With the themes of deadly seduction and textual violence, Judith was a prime candidate for this new type of characterisation. Klimt's Judith functions closer to Severin's masochistic fantasy, than the woman from the biblical text who shows no signs of erotic pleasure while completing her mission. The fantasy of a

---

[219] Stocker. *Sexual Warrior*. 176.
[220] A woman who participates in one or more of the following: Bondage/Discipline, Dominance/Submission, Sadism/Masochism, facilitating the sexual encounter or relationship as the dominant partner.
[221] Partsch, *Klimt*. 98.
[222] Dijkstra. *Idols*. 376.
[223] Ibid. 375.

sadistic Judith was firmly developed from the minds of male artists and writers. Theodore Ziolkowski argues for not just the character's obsession with Judith, but the sexual preferences of the author himself: 'Sacher-Masoch's self-identification with Holofernes coupled with the desire to be humiliated by strong women - have shaped many of the literary treatments of Judith in the twentieth century.'[224] Klimt's artistic interpretation of a sexually dominant Judith was inspired by the growing fascination of the character as erotic and powerful, rooted in descriptions such as Sacher-Masoch's.

Unlike the drawings from Klimt's studio sessions, *Judith I* was not a visual replication of his models' sexual acts, and his inspiration derived from a member of the Viennese elite - a woman called Adele Bloch-Bauer. Klimt enjoyed a closer relationship with Bloch-Bauer, who he highly respected and feared. Partsch writes on Adele Bloch-Bauer's influence on Klimt, stating 'Klimt was fascinated by the woman, and at the same time feared her. From Klimt's point of view, she wants to cut off his head, the very head she then caresses. This is a Judith who does not hold the head of Holofernes by its hair; nor is she holding the head merely incidentally. She has laid her hand on his head tenderly and is caressing it.'[225] While I dispute the tenderness of Judith's hand, which I read as firmly possessive, I agree with Partsch's fear-fascination interpretation: Judith possesses control over Holofernes, reflecting the power the elite women of Vienna had over Klimt due to their patronage. Whitford writes, 'Adele Bloch-Bauer became acquainted with Klimt not long before she married and, according to an article by the American psychiatrist Salomon Grimberg, they soon began an affair which lasted for twelve years.'[226] The Bloch-Bauer/Klimt affair has been long speculated by art historians, and the eroticism of *Judith I* hints at sexual chemistry between the pair, if not an actual affair. Judith's face is similar to Bloch-Bauer's, and a direct comparison between Klimt's *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I* and *Judith I*

---

[224] Ziolkowski. "Re-Visions." 321.
[225] Partsch, *Klimt.* 81.
[226] Whitford. *Klimt.* 12.

reveals how close this resemblance is. If the facial similarities are not enough, Judith's golden choker appears to be a replica of Bloch-Bauer's jewellery.[227] Whitford speculates that 'her husband was equally blind to this apparent evidence of his cuckoldry.'[228] If the rumours of the affair are true, Bloch-Bauer would have held a certain power over both men in Klimt's eyes, which may have prompted him to liken her to Judith. While this cannot be proven, the potential influence of Klimt's affair reinforces the manner in which *Judith I* can be read.

Secession, Feminism, and Anti-Feminism

Gustav Klimt's relationship with women is certainly misogynistic, reflected through the treatment of his models, and his disrespectful attitude to women outside his elite circle. Whitford notes that he hired poor and disadvantaged women as his models and 'saw them as bodies and little more.' [229] An analysis of Viennese fin-de-siècle society provides the background for Klimt's exploitation as 'pornography was a major industry. Men resorted to prostitutes; they seduced young working-class girls and they kept mistresses. Viennese restaurants had private rooms, the famous *chambres separées*, where couples could first enjoy dinner and then make love unobserved.'[230] Prostitution was common in Vienna, and Klimt used his position as the models' employer to his advantage, and provided these women with little respect. Klimt, however, is a contradiction as he and the associated Viennese Secessionist movement were both championed by the feminist movement, despite the chauvinism he perpetrated. Feminists in this era strongly approved of the

---

[227] Ibid.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Ibid. 166.
[230] Ibid. 161.

Secession, as it was 'perceived as launching a parallel assault on patriarchal society and its outmoded values.'[231] Klimt was viewed as the lesser of two evils, as he was against the dominant artistic academies, and by extension, the anti-feminist culture which permeated literature and politics. Feminism and anti-feminism were caught in a brutal fight, in which both sides drew from academia and culture, and anti-feminist discourse was rife with racist and anti-Semitic attitudes.[232] Klimt's separation from the culture espoused by the anti-feminists caused him, and his contemporaries, to be viewed as prospective allies for feminists.

In *Perceptions of Jewish Female Bodies through Gustav Klimt and Peter Altenberg*, Susanne Kelley analyses Klimt's connection to the Jewish community in Vienna, and the impact this has on *Judith I*. She comments that 'the centrality of the Jewish body in Klimt's portraits was not an aesthetic one, but a financial one. After he withdrew himself from publicly commissioned work following the scandal of the university paintings, he had to rely on his private patrons, many of whom belong to the Viennese Jewish upper-class.'[233] Klimt depended on Jewish women such as Adele Bloch-Bauer, and painted many portraits of them, which were seemingly celebratory. Lloyd notes the power of the Jewish women Klimt surrounded himself with: 'we find that a striking number of them achieved remarkable professional success given the limited opportunities available to them at the time.'[234] The authority of the Jewish figures in Klimt's life is replicated on his canvas, as Klimt chose to paint a famous figure from Jewish scripture. However, Judith is interpreted as more dangerous than heroic, which is problematic, especially when the danger is so sharply fetishised. Jane Kallir argues, 'Klimt's artistic realization of the prevalent fantasy of sex with a dark and dangerous Jewess eloquently expressed the comingled strains of

---

[231] Lloyd. "Viennese Woman." 21.
[232] Ibid. 17-21.
[233] Kelley. "Perceptions." 111.
[234] Lloyd. "Viennese Woman." 28

misogyny and anti-Semitism that characterized fin-de-siècle thought.'[235] This leads me to question whether this work is a tongue-in-cheek commentary on the treatment of women, particularly Jewish women in this period, or if Klimt is facilitating the sexist fantasies himself. Klimt's history with the women in his life, combined with the knowledge that the person on canvas is likely someone he had relations with, persuades me to believe the latter - that Klimt is constructing a visual fantasy. I am less inclined to believe that Klimt is parodying the misogynistic anti-feminists in his work, due to the fact 'he neither illustrated feminist books nor openly supported women's political emancipation.'[236] If Klimt were to have supported the feminist movement publicly and artistically,[237] I perhaps would read the painting differently – however Klimt appears more concerned with objectifying women through his pornographic content. There is the potential to bring in Roland Barthes 'The Death of the Author' theory, which states 'once the Author is removed, the claim to "decipher" a text becomes quite futile. To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing.'[238] The painting's interpretations live on beyond Klimt, and viewers may perhaps read against the grain of the painting and reclaim it as a feminist work. As I said in my introduction, my focus is on keeping artistic intent at the forefront of my research and to not read against the grain. As my methodology is strongly connected with biographies and social context, I will not utilise the Death of the Author/Artist theory.[239]

In the time of Secession and Feminism, it is impossible for Klimt's artistic endeavours to remain uninfluenced by the culture of the city in which he was living. The Battle of the Sexes in Vienna was more complex than simply male against female, and Klimt's work

---

[235] Jane Kallir as quoted by Kelley in "Perceptions of Jewish Female Bodies." 114.
[236] Lloyd. "Viennese Woman." 31.
[237] Due to their connection with the artistic community, feminists were granted access to cultural spaces, where they could host their meetings, and sometimes financial support. See Lloyd. "Viennese Woman."
[238] Roland Barthes. "The Death of the Author." In *Image, Music, Text*, edited by Stephen Heath. London: Fontana Press, 1977. 147.
[239] I hope to return to *Judith I* soon and read it through a feminist lens, but for the purposes of this thesis I cannot kill the artist.

should be read while taking into consideration the classism, anti-Semitism, and social Darwinism active in this society. The misogynistic male fantasies evident on Klimt's canvases were seemingly overlooked by the Feminists who sought an ally. For these women, Klimt was the lesser of two evils, as he did not condemn their movement and offered them solidarity. Judith is textually a Jewish heroine, and while her heroism may be lost among Klimt's sexualisation, her Jewishness remains, heavily influenced by the women from Klimt's elite circle. Judith's assertive sexuality on canvas is not a mockery of feminism, due to the close ties between the Secessionist movement and Women's Rights groups. The work, however, remains an erotic interpretation of Judith; Klimt removes her heroism, and she is reduced to a fetishised rendering of the pretextual character.

2.3   JEAN-JOSEPH BENJAMIN-CONSTANT: THE AMAZON JUDITH

Klimt's *Judith I* is just one example of many paintings of the character which question her identity as Judith. Albert Von Keller's *Die Liebe* (*The Love*, 1907) and Ferdinand Melly's *Tänzerin* (*Dancer*, *Die Kunst v.1*, 1899-1900) are also examples of the Salome-Judith argument. However, in this section I will focus on a Judith who is unquestionably Judith. I will reintroduce Orientalism by analysing an artist who was working several decades prior to Klimt: Jean-Joseph Benjamin-Constant. Benjamin-Constant was a nineteenth century French painter, who utilised Orientalist themes in the treatment of his biblical women. There is an abundance of Judith paintings by Benjamin-Constant, and I selected his 1885-86 *Judith,* which is housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan, New York.[240]

In chapter one, I described the Orientalist movement while discussing Regnault, and Benjamin-Constant was another major name in the French movement. Although Regnault died at the age of twenty-eight, his work was influential, and Nathalie Bondil argues that 'the precedents of Delacroix and Regnault incontestably brought Benjamin-Constant the finest moments of his corpus – the Orientalist canvases from the 1870s and 1880s.'[241] Benjamin-Constant favoured the character of Judith in his career, although the vast selection of Orientalist fantasies also interested him, and he dealt with several of its standard themes. Rosenthal comments:

> Favourite subjects of the nineteenth-century Orientalists included hapless nude slave girls being examined by clothed buyers, the voluptuous abandon of seminude odalisques, and the visits of the lord of the harem to the women's quarters. Such blatant fantasies of male dominance and female submission must have made

---

[240] Image can be viewed at: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/435649
[241] Nathalie Bondil. "Which History Painting? Benjamin-Constant States his Case." In *Benjamin-Constant: Marvels and Mirages of Orientalism*, edited by Nathalie Bondil. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014. 60.

provocative conversation pieces in the drawing rooms of the bourgeois patrons of the Salons.[242]

Scenes of slave markets and harems were frequently depicted across several decades of the nineteenth century, however the paradigm of male dominance and female submission was challenged when Salome, Judith, and Delilah were introduced. Benjamin-Constant and Regnault's respective treatments of the characters offer alternate fantasies for their audiences to admire, and their successors to approach in their own work. Samuel Montiège comments 'in his various depictions of Judith, Benjamin-Constant bypasses the stereotype of the imprisoned odalisque to address that of the femme fatales of history.'[243] For Benjamin-Constant, fatal biblical women were quintessential to the Orientalist theme – exotic, strange, and an intriguing deviation from the traditional odalisques which already had their place in his artistic repertoire.

Although Judith is not a foreign character in her biblical text ("foreign" usually is reserved for women like the Wife of Potiphar who was Egyptian, Jezebel from Sidon, or Delilah who is of ambiguous origin), for artists obsessed with non-European cultures, she was appealing and available to be adapted for their fantasies. Another reason Judith appealed to the Orientalists was her lack of family, which was characteristic of the women on their canvases. Christelle Taraud remarks, 'tender scenes of marital bliss and motherhood are scarce in Orientalist painting, which reinforces the notion that the women of the Near East it depicts are essentially intended to represent an eroticized, fantasized Other.'[244] Judith is a young widow in the text and had not given birth to a child prior to her husband's death. For the Orientalists, Judith belongs to the group of women who are not domestic; neither in

[242] Rosenthal. *Orientalism.* 99.

[243] Samuel Montiège. "Judith." In *Benjamin-Constant: Marvels and Mirages of Orientalism*, edited by Nathalie Bondil. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014. 76.

[244] Christelle Taraud. "Painting the Erotic and Exotic Oriental Feminine in Quiescence." In *Benjamin-Constant: Marvels and Mirages of Orientalism*, edited by Nathalie Bondil. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014. 216.

nature nor in nationality. She functions outside of the type of woman that most men in the nineteenth century desired to marry: 'spotless, quasivirginal household nuns, […] delicate possessions which needed special handling.'[245] Judith is neither spotless nor delicate, and is able to handle not just herself, but also a sword. The narrative contains a show of strength through beheading, and independence is a necessary trait in Judith's characterisation. In this section, I will look at the personality of Benjamin-Constant's *Judith* and how these qualities relate to nineteenth century France and the post-Revolution (gender) law changes.

Judith: Analysis

Benjamin-Constant's 1885-86 *Judith* is a standard Orientalist model of the character. She is portrayed as a white woman, with soft red curls and pinkish pale skin, however the style of her clothing, her accessories, and her sword all indicate Benjamin-Constant desire to include foreign cultures on his canvas. Her dress is peachy pink, with a deep V-shaped neckline, and the shoulders of the garment are gold and bulbous. It is made out of silk (or a similar fabric, as indicated by the shine Benjamin-Constant has created with lighter paint) and there is delicate embroidery on the lapel of the dress and across the golden sash, which is tightly bound around her waist. Judith stands proudly in the centre of the canvas and meets the viewer's gaze seductively, with no hesitancy or fear. The figure is as strong as the textual Judith, and she has no guilt over the murder she will soon commit.

Benjamin-Constant's *Judith* is not as obviously erotic as Klimt's *Judith I*, however it is sexually coded through the tactical placement of her hand on her hip. The hand grips the

---

[245] Dijkstra. *Idols.* 355-356.

sash around her waist, as if teasing the viewer that she may remove it. This aspect of the work, coupled with the dark green sword that lays parallel to her stomach, aids in attracting the viewer's gaze to her pubic region. Another indicator of Judith's subtle eroticism is the shape of her neckline, which extends to the base of her breasts. The sword that Judith grips has multiple purposes, with the most obvious being that it is a common iconographic feature of Judith paintings; after all Judith has to cut Holofernes' head off with something. The sword is dark green, with decorative gold highlights, which reminds the viewer that it is a relic of the culture she belongs to; an Orientalist accessory. The third and final purpose of the sword is related to that subtle sexuality which is present on the canvas: the long, still sheathed sword is phallic in nature, and Judith holds it in front of her groin.

While Judith functions as sexual on Benjamin-Constant's canvas, this is not the most significant attribute of the character, and the artist instead chose to display Judith's strength above all. Montiège comments that Benjamin-Constant 'may have taken inspiration from Henri Regnault's *Salome*: he presents a willing Judith, strong (morally and physically) and avoids revealing the end of the plot by omitting Holofernes' corpse, even his severed head.'[246] In both Regnault and Benjamin-Constant's canvases, the character is not featured with the head of her victim. The soon-to-be executed man is not present on canvas either, but each work signifies a beheading through the placement of iconographic objects. For Benjamin-Constant, that is the sword, which has evidently not been used because it is still sheathed, and there is no blood dripping from it or staining Judith's dress. The outcome of Judith's actions may not be present, but her physical strength is clear from her posture and how effortlessly she holds her heavy sword horizontally. Her mental strength is displayed through her tough expression: determined and resilient, Judith is unwavering from her duty.

---

[246] Montiège. "Judith." 76.

An Amazonian Judith

During the 1880s, Judith's personality was in the process of a dramatic shift, from heroine who kills for a purpose, to femme fatale who murders for her own pleasure. Benjamin-Constant did not construct any of his Judiths as sexual, dangerous vamps (as presented by Klimt), however the Judiths which he did present were influential to those in the succeeding decades. Benjamin-Constant's Judiths exuded power and dominance, but these characteristics were not applied in a sexual way, and by 1885 Judith had not reached dominatrix status. Stocker notes that 'by the early twentieth century the combined influences of Freud, Weininger, and Sacher-Masoch had typed Judith for sexology as aberrant woman: phallic, masculine (that is, denatured), perverted, barren dominatrix.'[247] Sacher-Masoch had already published *Venus in Furs* (1870), which had planted the seed of Judith's sexual dominance, and a darker version of the character was created when his interpretation combined with Benjamin-Constant's strong Judiths, and the increasingly common Salome-Judith misinterpretations.

The 1885-86 *Judith* does not present a dark version of the character, and Benjamin-Constant did not seek to create a dominant woman for Sacher-Masoch's protagonist Severin (or, indeed, Sacher-Masoch himself) to yearn for and submit to. Instead, the Judith on his canvas is reflective of the Amazonian strong woman, which can be attributed to Benjamin-Constant's artistic influences. Montiège reminds us that he 'sought to enter the ranks of the most illustrious artists who had taken on the story of Judith as subject (Michelangelo, Donatello, Mantegna, Rubens, Valentin de Boulogne, Caravaggio.)'[248] Benjamin-Constant was stimulated by the great artists from the Italian Renaissance and

---

[247] Stocker. *Sexual Warrior*. 181.
[248] Montiège. "Judith." 75.

Baroque movements, however his inspiration was not obtained from their composition or setting (typically landscape canvases featuring bedroom scenes from inside the General's tent, usually including multiple people: Judith, Holofernes, Judith's maidservant.) Rather, the Italian artists inspired Benjamin-Constant's view of Judith's personality and strength, and as I have stated, her gaze and posture aids in the construction of her indomitable power. The Judith we see on Benjamin-Constant's canvas is reminiscent of the Greek Amazons, and serves as a new adaptation of the Amazonian Judith of the Renaissance. Elena Ciletti and Henrike Lähnemann comment, 'garbed in clothing and ornaments suffused with references to Athena and the Amazons rather than in the nondescript cloaks of medieval personifications, the Judiths of Italian artists from Donatello to Artemisia Gentileschi are literally enveloped in the authoritative mantle of classical female heroism.'[249] It is the costuming of Italian Judiths, coupled with her accessories (both jewellery and weaponry), which invite comparisons with the mythological figures. Apostolos-Cappadona comments that these qualities, 'reflect values from the classical tradition of the female agency of Athena, Artemis, and the Amazons, those independent women who either wore armor or carried weapons in anticipation of battle or the hunt.'[250] Benjamin-Constant's Judith does not wear armour, but she carries her weapon proudly and anticipates striking Holofernes. The ornamental style of Judith's clothing and weaponry is reminiscent of this classical style, and a comparison can be particularly drawn to Giorgio Vasari's *Judith and Holofernes* (1554), as in this painting, Judith is 'dressed in a garment composed of a pale pink cuirass with gold trim.'[251] While Benjamin-Constant's *Judith* does not wear a breast plate, she is dressed in colours which evoke Vasari's work, and the

---

[249] Elena Ciletti and Henrike Lähnemann. "Judith in the Christian Tradition." In *The Sword of Judith: Judith Studies Across the Disciplines*, edited by Kevin R. Brine, Elena Ciletti and Henrike Lähnemann. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2010. 57.
[250] Diane Apostolos-Cappadona. "Costuming Judith in Italian Art of the Sixteenth century." In *The Sword of Judith: Judith Studies Across the Disciplines*, edited by Kevin R. Brine, Elena Ciletti and Henrike Lähnemann. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2010. 327.
[251] Ibid. 355.

use of gold (either on the trim or accessories) was employed by several of the Renaissance artists.

The Amazon Judith in the Nineteenth Century

Benjamin-Constant was impressed and influenced by a plethora of Italian artists, which is perceptible due to the presence of the Judith-as-Amazon concept. Applying the Amazon theme to Judith heightens her strength and creates a wry commentary on Judith's lack of dependency on men. Eleanor E. Ter Horst comments on the original Amazons of Greek mythology, stating they 'confounded the logic of the Greeks, since they do not behave like conventional women, opposites of men, who stay at home waiting for the men to return from war; nor do they behave entirely like men, since they refuse to align themselves with either of the male camps.'[252] This concept of women who behave outside of the conventions of their culture is indicative of Judith, who does not stay at home while men go to war, nor does she participate in warfare herself. Judith breaks gendered societal binaries by approaching the enemy camp alone, presenting herself as more feminine to appeal to Holofernes, participating in psychological battles by charming him and gaining his trust, then finally employing her physical strength. Textually, no war is needed between the people of Bethulia and the Assyrian threat, as Judith takes initiative and acts in an unconventional manner. Benjamin-Constant's *Judith* displays the power women can potentially have, and reminds the viewer that men are not needed for support or help. This perspective was relatively positive, however it revealed an independent woman during a period where female emancipation was a topical issue. In late nineteenth century France, women were increasingly gaining more civil freedom in a post-revolution political sphere:

---

[252] Eleanor E. Ter Horst. *Lessing, Goethe, Kleist, and the Transformation of Gender: From Hermaphrodite to Amazon*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2003. 123.

> The Constitution of September 1791 defined civil majority in identical terms for men and women. Women were also acknowledged to possess sufficient reason and independence to serve as witness to public documents and to contract obligations as they saw fit (1792). They were also allowed to share in communal properties (1793) […] but it was above all the important laws of September 1792, concerning civil status and divorce, that treated husband and wife in strictly symmetrical terms, establishing both equal rights and a common set of procedures.[253]

Judith, who functions outside of cultural norms, may become a feminist icon to women, but to anti-feminist men she became a warning. The character of Judith was fully capable of thriving on her own, and this began to frighten men who preferred women to be 'delicate possessions.'[254] Elisabeth Sledziewski comments that the 'nineteenth-century antifeminists were therefore not wrong to point out that the Revolution, by destabilizing marriage and the domestic order, had opened a Pandora's box of women's political demands. A woman who was free to choose her own husband or divorce him if she saw fit probably felt entitled to choose her own government.'[255] In the Book of Judith, the character had surprising political power, exhibited through her summoning of the elders of her town (Jdt. 8:10), her impassioned speech, and her command to them: 'Stand at the town gate tonight so that I may go out with my maid; and within the days after which you have promised to surrender the town to our enemies, the Lord will deliver Israel by my hand. Only, do not try to find out what I am doing; for I will not tell you until I have finished what I am about to do' (Jdt. 8:33-34). Judith is not only allowed to complete her task, but is permitted to carry it out in secret, revealing no details of her plan to the Elders. Therefore, although Judith is an appropriate symbol for the growing power of French women, she also clearly epitomises the anti-feminist fears.

---

[253] Elisabeth G. Sledziewski. "The French Revolution as the Turning Point." In *A History of Women in the West: Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War*, edited by Geneviève Fraisse and Michelle Perrot. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993. 36.
[254] Dijkstra. *Idols.* 356.
[255] Sledziewski. "Revolution." 37.

Stocker rightly comments that a 'feminist construction of Judith is of course almost indistinguishable from the misogynist version that demonizes her.'[256] Whether intended to be a feminist or misogynist adaptation, each version includes Judith's power, her sword, and often the head of Holofernes. However, the male reception of the canvases often advocate for Judith's vilification, as men such as the anti-feminists from the *Belle Époque* have the potential to 'relapse into the received wisdom that "women are like that".'[257] These men believed that if Judith could overpower a man, then all women had that potential. In the 1890s, a mere five years after Benjamin-Constant's work was completed, Judith faced a different reception across culture. Jann Pasler comments that 'an emerging hostility toward the "new woman" […] contributed to a radically different reception, one that was fearful and almost misogynist.'[258] Benjamin-Constant believed Judith was dangerous and powerful, however he was impressed with her heroism, her piety, and her resilience, and therefore did not portray her negatively. Nevertheless, later artists, theatre practitioners, and writers did demonise Judith, and the root of their fear can be found in paintings such as this.

While Benjamin-Constant's interpretation of Judith does not feature intense sexuality found in adaptations such as Klimt's and Mossa's, his version was influential on artists who were drawn to the subject. Furthermore, *Judith* also firmly secured its place in culture amidst the gender discourse of the *Belle Époque*, and proved influential to both sides of the argument. Judith was defined by Benjamin-Constant as a heroic, good woman, who teetered on the edge of too-powerful. Pasler reminds us 'in late-nineteenth century France […] painters depicted Judith as predatory femme fatale, associating her with feminine

---

[256] Stocker. *Sexual Warrior*. 18.
[257] Ibid.
[258] Jann Pasler. "Politics, Biblical Debates, and French Dramatic Music on Judith after 1870." In *The Sword of Judith: Judith Studies Across the Disciplines*, edited by Kevin R. Brine, Elena Ciletti and Henrike Lähnemann, Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2010. 431.

evil.'[259] This was particularly prominent during the *fin-de-siècle* and continued through to the end of the *Belle Époque*. In the last section of my Judith chapter, I will remain in the French art scene, but focus on Gustav Mossa, who was active two decades after Benjamin-Constant. Mossa was fond of femmes fatales, and he did not question Judith's nature: no longer was she the Orientalist hero that Benjamin-Constant adored, but an evil woman.

---

[259] Ibid.

2.4 GUSTAV MOSSA: JUDITH THE FASHIONISTA

Unlike Salome or Delilah, the textual Judith is generally regarded as a heroine, although excuses often have to be made for her murderous actions. Stocker comments that the early Christian Fathers' 'understanding of the character was developed through 'the doctrinal allegories that jettisoned literal events of biblical narratives in favour of high-minded metaphors.'[260] These related to their view of Judith as a prototype for Mary,[261] and equating her to the virtue of chastity and celibacy. In particular 'St Jerome cited her example of inconsolable fidelity to her dead husband.'[262] By emphasising her status as a widow, and celebrating her fidelity, chastity, and devotion to God, Judith remained a heroine for centuries. However, Ciletti and Lähnemann argue that 'Judith's "sisterhood" with biblical figures could be used to vilify her or at least to emphasize her equivocal morality, on grounds that are fundamentally sexual.'[263] Judith appears in a beheading narrative like Salome, and her cunning personality is reminiscent of Delilah. By "grouping" Judith with women who are already viewed as morally corrupt, she begins to lose her place as a heroine. Her morality was particularly distorted during the *Belle Époque*, and over the course of three decades, Benjamin-Constant's patriotic hero became the dominatrix of Klimt's *Judith I* (1901) or the vamp in *Judith II* (1909) who is regarded as the more threatening of Klimt's two interpretations.[264] I will not return to Gustav Klimt in this section of chapter two, but rather look at another Gustav; Gustav-Adolf Mossa.

---

[260] Stocker. *Sexual Warrior*. 4.
[261] Ibid.
[262] Ibid.
[263] Ciletti and Lähnemann. "Christian Tradition." 59.
[264] Kelley. "Perceptions." 113-114.

Gustav-Adolf Mossa (1883-1971)[265] was a French artist who became active during the first decade of the twentieth century. He was part of the Symbolist movement, although a much later addition, and he frequently used the femme fatale motif in his paintings. Mossa's canvases were filled with dangerous women from biblical and mythological texts who are 'fully realized femmes fatales.'[266] There is no question about the nature of Mossa's women; all are dangerous and have dubious moralities. Mossa addressed all the characters from my thesis, most notably his doll-like *Salomé* (1901) who licks blood off the sword which was used to decapitate John the Baptist, and *Dalila S'amuse* (Delilah amuses herself, 1905). This version of Delilah is unusual, as it features an entertained woman spectating as the blinded Samson grinds in the prison mill. Delilah is pristine and dressed as an extravagant French woman, while Samson is gritty and covered in blood. The painting I will address is *Judith* (1904), which is a tiny watercolour and ink painting at 36 x 19cm.[267] This Judith a typical example of the femmes fatales of Mossa's repertoire, and particularly reveals his attitude toward the modern French woman. Although this work is French in origin like Benjamin-Constant's, it demonstrates the difference two decades can have on the shaping of a character's personality and morality.

Judith: **Analysis**

Mossa's *Judith* could not be more different from Benjamin-Constant's interpretation of the character. The two artists belonged to different movements, with Mossa a Symbolist, and Benjamin Constant was an Orientalist Academic. Mossa rejected brassy tones and oil painting, and selected softer tones and lighter paint for his *Judith*. The quirky watercolour

---

[265] Adolf and Adolphe are used interchangeably.
[266] Menon. *Evil*. 160.
[267] Image can be viewed at: http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2016/tableaux-sculptures-dessins-anciens-xix-siecle-pf1609/lot.145.html

features a bright colour palette, with shades of pinks, oranges, and yellows dominating the canvas. Judith is not a warrior; she does not wear any armour or carry weaponry, although Mossa did include Holofernes' decapitated head, which rests at Judith's hip. The head is freshly cut and blood drips onto her skirt and her maidservant's apron. The moment Mossa chose to depict was Judith's flight from Holofernes' camp, which here takes place in in broad daylight, under a soft blue sky. Although the stereotypical sword is absent, Mossa did include Judith's maidservant, who is not commonly included on the canvases of this era. The servant assists Judith during her escape and looks over her shoulder to check they are not being followed by Holofernes' soldiers. The landscape the women travel across is typical of provincial France, and the haystacks in the background are reminiscent of those painted by the artists of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist movements.[268]

The background is not the only "French" element of the painting; Judith wears garments which are reflective of Mossa's modern French society, not any foreign cultures or past periods of time. Although the painting is still a retelling of the biblical account, Judith appears as a modern woman, donning a stylish pink dress, and accessories similar to those worn by the fashionistas of the early twentieth century. Judith appears wealthy on Mossa's canvas due to the jewellery she wears, the fabric of her gloves, and the fur around her shoulders. Valerie Steele comments that in France 'luxurious materials, such as silk, velvet and sable, reinforced the image of woman as an expensive and desirable object. Exclusivity created degrees of value, as did the style and sensuousness of particular fabrics and furs.'[269] Judith being draped in expensive jewellery and fabric reinforces the idea that she is desirable, and an object to be admired. Her sensuality is further heightened by her breasts, which are bare and on display for the paintings' viewers.

---

[268] See Vincent Van Gogh's *Wheat Field* series, 1885-1890.
[269] Valerie Steele. "Femme Fatale: Fashion and Visual Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris." *Fashion Theory*, 8:3 (2004) 315-328. 326.

Mossa's *Judith* as Commentary on French Society

Mossa's Judith is signified as highly feminine, from her pale pink dress and matching chiffon hat, to the flowers in her hair and fur draped over her shoulders. Art of the *Belle Époque* exhibited highly feminised women acting sadistically, and even the concept of sin was 'identified as the eternal, enigmatic feminine.'[270] Judith was purposefully stylised as feminine by Mossa to indicate her dark nature, and this is a direct commentary on the fashionable French women. Valerie Steele comments 'the fashionable Parisienne was herself an icon of modernity and, as such, she evoked powerful emotions. Beautiful and seductive, she also seemed to many dangerous and unnatural.'[271] Due to the connection in this period between beauty and danger, women who strove to make themselves fashionable and seductive were treated with caution, and were perceived as vain and self-centred. In the anti-feminists' opinion, these women could undermine the domestic sphere, as Menon notes, 'male artists saw women as being consumed with a passion for *la mode* that often indicated a frivolous attitude that could compromise traditional notions of domesticity and childbearing.'[272] When analysing Benjamin-Constant, I discussed the male anxiety of women's shifting social roles. A woman who chose fashion and her appearance over her husband and children, was reminiscent of the New Woman. Steele comments that the New Woman 'who left home and family for education and a career, has traditionally been regarded as the antithesis of the fashionable woman. But the reality was more complex.'[273] Both the Fashionable Woman and New Woman were regarded as selfish, and criticised for putting their own interests first, whether that was their career or their pursuit of fashion. Mossa's *Judith* committed murder and acted independently, which was already

---

[270] Whitford. *Klimt*. 161.
[271] Steele. "Fashion." 316.
[272] Menon. *Evil*. 54.
[273] Steele. "Fashion." 327.

threatening, but by portraying her as a fashionable French woman, Mossa secured her interpretation as femme fatale.

The textual Judith made a significant effort to dress up for Holofernes, using expensive items of clothing and an array of glittering jewellery to appeal to the General: 'she put sandals on her feet, and put on her anklets, bracelets, rings, earrings, and all her other jewelry. Thus she made herself very beautiful' (Jdt. 10:4). Mossa decided not to employ the Orientalist design (veils, gold tones, and excessive jewellery) as the movement had gone out of fashion by the end of the 1880s, and instead he used the current French style to demonstrate her seductiveness. Menon argues 'the fille d'Eve and femme fatale can be understood as volatile mixtures of fashion and the feminine body, becoming both advertisement of sensuality and a warning against indulgence in pleasure.'[274] Judith functions as both advertisement and warning on Mossa's canvas. He allows his audience to be captivated by her beauty, but conceiving her as stylish serves as a warning: fashionable women are dangerous. Judith's aesthetic appealed to Holofernes and the consequence of his attraction was death. The final detail on Mossa's canvas which signifies Judith's lack of morality is the snake necklace which encircles her neck. Menon notes, 'biblical interpreters have cast the genesis snake as a cunning trickster; as woman became more closely associated with serpents, she took on that quality.'[275] As Judith is often regarded as cunning due to her secretive scheme against Holofernes, and the use of a serpent motif heightens this aspect of her personality. Furthermore due to the association of snakes with evil, this motif contributes to the reshaping of Judith's morality.

---

[274] Menon. *Evil*. 45.
[275] Ibid. 230.

Influence from Charles Baudelaire

Gustav Mossa's treatment of Judith (and other femmes fatales) can be traced back to his fascination with Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867). Baudelaire was one of Mossa's most important influences, and he 'frequently illustrated Baudelaire's poetry, sometimes integrating portions of the chosen poems into his works.'[276] The themes included in Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs Du Mal* (Flowers of Evil) can be found in many of Mossa's paintings. One particular example, in relation to Mossa's *Vénus*, is addressed by Menon: 'Mossa has his Venus spread apart the petals of a lily to chew on the phallic reproductive organs, an image inspired by Baudelaire's poem "Un voyage à Cythère".'[277] The themes and motifs in Baudelaire's poetry are apparent in many of Mossa's paintings, and both were boundary pushing. Barbara Wright notes that Baudelaire's work was 'condemned as an affront to public morality after its first publication in 1857, partly for its poems on lesbian love, partly for perceived sadism, partly for its questioning of conventional morality.'[278] It is particularly the latter two qualities (the sadism and morality questioning) which were influential on Mossa's paintings, which are full of sadistic women. In the poem *Le Vampire* (English: *The Vampire*), Baudelaire references a creature which has been closely associated with the femme fatale, and creates a paradigm of female dominance which is both desired and feared. In this poem, Baudelaire uses language related to bondage: 'polluted wretch! To whom I'm tied, as is the convict to his chain'[279] and subjugation: 'you are too base to be restored from your accursed servitude.'[280] James R. Lawler comments, 'the rhyme scheme changes to an envelope pattern that emphasizes self-

---

[276] Ibid. 160.
[277] Ibid.
[278] Barbara Wright. "Baudelaire's Poetic Journey in Les Fleurs du Mal." In *The Cambridge Companion to Baudelaire*, edited by Rosemary Lloyd. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 31.
[279] Charles Baudelaire. "The Vampire," translated by H.C. In *Baudelaire in English*, edited by Carol Clark and Robert Sykes. London: Penguin Books, 1997. 46.
[280] Ibid. 47.

enslavement; the last words, returning to the title, put in one and the same breath the horror of submission and the imperious need for submission.'[281] This particular feature of Baudelaire's poetry is evoked by Mossa in his paintings of biblical femmes fatales, who act cruelly and without mercy, and the male figures who allow, and desire it to happen. By the start of the twentieth century, Judith had been characterised as a dominatrix, as I have discussed in relation to Klimt, and this appears again in Mossa's retelling. For Mossa, Holofernes has already succumbed to Judith's tempting, and she is satisfied as she leaves the enemy camp with his head in her hands. Mossa prompts the viewer to be placed in a precarious position between desiring to submit to Judith, and fearing the horrifying outcome of that submission, which is present in the form of Holofernes' head.

Throughout *Les Fleurs du Mal*, 'humanity is shown as seeking for some infinite satisfaction in art and love ("Spleen and the Ideal"), in the life of the city ("Parisian Scenes"), in stimulants ("Wine"), in perversity ("Flowers of Evil"), and finally, in death ("Death").'[282] Most of these concepts are present in Mossa's canvas – with, perhaps most playfully, a reference to stimulants in *Judith* through the cluster of poppies in her hair. Menon comments, 'Gustave Adolphe Mossa took the subversion of flower imagery to new heights in many of his artworks including his treatment of poppies in *Judith* (1904).'[283] Poppies were associated with sleep, peacefulness, and death in the nineteenth century,[284] and a flower which symbolises death is hardly subversive in relation to Judith. However, the peaceful and dreamy nature of the flower is not cohesive with the narrative. Holofernes did not have a peaceful death and the text drips with violence, similar to the dripping blood from Holofernes' head on Mossa's canvas. Furthermore, poppies were a source of opium, a

[281] James R. Lawler. *Poetry and Moral Dialectic Baudelaire's Secret Architecture*. London: Associated University Press, 1997. 69.
[282] Wright. "Baudelaire." 32.
[283] Menon. *Evil*. 160.
[284] Malgorzata Luczynska-Holdys. *Soft-Shed Kisses: Re-visioning the Femme Fatale in English Poetry of the 19th Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013. 218.

stimulant referenced by Baudelaire across *Les Fleurs du Mal*, and Judith's poppies are a playful nod to this.

Death is also a mutual theme of Mossa and Baudelaire, and death in relation to sadism, appears frequently in the work of both. While sadistic-dominant women appear in poems such as *The Vampire,* a more general look at sadism creeps into Baudelaire's writing. The poem *Une Charogne* (*A Carcass*), is an example of the use of sadism and death in Baudelaire's poetry, as he compares his female companion to a carcass they once discovered:

> Yet you will be like that corruption too,
>
> Like that infection prove —
>
> Star of my eyes, sun of my nature, you,
>
> My angel and my love!
>
> Queen of the graces, you will even be so,
>
> When, the last ritual said,
>
> Beneath the grass and the fat flowers you go,
>
> To mould among the dead.'[285]

The misogyny evident in Baudelaire's poem (along with several others from his collection) is influential on Mossa, who produced objectified women such as Judith, and specifically fashioned them to be representations of evil. Damian Catani argues that in *The Carcass*, 'the female companion evoked in this poem is objectified, denied a voice, and addressed in

---

[285] Charles Baudelaire. "A Carcass." Translated by Richard Herne Shepherd in *Fleurs du Mal* http://fleursdumal.org/poem/126. Accessed September 15, 2017.

provocatively grotesque, humiliation.'[286] This treatment of women is also present in Mossa's work, and is prominent through Judith who is objectified. For the viewer, Judith is presented as the threat; she is the dominant woman who controls and destroys men, but Mossa is ultimately in control of his character.

Mossa's *Judith,* while stylistically different from both Klimt and Benjamin-Constant's interpretations, shares a similar personality with the former. Both artists neglect Judith's heroism in favour of shaping her as a deadly woman. Judith acts dominant for their fantasies, but ultimately is not truly in control; her voice is removed and she is objectified. Mossa shaped Judith to be what he perceived as the perfect fatal woman; fashionable, beautiful, and cold, and consequently he regulated what elements of her narrative and personality are on display. Holofernes' bloody head is included, which reminds the viewer that Judith is a murderer, and through Mossa's equation of femininity with evil, her hyper-feminised appearance only serves to vilify her. Mossa gave Judith the "*Belle Époque* treatment" and she emerged with the same characterisation as Salome and Delilah: she is now a vain, beautiful, and fatal woman.

---

[286] Damien Catani. "Notions of Evil in Baudelaire." *The Modern Language Review,* 102:4 (2007) 990-1007. 997.

3 DELILAH: FOR HE HAS TOLD HIS WHOLE SECRET TO ME

3.1 INTRODUCTION

While the Bible is bursting with women who compete intellectually and physically in the "Battle of the Sexes,"[287] there is one character in particular who emerges as an exemplary model for this concept: Delilah. Judges 16 details the relationship between the biblical "strong man" Samson, and a mysterious woman named Delilah. Delilah's actions against Samson are so notorious that her name has become synonymous with tempting, seducing, and destructive women.[288] The *Belle Époque* saw artists condemning Delilah as a villainess, and shaping her into the femme fatale archetype across the arts, accompanying Salome and Judith. Samson and Delilah are often described as partners who engage in violent, passionate love,[289] regardless of the textual reality. The narrative itself does not feature a fully developed romance, especially on Delilah's part. There is no clarification in the text regarding Delilah's feelings toward Samson, although it is clear he loved her: 'he fell in love with a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah' (Judg 16:4). Their initial encounter is not described, and instead the text launches into "the beginning of the end" for Samson: his enemy group, the Philistines, visit Delilah to request that she discover the secret to Samson's strength. They offer Delilah eleven hundred pieces of silver to complete her task, and after several failed attempts she discovers a haircut removes his strength.

---

[287] The Battle of the Sexes was a common theme in the *Belle Époque*, and something I will explore in depth in this chapter.

[288] Exum, *Plotted*. 176.

[289] See: Zuffi. *Love*. 294-295. Samson and Delilah are discussed under the section "Famous Couples."

When Delilah eventually cuts Samson's hair, he loses his strength and she calls his enemies to take him away. The moment Samson's hair is severed is often understood to take place after a sexual encounter, as Samson falls asleep on her lap. Subsequently, Samson is arrested by the Philistines, has his eyes gouged out, and is forced to work in the prison mill. Death does not come instantly to him, but after his torture, he is put on display by the Philistines for entertainment. Samson is placed between two pillars, and with a desperate desire for revenge, he prays to Yahweh, and asks for his strength to return – a request which is granted, allowing him to push the pillars. Samson perishes in that moment, when he is crushed by the house along with his enemies. However, his death narrative begins the moment Delilah ordered his hair to be cut – a symbolic beheading. For Samson, it is irrelevant whether the blade strikes his head or hair. The same outcome would occur either way: whether it is instantaneous or consequential, a chop results in death.

The narrative in Judges 16 follows a repetitive structure: Delilah attempts to discover Samson's secret, he lies and gives her false methods for depriving him of his strength, Delilah carries out each procedure, and she continues to fail.[290] However, on Delilah's fourth attempt, she is surprisingly successful after urging him repeatedly:

> "How can you say, "I love you," when your heart is not with me? You have mocked me three times now and have not told me what makes your strength so great." Finally, after she had nagged him with her words day after day, and pestered him, he was tired to death. So he told her his whole secret. (Judg 16:15-17).

Scholars have tried to understand and rationalise why Samson tells Delilah the truth. The text is clear that Samson confesses because he has tired of the pressure. He refuses to leave

---

[290] This occurs three times in the passage. First, he claims she must bind him with seven fresh bowstrings, after which he instructs her to use ropes which have not been used, and then, closer to the truth he claims she must weave the seven locks of his hair and fix it tight with a pin. None of these attempts are successful.

Delilah because he loves her, but he wants this "pestering" to stop. Mieke Bal reminds her readers that 'Samson knows from experience that Delilah is betraying him.'[291] This cannot be disputed; however, Bal does comment on a recurring interpretation of Samson's characterisation: 'the solution the recipients choose is his lack of intelligence.'[292] This is a simple explanation, and appears sound, although it must be recognised that there is no textual foundation for this other than Samson conforming to Delilah's wishes, a fact which Bal stresses.[293] Corrington Streete notes, 'Samson foolishly treats her cajoling as just another riddling game, despite the fact that the Philistines try to capture him three times'[294] and her emphasis is on Samson's foolish nature and lack of perception of reality.

There is also an alternative solution provided by Lori Rowlett which reflects some of the interpretations found on the canvases of the *Belle Époque*: Delilah can appear in the role of a dominatrix. Judges 16 has been read through a "kink lens" by scholars who believe Delilah's attempts to discover Samson's secret are part of an 'S/M game.'[295] Rowlett argues that, 'the constant give and take between the two lovers resembles S/M role-play, complete with ritual questions, hair fetishism and other power games. Delilah does not trick him into saying or doing anything. Samson deliberately relinquishes control to the dominatrix who repeatedly subjects him to humiliation and bondage.'[296] Delilah's incessant questioning can be interpreted as a game, however the hazardous stakes are authentic. If Samson is playing the interrogation game - allowing himself to be tied up and taunted with threats of the Philistines – he must either be unaware or uncaring of the

---

[291] Bal. *Lethal*. 58.
[292] Ibid. 59.
[293] For further reading: Ibid. 58-59.
[294] Corrington Streete. *Strange*. 55.
[295] Lori Rowlett. "Violent Femmes and S/M: Queering Samson and Delilah," in *Queer Commentary and the Hebrew Bible*, edited by Ken Stone. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001. 106.
[296] Ibid.

consequences. Rowlett argues that Samson's truth-telling is an 'act of deeper submission'[297] and utilises a comparative scenario from modern contexts:

> In modern S/M, both partners have a codeword to stop the game just to keep it safe, but part of the allure is being on the edge of danger. As John Preston points out in his article on the gay leather scene, "overcodification" makes the game too safe, too predictable, and that makes it unsexy. [...] When Samson takes the game to the next level, he is seeking a new challenge.'[298]

The concept of neglecting safety is reflective of Samson's attitude, as he grants Delilah the power to betray him, although I believe this negates the S/M reading (at least through a modern lens.) Sisson writes that 'contemporary S/M organizations promote and share the behavioural code, "safe, sane and consensual" […] According to S/M community standards, only consensual S/M interactions constitute S/M; non-consensual interactions constitute abuse.'[299] A clear distinction must be drawn between unsafe thrill-seeking and modern S/M: if Samson practices BDSM, it is unsafe and not particularly sane or consensual.[300] Scholars who use the kink lens while analysing biblical text are often drawn to dangerous passages and neglect to differentiate between safely carried out fantasies and the non-consensual textual violence.[301] The violence of the text may still be fetishised, however this is not an example of the modern, safe S/M. Similarly, *Belle Époque* artists and writers do not follow any modern safety standards in their sadomasochistic fantasies, as these had not been developed.[302] However, the narrative appealed to them as they saw Delilah's power over Samson and believed they could replicate this dynamic for their canvases.

---

[297] Ibid. 110.
[298] Ibid
[299] Sisson. "The Cultural Formation of S/M." 23.
[300] Here I am omitting Preston's argument, as it is attributable to a small amount of people who stray away from the traditional 'safe, sane, and consensual' mantra of BDSM.
[301] Another example would be the Songs of Solomon. See: Virginia Burrus and Stephen Moore. "Performing Sadomasochism in the Song of Songs." *Women and Performance: a journal of feminist theory,* 13:1 (2002): 129-146.
[302] For further reading, see: Sisson. "The Cultural Formation of S/M." Particularly pages 14-23.

Of the three characters who are the focus of this thesis, Delilah is unsurprisingly the least ambiguous in terms of her morality – Salome is a young girl following her mother's orders, and Judith is more heroine than villainess – but Delilah is seemingly seductive and dangerous. This is due to the way in which her character is framed; Delilah's actions are against a hero figure (Samson), not an antagonist (Holofernes), and she acts independently, unlike Salome who is textually under her mother's orders. Many feminist biblical scholars, including Mieke Bal and Carol Smith, have argued for her reclamation, as she had traditionally been used to typify feminine evil, and condemned across scholarship and culture without regard to her perspective or motivations. Delilah is wrongly described as a Philistine by many writers including Margarita Stocker, who refers to her as 'a nefarious siren and a Philistine to boot'[303] or Margreet Nouwen, when she uses the term 'fellow Philistines'[304] in reference to Delilah's relationship with the soldiers on Max Liebermann's canvas. However, nowhere in Judges does the text say Delilah is a Philistine, and Carol Smith draws attention to the vague nature of Delilah's origins: 'Delilah has a Hebrew name. From where does she originate? She lives on the boundary between Israelite and Philistine territory. The text presents at least the possibility that Delilah is an Israelite.'[305] The concept of Delilah-as-domestic-based provides a problem for those who wish to characterise her as foreign through the Israelite-Philistine divide. Delilah is often vilified due to her association with the foreign enemy. The text is binary in nature as it features the Battle of the Sexes dynamic: male against female.[306] Furthermore, Samson is the hero from home, who fights against the villains from elsewhere, which strengthens the binary nature of the text. It would be nonsensical to read Delilah as an Israelite, as this would destroy the dichotomy. It is not known whether Delilah is an Israelite or a Philistine, and I will not

---

[303] Stocker. *Sexual Warrior*. 12.

[304] Margreet Nouwen. "Who's Afraid of Delilah? Liebermann Portraying Women." In *Max Liebermann and International Modernism: An Artist's Career from Empire to Third Reich*, edited by Marion Deshmukh, Françoise Forster-Hahn, and Barbara Gaehtgens. New York: Berghahn, 2011. 158.

[305] Carol Smith. "Delilah: A Suitable Case for (Feminist) Treatment?" In *Judges: A Feminist Companion to the Bible*, edited by Athalya Brenner. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999. 94.

[306] Here, I wish to acknowledge that gender is not binary. Multiple genders exist outside of "male" and "female," however the historical Battle of the Sexes is binary by nature: male vs female.

assume one stance, but rather comment on the advantages each alignment offers to those wishing to either reclaim her, or vilify her further. Lillian Klein assumes that Delilah is a Philistine and makes the case that she is 'a resourceful woman, possibly a heroine to her own people.'[307] Delilah, to the Philistines, may be categorised as Judith "type": a saviour who defeats her own Holofernes figure and Carol Smith notes that from the perspective of a Philistine woman, Delilah is 'a woman who is patriotic and shows initiative.'[308] Patriotism is regularly associated with the character of Judith, but in artistic recreations of Delilah this quality is not normally employed. If Delilah were to be read as an Israelite, then she would be cast as a traitor and villainess, but as a Philistine, she is patriotic, as she betrays the enemy of her people. On the other hand, accepting Delilah as a Philistine would open up the foreign versus domestic paradigm: Delilah would be cast as "different" and foreign, which thus invokes fear and uncertainty. Regardless of the result, Delilah's nationality will force her into the position of villainess, either due to her foreignness and enemy status (as Philistine), or her betrayal (as Israelite) of not just Samson, but her people as a whole. The lack of understanding of Delilah's origin only serves to strengthen her ties to the femme fatale concept. As Exum argues, 'the femme fatale represents for the man both a fantasy of female sexual desire, whose nature he does not really understand, and the mystery of female sexuality, the secret he cannot divine.'[309] Delilah's obscured origin was attractive to *Belle Époque* artists, who wished to either fetishise or condemn foreign cultures, and utilised the femme fatale trope to provide social commentary.

Unlike Salome and Judith, Delilah does not seem to have a concentrated artistic presence in one particular era. Instead, her appearance is fairly consistent across the past five hundred years of European art. She is a subject to whom painters return commonly, from

---

[307] Lillian Klein quoted by Smith. "Delilah: A Suitable Case for (Feminist) Treatment?" 109.
[308] Ibid.
[309] Exum, *Plotted*. 227.

Lucas Cranach the Elder in the German Renaissance to Artemisia Gentileschi and Elisabetta Sirani in Baroque; from Rembrandt in the Dutch Golden Age, to Alexandre Cabanel in French Academic art. Delilah's popularity increased as the *Belle Époque* progressed however, and she was depicted across the visual and literary arts, along with her "sisters" Salome and Judith. In this chapter, I will analyse Gustave Moreau's *Samson and Delilah* (1882), which is an example of the Symbolist approach to Delilah. Then I undertake two German artists, Max Liebermann and Lovis Corinth. These artists were contemporaries and part of the Berlin Secession, however the motivations behind their work, along with their treatment of Delilah, are distinctive enough to justify my decision to include both.

3.2 GUSTAVE MOREAU: THE DECORATED DELILAH

In chapter one, I briefly discussed the Symbolist painter Gustave Moreau, who was active in the nineteenth century. In my introduction to Salome I included a short analysis of *The Apparition*, as the work was significant to the development of Salomania, and here I return to Moreau to analyse one of his many interpretations of Delilah, *Samson and Delilah* (1882). My reason for discussing Moreau's interpretation of Delilah over his Salome series is to demonstrate that while he *was* a pioneer of Salomania, other women also captured his attention. Moreau's work was full of biblical themes and interpretations of Hellenistic mythology, as he 'devoted himself exclusively to illustrating the doings of the gods and Biblical scenes.'[310] This was partly due to his fascination with spirituality and interest in the narratives of various religions, however he also was influenced by Renaissance artists,[311] whose work were also brimming with religious themes. Moreau's association with the Symbolist movement also prompted his interest in spiritual paintings, as these themes were prominent in art from across the movement. Moreau, like the other Symbolists, 'turned away from the 'real' world […] taking refuge in a phantasmal world, supposedly free from the heavy burden of history.'[312] Moreau particularly was drawn to dangerous and seductive women from religious and mythological contexts, and he frequently painted biblical temptresses, Hellenistic goddesses, and creatures such as sphinxes. Mathieu notes that Moreau's output of the last two decades of the nineteenth century 'was largely devoted to one dominant theme: woman, beautiful and aloof. His varying images of her appears in one watercolour after another.'[313] After his treatment of

---

[310] Pierre-Louis Mathieu. *Gustave Moreau: Complete Edition of the Finished Paintings, Watercolours and Drawings*, Oxford: Phaidon Press Ltd, 1977. 149.
[311] Pierre, José. "Gustave Moreau: Through the Eyes of Succeeding Generations." In *Gustave Moreau His Life and Work*, edited by Jean Paladilhe. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1972. 77.
[312] Peter Cooke. *Gustave Moreau: History Painting, Spirituality, and Symbolism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014. 31.
[313] Mathieu. *Gustave Moreau.* 155.

Salome in the Salon of 1876, his fascination with dangerous and beautiful women increased, and his interest was unwavering until his death in 1898. Moreau's *Samson and Delilah*[314] features Delilah as a quintessential femme fatale, from her appearance to the persona which exudes from her. Both characters are relaxing in their private chambers on canvas, with Delilah taking on a dominant role, while Samson is made submissive (and feminised) by Moreau.

Samson and Delilah: Analysis

Moreau's *Samson and Delilah* is a small but detailed watercolour,[315] which makes a strong impact through its treatment of the characters, despite its size. Delilah sits upright on a chair, while Samson lounges on the floor, with his head and shoulders propped up on her lap. Samson is evidently comfortable around Delilah, as his eyes are closed and his head is tipped back, exposing his neck. Both figures are clothed, but their languid states indicate that they have exerted themselves during sexual intercourse. The moment featured occurs before Delilah cuts Samson's hair as he still has his long locks. Delilah's arm is draped over Samson's shoulder and while the position is seemingly protective, it is juxtaposed by the scissors she holds in her hand. Gustave Larroumet, a nineteenth century art historian, describes the characters present on Moreau's painting:

> Samson is not the fairground Hercules represented by so many painters' he is a strong and tender being who will perish for having placed his trust in love. Delilah, with her tawny gold hair and the matte whiteness of her flesh, is a joyful beast of prey, egotistical and feline, who remains circumspect and false even in the throes of pleasure.[316]

---

[314] Image can be viewed at: https://www.wikiart.org/en/gustave-moreau/samson-and-delilah-1882
[315] The size is approximately 15.8x 21.3 cm, making it one of the smallest paintings in this thesis.
[316] Gustave Larroumet as quoted by Geneviève Lacambre in *Gustave Moreau: Between Epic and Dream.* Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago; Princeton University Press, 1999. 201.

Delilah acts confidently while gazing at the viewer; uncaring toward Samson despite their intimacy and his trust in her. Viewers may be unnerved by Delilah, who 'has an impassive face like that of the sphinx'[317] as she challenges the gaze of those who look upon her. Moreau interprets Delilah as vain and seductive: she knows she is attractive and intends to tempt men into replicating Samson's submission.

Gustave Moreau fashions Samson and Delilah as visually similar; both have long hair, are adorned with jewels, and have thin, feminine bodies. There are subtle physical differences which make Delilah identifiable, such as her red hair, pale skin, and the fact she is the more decorative of the two. She wears a long blue skirt, and her hair is gathered on top of her head and bound with strands of jewellery. Samson is beardless, which deviates from traditional iconography: Rembrandt gave Samson a beard in his *Blinding of Samson* (1636), as did Lucas Cranach the Elder in *Samson and Delilah* (1528-30). Furthermore, Moreau's Samson is thinner and more androgynous, which was a typical feature of his repertoire. Mathieu states that 'the male figures in Moreau's work are always young men […] even a hero-like Hercules, the very personification of male strength and courage, was transformed in Moreau's hands into a slender academy figure.'[318] Both Hercules and Samson are noted for their strength, yet signifiers of their traditional masculinity, such as their muscles and beards, are absent from Moreau's interpretation.[319] The reason Moreau stripped Samson of his muscular appearance was to increase his desirability. Emmanuel Cooper writes 'artists within the decadent circle found the concept of the androgynous or

---

[317] Lacambre. *Epic*. 201.
[318] Mathieu. *Gustave Moreau.* 165.
[319] The androgynous Samson invites a queer reading, which is strengthened due to Moreau's ambiguous sexuality. It is likely that his sexuality is outside the hetero/homo-sexual binary. Moreau had a twenty-five year personal (possibly romantic) relationship with a woman named Adelaide-Alexandrine Dureux, although a romantic relationship cannot be confirmed. However, personal letters Moreau exchanged with his patron Henri Rupp are often used to argue that Moreau is homosexual. If Moreau had personal, possibly romantic, relationships with both Dureux and Rupp, it seems nonsensical to categorise his sexuality as binary – singularly attracted to either men or women. The bonds with people of different genders suggest that Moreau is bisexual, although this is just speculation. See Mathieu or Cooper for further reading.

effeminate male highly attractive.'[320] This was particularly prominent in Moreau's work, and his Samson is a typical example of his feminisation. Cooper comments that as Moreau 'grew older he became fascinated with the youthful nude male which occurred with greater frequency.'[321] To Moreau, the beautiful (innocent) male victim was just as desirable as the beautiful (deadly) female instigator.

Delilah as the Quintessential Femme fatale

Moreau's treatment of biblical characters was significant to the development of the femme fatale trope during the *Belle Époque*. In reference to Moreau's fatal women Gudrun Schubert argues that the paintings 'echo the lust, lechery and destruction already associated with the literary treatment of similar subject-matter'[322] and she further comments that Moreau's fascination with such subjects inspired 'several similar variations on the theme of the fatal, destructive woman.'[323] One of Moreau's major influences was Baudelaire, just as his Symbolist successor Gustav Mossa. Baudelaire was one of Moreau's favourite writers,[324] and Moreau was influenced not only by the themes of *Les Fleurs du Mal,* but also societal attitudes propagated by the writer. Baudelaire influenced both Moreau's femmes fatales and his opinion of women in general:

> Woman performs a kind of duty […] when she endeavours to appear magical and supernatural: she should dazzle men and charm then, she is an idol who should cover herself with gold so as to be adored. She should therefore borrow from all the

---

[320] Emmanuel Cooper. *The Sexual Perspective: Homosexuality and Art in the Last 100 Years in the West.* London: Routledge, 1994. 70.

[321] Ibid. 71.

[322] Gudrun Schubert. "Women and Symbolism: Imagery and Theory." *Oxford Art Journal; Women in Art*, 3:1 (1980) 29-34. 30.

[323] Ibid.

[324] José Pierre. "Gustave Moreau: Through the Eyes of Succeeding Generations." In *Gustave Moreau His Life and Work*, edited by Jean Paladilhe. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1972. 90.

arts the means of rising above nature so as to better subjugate the hearts and impress the minds of men.[325]

On Moreau's canvas, Delilah has clearly charmed Samson into falling in love with her. She is covered in golden accessories, glittering jewels, and appears as the perfect "idol"; one who has subjugated Samson. However, Delilah does not have a good nature according to Moreau, and her appearance and sexuality are both performative. Moreau's Delilah pretends to love Samson and allows him to be comfortable around her, thus trapping him. Delilah's sexuality, beauty, and charms mask her fatal nature; a nature which is revealed to the viewer through her challenging gaze and the glint of her scissors. Douglas W. Druick writes that in Moreau's repertoire 'woman represents the forces of destruction and chaos. She is "unconscious," lacking in thought and an "inner sensibility"; and "animal nature," at once "vegetal and bestial," driven by "unsatisfied desire" for the fulfilment of which she is ready to "[trample] everything underfoot." Hence she is naturally "fatal".'[326] Therefore Moreau's Delilah acts as a typical *Belle Époque* femme fatale: although she is beautiful, she possesses a destructive nature, which is unhinged, unrelenting, and ultimately deadly. Although the moment displayed by Moreau is seemingly blissful - the comfort a lover offers her partner - it is the calm before the storm. Delilah will soon cut Samson's hair and destroy his life.

Moreau's personal attitude toward women is what determines the nature of the female characters on his canvases. Cooper notes, 'Moreau had little affection for women in general, writing that the female is "in her primal essence, an unthinking creature, mad on mystery and the unknown, smitten with evil in the form of perverse and diabolical

---

[325] Charles Baudelaire as quoted by Wendy Steiner. *The Trouble with Beauty*. London: William Heinemann, 2001. 81.
[326] Douglas W. Druick, "Moreau's Symbolist Ideal." In *Gustave Moreau Between Epic and Dream*, edited by Geneviève Lacambre. Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago; Princeton University Press, 1999. 37.

seduction".'[327] Therefore, it is unsurprising that he is attracted to the character of Delilah, whose action against Samson is interpreted as diabolical or evil. Exum notes that for the textual Delilah '"prying" and "lying" attribute evil intention to her,'[328] and while a case for feminist reclamation can be (and has been) made, Delilah remains a favourite for artists who desire to produce a traditional biblical temptress. Moreau uses characters such as Delilah to demonstrate several traits which he believed were inherent to modern women. An example of this can be found when he wrote in reference to one of his Salome paintings:

> This bored, temperamental, highly sensual woman is given very little pleasure at seeing her enemy laid low, so sick is she of always having her every desire satisfied. This woman, walking nonchalantly, bestially, in gardens which have just been stained by that horrible murder, which so horrified even the executioner that he ran off distractedly - you should really enjoy this. When I want to portray these nuances, I find them, not in my subject, but in the real nature of woman today, who searches for unhealthy emotions and because she is so stupid, does not understand the horror of the most appalling situations.[329]

The characters on canvas function as materialisations of Moreau's opinion of women. Delilah's devious and deadly persona in *Samson and Delilah* reflects what Moreau believes is the nature of women. Delilah is as beautiful as Samson, but while Samson is serene, trusting, and capable of love, Delilah is temperamental, and acts with nonchalance as she destroys Samson's life. By depicting fatal women continuously across his canvases, Moreau warns his viewers against seductive women, while perpetrating his own misogyny.

Moreau significantly contributed to the construction of the biblical femme fatale, as his chauvinism shaped his portrayals of women on his canvases. Although his depictions of Salome are usually cited by scholars, I analysed *Samson and Delilah* to demonstrate that Moreau addresses the theme of morality (in particular the nature of women) on canvases

---

[327] Cooper. *Sexual Perspective.* 71.
[328] Exum, *Plotted.* 175.
[329] Gustave Moreau quoted by Sine. "Cases." 16.

other than *The Apparition*. In this painting, he explores gender, powerful women, and portrays Delilah in a misogynistic manner by critiquing her femininity. Moreau simultaneously uses femininity to fashion Samson to his aesthetic ideal, which suggests that Moreau believes feminine attributes are intolerable on women, but are positive and sensual when applied to men. To Moreau, women must be characterised negatively; he frames their minds, actions, and sexualities as deadly. The aloof, arrogant, and egotistical women from his repertoire, such as Delilah, therefore became highly influential during the *Belle Époque*, prompting later artists to portray their characters similarly.

3.3 MAX LIEBERMANN: THE MODERN DELILAH

Practically every artist in this thesis dealt with religious themes multiple times in their career. However, my next artist was not obsessed with biblical characters, and generally recoiled from religious source material. Max Liebermann (1847–1935) was a Berlin-based painter who was not attached to any of my previously discussed artistic movements; he was a well-established German Impressionist painter. Impressionism was a rival to the Academic and Symbolist movements of the nineteenth century, and easily attracts the attention and admiration of twenty first century viewers, due to its soft pastel tones and obvious brushstrokes. Impressionists were not generally concerned with spirituality and religious subjects, preferring to break away from classical themes and focus on nature, and treatments of light and colour:

> The age-old principles of academic painting- stillness, symmetry, order, and cleanliness – they cast aside the distinction between foreground and background; the frontal illumination needed for chiaroscuro; the sharpness of outline' the balance of mass and colour; and the solidarity of form.[330]

While the earlier French Impressionists did not pay much attention to biblical subjects in an attempt to distance themselves from Academic painters, German Impressionists from the *fin-de-siècle* produced biblical paintings, including Max Liebermann and Lovis Corinth.[331] Upon viewing Max Liebermann's *Samson and Delilah* (1902),[332] it is clear that his work is reminiscent of Impressionists such as Monet and Pissarro, as he uses a softer colour palette. Thus far, I have not explored the Impressionist movement, due to the general lack of the femme fatale trope on their canvases, however Liebermann's *Samson and Delilah* provides a modern treatment of the characters. Liebermann uses his characters

---

[330] Jo Marceau. *Art: A World History*. London: Dorling Kindersley, 1998. 490.
[331] Corinth's placement as an Impressionist is a little more complex – I will address this in his section.
[332] Image can be viewed at:
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1902_Liebermann_Simson_und_Delia_anagoria.JPG

to represent the cultural "Battle of the Sexes" which was a prevalent topic in early twentieth century Germany.

Max Liebermann did not frequently paint biblical subjects, although his reasoning was dissimilar to the Impressionists who wanted to paint more natural themes and avoid Academic subject matter. He avoided producing biblical retellings because he 'felt no obligation to explore Jewish tradition or subject matter in his work and his resistance to identifying his art as Jewish was unwavering.'[333] Liebermann himself was Jewish, and this attitude was in response to the anti-Semitic criticism his work had faced. The first religious subject he painted was from New Testament narrative, *The Twelve Year Old Jesus in the Temple* (1879), in which he depicted the episode from Luke 2: 41-51. When displayed, this painting was met with varying responses; the harshest of which were anti-Semitic critiques of Jesus' appearance. Lenman writes 'when first shown at the 1879 Munich International Exhibition it unleashed a storm of anti-Semitic abuse – the Jesus figure, actually modelled on an Italian child, was attacked as too "Jewish".'[334] The claims, along with the fact the painting 'was rehung in a side room and subsequently vilified in an unedifying parliamentary debate'[335] contributed to Liebermann's decision to avoid Jewish themes. Barbara C. Gilbert notes that 'Liebermann's story is also marked by personal experiences of anti-Semitism, which culminate after the takeover of the National Socialists (Nazis) with the removal of many of his paintings from German museums.'[336] Furthermore, at the start of the 1930s, he was the leader of the Berlin Secession, but he resigned as the Nazis

---

[333] Mason Klein. "Gentleman's Agreement: Belief and Disillusionment in the Art of Max Liebermann." *In Max Liebermann: From Realism to Impressionism*, edited by Barbara C. Gilbert. Los Angeles: University of Washington Press, 2005. 173.
[334] Lenman, *Artists*. 88.
[335] Ibid.
[336] Barbara C. Gilbert. "Max Liebermann: A Long and Fruitful Career." In *Max Liebermann: From Realism to Impressionism,* edited by Barbara C. Gilbert. Los Angeles: University of Washington Press, 2005. 21.

rose to power.[337] Despite his intention to avoid Jewish themes, he was attracted to Samson's narrative from the Hebrew Bible. He portrayed Judges 16 and the turbulent "couple" twice on canvas, and multiple times further in preliminary sketches and studies. The first canvas was completed and displayed in 1902, and with the second version appearing in 1910. I will focus on the earlier painting, due to its treatment of Delilah as a femme fatale and the theme of Battle of the Sexes. This theme prevailed so strongly on Liebermann's canvas that his painting was a central component of the *Geschlechterkampf* art exhibition (Battle of the Sexes, 2016-17) in the Städel Gallery, Frankfurt. The work was not only used in promotional material, such as street posters and website banners, but also inspired a digital trailer of the exhibit. This trailer featured a man and woman engaging in an animalistic fight; the climax of which saw the actors replicating the positions held by Samson and Delilah on Liebermann's canvas.

Samson and Delilah: Analysis

Liebermann's *Samson and Delilah* takes place immediately after Samson's hair is shorn. The couple are in bed together with Samson asleep on Delilah's lap. Liebermann chooses to render the moment directly after Samson's haircut, having his Delilah extend her arm up in victory, while grasping her trophy: a clump of Samson's hair. Liebermann strips away any unnecessary decorative costumes or background features in *Samson and Delilah*. The pair appear inside a tent, which is identifiable by the figure peering through a small opening at the far left of the canvas. They are placed on top of white sheets, the only other indicator of their setting. The painting is much less detailed than Gustave Moreau's Symbolist version; Samson and Delilah are both painted nude by Liebermann, and Delilah

---

[337] Adam. *Third Reich.* 59.

is not draped in accessories to create an "enticing" air. Furthermore, Delilah is not painted with her typical voluptuous body, nor cascading curls. Nouwen writes that Delilah's 'wiry, light-skinned figure contrasts sharply with Samson's tanned, muscular male body.'[338] Delilah instead has been painted to be very thin, almost frail, and yet she is completely in control of Samson and the situation. Power radiates from Delilah: she has truly dominated Samson on Liebermann's canvas. Ingo Borges writes 'with a triumphant gesture, Delilah holds the hero Samson's locks – which she has just cut off – in the air, a symbol of the victory of the feminine arts of seduction over the hero, formerly considered unconquerable.'[339] The seduction on canvas is still evident through their nudity and Samson's position in proximity to Delilah. Both these factors indicate to the viewer that a sexual encounter has occurred. However the focus is on Delilah's power over Samson as opposed to her sexuality and seductiveness.

Liebermann's *Battle of the Sexes*

Whilst Liebermann's painting is generally less erotic than other versions of the narrative, the sexuality of the characters remain present, especially in regards to their power roles. Bal comments that although Samson has experienced Delilah's betrayal before, 'he falls quietly asleep, "on her knees," an expression in Hebrew that also allows the translation "between her knees." This attitude on Delilah's lap shows that he has completely surrendered to her indeed. The attitude suggests in the first place rest after love making.'[340] Samson lies across Delilah's lap, and both his submissive posture and chopped hair provide justification for the air of vulnerability surrounding him. Samson's arm is curled

---

[338] Nouwen. "Afraid." 158.
[339] Ingo Borges. "The Shock of the Real." In *Battle of the Sexes: From Franz Von Stuck to Frida Kahlo*, edited by Felix Krämer. New York: Prestel Publishing, 2017. 162.
[340] Bal. *Lethal*. 58

around Delilah's leg, clutching her, as if he is afraid to lose her. Furthermore Samson seems unaware of the danger that waits for him outside the tent. Samson's submissive position is contrasted with Delilah, who is placed above him. Her body is stretched across the canvas as she reaches upwards to present her "trophy." While Delilah celebrates the completion of her task, she simultaneously pushes Samson's head down in a swift act of dominance, described by Nouwen as 'much in the way that big-game hunters place a foot on their quarry.'[341] Marina Dmitrieva-Einhorn comments that this movement 'is a gesture of emancipation, a demonstration of the victory of the female over male force.'[342] In Liebermann's society, female emancipation was a contemporary issue, but this painting is not a celebration of the concept, or even in favour of it. I will now explain Liebermann's personal views on *Geschlechterkampf*, and how, to him, Delilah incorporates the danger of female emancipation.

The Battle of the Sexes theme arose in response to the feminist movement as 'many men felt that their dominant position in the world and at home was being threatened by the emancipation of women, which began around 1875.'[343] The character of Delilah is reflective of this topic, as textually she is an autonomous woman who does not belong to, nor depend on, anybody. Bal notes, 'we have seen that, named by a name of her own and in possession of a house, associating with high-placed people, she could be considered a prototype of the socially successful, independent woman.'[344] This concept is utilised by Liebermann and reflected on his canvas, as he moulds the biblical Delilah into a modern woman. According to Borges, this Delilah is 'no longer the femme fatale of the nineteenth century who operates only through the power of sensuality, she becomes dangerous to the

---

[341] Nouwen. "Afraid." 158.
[342] Marina Dmitrieva-Einhorn. "Max Liebermann in Russia." In *Max Liebermann and International Modernism: An Artist's Career from Empire to Third Reich*, edited by Marion Deshmukh, Françoise Forster-Hahn, and Barbara Gaehtgens. New York: Berghahn, 2011. 196.
[343] Nouwen. "Afraid." 161.
[344] Bal. *Lethal*. 51.

man as an autonomous, self-confident modern woman.'[345] While I agree with Borges that Liebermann's Delilah is the autonomous modern woman, I disagree that she is no longer a femme fatale, as she *is* dangerous to Samson. The sensuality of Delilah is signified through her nudity, and the dominance she exerts over Samson is reflective of the trope. Furthermore, Delilah's modern appearance does not sever her connection from the *Belle Époque* fatal women, but rather facilitates the development of the trope.

Liebermann's "Private" Attitude

Male anxiety in the *Belle Époque* was not just related to loss of social power, but also their fear of losing control of their sexuality, and the growing risk of sexually transmitted disease. Nouwen comments that this 'to many men of his time, sexuality seemed threatening, not least because of syphilis, whose terrible effects Liebermann also witnessed in his most immediate circle.'[346] The heterosexual men who engaged in widespread sexual activities placed the blame on their female sexual partners. This culture was very much gendered, especially in relation to prostitution which was heavily criticised (although widely used.) Weininger's *Sex and Character* was filled with chauvinist arguments, and he concluded that prostitution 'was the natural outlet for any woman whose inherently polyandrous nature was too strong to be tamed by her acculturation for the purpose of assuming the task of motherhood.'[347] This statement displays the common attitude of this period, that women can be categorised dualistically: mothers or prostitutes. Dijkstra comments on the writings of Jules Bois, noting that he 'bewailed the fact that woman "no longer wants to content herself with being the fated breeding ground of generations".'[348]

---

[345] Borges. "Shock." 162.
[346] Nouwen. "Afraid." 161.
[347] Dijkstra. *Idols*. 357.
[348] Ibid. 366.

Anti-feminists were afraid of changes to the domestic sphere; they did not want the social autonomy of women in case it led to population decline, or radical political change. The character of Delilah did not function textually as a mother or wife in Judges 16, but rather as an independent figure, and she represents the modern woman on Liebermann's canvas. The Book of Judges offers a dualistic view of women, and as Delilah functions without a family, she cannot be categorised as "safe":

> There are two kinds of women according to this story: the good (safe) woman and the bad (threatening) woman. The good woman is usually placed on a pedestal, as a mother or a virgin. She is idealized in her nonsexual role. The bad woman is defined by her sexuality: she is the sexually available, "wanton" (from the perspective of male ideology) woman, who arouses in men both desire and animosity (men blame *her* for *their* lust).[349]

Across the wider Samson narrative, he encounters women who fall into both the "safe" and the "threatening" categories. Samson's mother is part of the quintessential Hebrew Bible tradition of infertile women being blessed and granted motherhood by the LORD, and this is contrasted with Delilah, who 'is often referred to as a "loose woman".'[350] The dichotomy in the biblical text is remarkably similar to the attitudes of the *Belle Époque,* as women who functioned outside the domestic sphere were viewed negatively. Liggens argues that 'at a time when motherhood was still validated as the proper woman's mission in life, singleness was perceived to be 'alien' to middle class femininity, and accepting the position of old maid was seen as a sign of failure, a 'falling short' of a woman's dreams.'[351] Delilah's autonomy is therefore adapted by Liebermann to be a warning for those who reject the social norm. Living outside of the domestic sphere ceases to be just "falling short," as described by Liggins, and instead it becomes emphasised as something dangerous and indeed fatal.

---

[349] J. Cheryl Exum, 'Feminist Criticism: Whose Interests Are Being Served?' In *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, edited by Gale A. Yee. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995. 78.
[350] Ibid. 79.
[351] Liggins. *Odd*. 31.

With Delilah placed firmly in the "threatening" category, Liebermann's painting becomes a commentary on the dangers of female sexuality. The work is a direct reflection of his belief in the disastrous results of sexual indulgence, especially when women have been granted more power:

> It indicates that he judged the possibility that a man could bring disaster upon himself through his erotic desires to be a real, current danger. That Samson has lost not only his hair (i.e., his power), but possibly also his mind is symbolised in the first version, where Delilah is pushing Samson's head down. One could interpret this metaphor as a loss of creativity.[352]

The misogynistic belief in this era was that engaging in sexual activity with women could lead to bodily ruin (through sexually transmitted diseases), or creative ruin (if their sex drive were to overpower their creative drive) and these fears were present on Liebermann's canvas. The bodily torture that Samson is faced with post-submission could easily represent the suffering and illness the body goes through upon contact with a sexually transmitted disease. The centrality of Samson's head on the canvas signifies the importance of the mind to Liebermann who 'very likely feared the power that an attractive woman could exert on a man and above all that she would be able to paralyze his creativity.'[353] There is also a direct link between general fears of disease, with the fear of mental decline, and Menon notes that the diseases in this period 'caused madness and death.'[354] Liebermann feared the madness which arose from sexually transmitted diseases, and was paranoid about becoming too obsessed with women to continue creating art. However, despite his fear of feminine sexuality, Liebermann still 'struggled with the end of his bachelor life.'[355] It has been noted that Liebermann's wife had to 'console him through his tears'[356] upon the start of his marriage.

---

[352] Nouwen. "Afraid." 161.
[353] Ibid.
[354] Menon. *Evil*. 95.
[355] Nouwen. "Afraid." 165.
[356] Ibid.

Liebermann did not purposefully create an erotic Delilah, but rather as a warning regarding the threat of female emancipation. *Samson and Delilah* displays the moment of triumph: Delilah celebrates cutting Samson's hair and removing his power, while Samson rests on her knees, unaware of the danger which he will soon face. Liebermann utilised the theme of the Battle of the Sexes and displays the clear winner; the woman dominates the man on his canvas, however Liebermann despises this outcome. Delilah's appearance is reminiscent of the modern woman, and she acts independently on canvas, as she had in Judges 16. Liebermann's canvas reflects the general anxiety of male anti-feminists during the *Belle Époque* in relation to women deviating from the domestic sphere. Furthermore, Delilah represents the fear of loss of sexual power; created during a context where cases of syphilis and other sexually transmitted diseases were rising. Liebermann feared that engaging with women would lead to the destruction of his mind and body, and uses Samson's demise to illustrate this. *Samson and Delilah*, therefore, is not a glorification of female power, nor a sexual fantasy; it is Liebermann's warning to society.

3.4 LOVIS CORINTH: THE BACKGROUND DELILAH

The final section of my Delilah chapter will analyse what happens when the femme fatale ceases to be the focal point of the painting. Every painting I have discussed has featured the woman at the centre of the canvas, while their male counterpart is not often present. Lovis Corinth's *Samson Taken Captive* (1907),[357] presents the moment after Samson's haircut, when Delilah calls the Philistines to capture Samson. In this work, Samson appears in the centre of the painting, while Delilah crouches in the background. Lovis Corinth (1858-1925) was a German painter, whose career lasted from the latter half of the nineteenth century up until his death. Categorising Corinth into an artistic group is difficult, as his style transcends movements. He is associated with both Impressionism and Expressionism, and is even regarded as 'a forerunner of German Expressionism.'[358] However, Peter-Klaus Schuster is right to argue 'the already noted mutual aversion between Corinth and the young German Expressionists shows that he cannot be counted as part of this sort of Expressionism.'[359] Regardless, his work does share features with both movements, such as the use of light, and brushstroke techniques found in Impressionism. His later works were also 'increasingly loose and more deeply introspective,'[360] which are characteristics of Expressionism, as I have explained in regard to Max Oppenheimer in chapter one.

---

[357] Image can be viewed at:
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lovis_Corinth_Die_Gefangennahme_Simsons_1907.jpg
[358] Dijkstra. *Idols.* 108.
[359] Peter-Klaus Schuster. "Painting as a Passion: Corinth in Berlin." In *Lovis Corinth*, edited by Peter-Klaus Schuster, Christopher Vitali, and Barbara Butts. Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1996. 50.
[360] Tolhurst Driesbach. *Expressionism.* 24.

The themes found in Corinth's repertoire are typical Academic and Symbolist themes. Corinth studied at the Munich Academy during the 1890s, although abandoned it in favour of the Munich Secession (and later moved to the Berlin Secession.) Klaus-Schuster argues that Corinth conquered Berlin 'as an exponent of both Salon painting and Symbolism, a combination characteristic of Munich.'[361] Due to the multitude of movements associated with Corinth, I will not address his work in regard to style, but rather assess the influence his geographical location had on his interpretation of the subject– in particular the politics of turn of the century Munich, which provided inspiration and motivation throughout his career.[362] Tolhurst Driesbach states that 'the Bavarian capital, however, was artistically conservative and unresponsive to Corinth's work.'[363] This unresponsiveness, coupled with direct criticism from those in power motivated Corinth, and I will analyse how his provocative *Samson Taken Captive* was influenced by his antagonism toward the Munich political scene.

Corinth and Biblical Themes

Corinth depicted the Judges 16 narrative multiple times on his canvas, and appeared to favour Samson over Delilah, selecting his suffering as the focal point over Delilah's seduction. Delilah's seduction is apparent in his *fin-de-siècle* version entitled *Samson and Delilah,* (1893). This work is a standard depiction of the narrative, as Delilah stands semi-nude in the centre of the canvas. To her left, Samson sleeps soundly in his bed, and to her right is a group of waiting Philistines. However, the work which caught my attention was *Samson Taken Captive*, due to the characterisation of Delilah and her unusual position on

---

[361] Schuster. "Painting." 50.

[362] Maria Makela. "Lovis Corinth's 'Themes': A Socio-Political Interpretation." In *Lovis Corinth*, edited by Peter-Klaus Schuster, Christopher Vitali, and Barbara Butts. Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1996. 61.

[363] Tolhurst Driesbach. *Expressionism.* 24.

canvas. She is no longer centre stage in Samson's narrative, but a voyeur herself, taking pleasure in Samson's demise.

Dangerous biblical women were a key part of Corinth's artistic repertoire. He used the Bible as source material frequently, such as his adaptation of Genesis 39: *Joseph and Potiphar's Wife* (1914), his Christ paintings (*The Deposition*, 1895, and *Ecce Homo*, 1925) and also through his participation in Salomania. It was particularly his *Salome* (1900), labelled "sado-porno"[364] due to its extreme depiction of the character, which propelled his career after it was exhibited in the Berlin Secession. This work has been noted as the 'first painting to draw public attention to his work.'[365] *Salome* is crude and farcical, as it features an over-exaggerated representation of female sexuality. This Salome is framed as beautiful and sensual, whilst typically sadistic as 'she daintily pries open one of the saint's eyes, as if to force him to acknowledge her beauty, if only in death.'[366] It is an eccentric and busy canvas, with multiple figures squeezed into one surface area, and it is brimming with references to beauty and death: Salome is dripping with pearls and flowers, while touching the cold, lifeless head of John the Baptist. In the foreground, a soldier grips a sword, and in the bottom corner, servants remove the corpse. Lloyd comments that 'Corinth was preoccupied with intimations of morality and with the interrelation of life, sexuality and death.'[367] These themes are addressed and synthesised in many of his paintings, such as *Salome* and *Samson Taken Captive*.

---

[364] Schuster. "Painting." 44.
[365] Jill Lloyd. "Lovis Corinth: Intimations of Morality." In *Lovis Corinth*, edited by Peter-Klaus Schuster, Christopher Vitali, and Barbara Butts. Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1996. 69.
[366] Horst Uhr. *Lovis Corinth*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990. 119.
[367] Lloyd. "Intimations." 69.

Samson Taken Captive: **Analysis**

Samson Taken Captive is a gritty adaptation of the violent moment which occurs directly after Delilah gives Samson his infamous haircut. The scene presented by Corinth is as busy as his *Salome*, with multiple figures filling the space. There are seven distinguishable figures (Samson, Delilah, and five Philistine soldiers), with a further three partially obscured in the background. The presence of faded figures signifies that the army is larger than just the soldiers at the foreground of the canvas. If there are shadowy figures partially hidden from sight, then perhaps more are ready to burst onto the scene. The expanse of Samson's body covers the centre of the canvas, and multiple Philistines pin him to the ground, while another binds his ankle tightly. A final Philistine presses his foot to Samson's stomach, securing him in place, while angling his spear towards Samson's face 'ready to plunge'[368] it into his eyes.

Delilah is featured in the painting, although she blends in among the soldiers. She appears at the top centre of the canvas, crouching as she assesses the situation before her. Horst Uhr comments that Delilah 'leans forward and looks down at the struggle with an expression that combines detached curiosity and cruel satisfaction.'[369] Delilah's gaze is cat-like and fixed on Samson; a voyeur of the scene. She does not appear remorseful about her actions, and instead is amused by Samson's struggle. Both Samson and Delilah are painted fully nude which indicates that this moment occurred pretty quickly after an intimate moment between the pair. However, any sexual connection between the characters is lost among the violence. Delilah's hair is long and dangles low enough to tickle the soldier sitting directly below her. The combination of her nudity and hair indicates a

---

[368] Uhr. *Corinth*. 160.
[369] Ibid.

residual sensuality, although it is rawer and intermingled with violence. Delilah appears more primal and animalistic, easily imitating the aggression present in the soldiers' actions. Furthermore, Uhr argues that 'the subdued earth colours underscore the primeval character of the subject, and the vigorous brushstrokes, reinforced by scrapings with the palette knife, further enliven the violent scene.'[370]   The characterisation is cohesive with the painterly technique, and these elements enhance the erratic atmosphere on Corinth's canvas.

Samson Taken Captive as Social Commentary

Corinth's treatment of the narrative is brutal and crude, but also highly parodic in nature. It was not uncommon for Corinth to address serious subjects in an absurd manner. Lenman addresses that Corinth 'had an eye for the farcical, and in 1897 had painted a satirical *Temptation of Saint Anthony* that assembled all the currently fashionable vampire-females: Salome, Delilah, Judith, and Eve, as well as Franz Stuck's *Sin*.'[371] Each of the temptresses in Corinth's *Temptation* are earlier versions of the Delilah he constructed ten years later; they appear nude and either crouch or crawl toward St. Anthony. Dijkstra notes that German painters such as Corinth depicted women 'with bodies and features of exaggerated protoexpressionist coarseness which loudly proclaimed their bestial natures – who had a habit of crawling about all over the place.'[372] Delilah appears in *Samson and Delilah* as described; exaggerated through her facial expression and the position of her body.

---

[370] Ibid. 160.
[371] Lenman. *Artists*. 89.
[372] Dijkstra. *Idols*. 254.

Corinth's parodying of biblical and religious subjects finds its roots in his attitude toward the socio-political situation of Germany. Maria Makela concludes that 'perhaps, then, it was the particular socio-political and cultural context of turn-of-the-century Munich that directed Corinth towards a form of parody that then became the hallmark of his approach to such themes for the next two decades.'[373] I will return to Corinth's nationalism in the next section, but first I wish to address Corinth's parodic nature in terms of the Munich context. Munich was politically and culturally conservative during the 1890s, when Corinth was studying in the city, as 'the balance of the governmental power had shifted from the liberal Cabinet to the Catholic Parliament whose most influential politicians held art and literature responsible for the spread of a pervasive "irreligious" spirit.'[374] Corinth was against the Catholic parliament due to the restrictions they placed on the artistic community.[375] In protest of artistic restrictions, Corinth addressed a variety of religious subjects in the 1890s (including his first *Samson and Delilah*), and whilst parodying the religious themes, he also emphasised banned qualities, such as naturalism and nudity. Makela argues that 'in flagrant violation of the highly publicized Catholic cultural agenda that proscribed not only the appearance of the nude but any Naturalism and Realism in art, Corinth peopled such compositions in the 1890s with fleshy, unidealised figures whose overstated gestures and expressions mock the time-honoured episodes they purport to enact.'[376] His crude *Temptation of Saint Anthony* is an example of his output from the *fin-de-siècle,* and the treatment of Delilah in *Samson Taken Captive* is reminiscent of the fatal women from the painting. Corinth produced these unidealised figures across his repertoire, in response to the Catholic view 'that excessive naturalism in the treatment of religious and sexual subjects resulted in blasphemous or pornographic art and literature.'[377]

---

[373] Makela. "Themes." 61.
[374] Ibid.
[375] An example would be the censoring of playwrights, e.g. Frank Wedekind's *Frühlings Erwachen* (Spring Awakening, 1891) was not allowed to be staged until 1906.
[376] Makela. "Themes." 63.
[377] Ibid. 61.

Samson Taken Captive was produced after Corinth abandoned Munich for the less-conservative Berlin, but it is stylistically and thematically similar to his output from the *fin-de-siècle*. Makela argues that 'having made his mark by perverting classic religious and mythological themes, Corinth stuck with this style as long as it continued to be aesthetically, even socio-politically transgressive.'[378] Therefore, Corinth's excessive use of biblical subjects can be attributed to his attitude towards, and disapproval of, the political situation in Munich. Delilah's nudity was not meant to be erotic, but rather Corinth put her body on display to provoke those who perpetrated censorship. The femme fatale motif was not a sexual fantasy for Corinth, but a popular device in the *fin-de-siècle*, which he parodied and reproduced to serve his political agenda.

Corinth's views on society and politics must be taken into account when analysing any of his paintings, due to Corinth's own belief 'that a powerful residue of nationalism is always present in every work of art.'[379] Corinth was a proponent of the belief that German artists should create German art. Christopher B. With quotes a comment Corinth left in the guest book of a Free Student Association event in 1914:

> "You should endeavour to strengthen the level of German self-confidence. 'Work and Make It Better' should be the motto in opposition to everything foreign. German art students must cultivate the traditions of their own country, and strengthen their own powers of self-discipline and freedom."[380]

Corinth believed in supporting German artists in their cultivation of their own art movements, styles, traditions, etc. He was against the "Frenchification" of German culture, perhaps partially provoked by his loss of students to Parisian academies. B. With argues

---

[378] Ibid. 63.
[379] Christopher B. With. "'Work and Make It Better': Lovis Corinth, German Art and the Peril from Abroad." In *Imagining Modern German Culture: 1889-1910*, edited by Françoise Forster-Hahn. Washington: National Gallery of Art; University Press of New England, 1999. 212.
[380] Ibid. 209.

that the 'propagation of French art, in turn, led to an over-exaggeration of non-German ideals and attitudes which not only threatened German national identity but also seduced many young artists into copying French styles with the promise of quick recognition and economic success.'[381] These factors intimidated Corinth, and he not only spoke out against this, but included these views in his artistic repertoire. The Samson and Delilah narrative features the domestic-foreign paradigm, as Samson is celebrated as the hero from home, with the Philistines (a foreign group) positioned as the enemy. *Samson Taken Captive* warns Corinth's viewers of the "Frenchification" of German culture, with Germany represented as a struggling Samson, and France by the Philistines and even Delilah herself. Deborah F. Sawyer argues that women such as Delilah 'do not necessarily do bad things that other female characters do not do - rather, they act without any alliance with the Lord God of Israel. These women are bad either on their own account or on behalf of some human agency.'[382] Corinth selected Delilah as his femme fatale on multiple canvases because she did not act out of any nationalism as Judith had, but rather her participation is prompted by payment from Samson's enemies. Just as Samson was seduced into comfort, love, and security by Delilah, Corinth believed the upcoming German artists had the potential to stray to those schools in France which promised quick success. Delilah is used by Corinth as a metaphor for the foreignness he disapproved of, and despite her placement in the background, this makes her a significant force in the work. After 1914, Corinth's utilisation of the France/Germany metaphor became more frequent when he began to produce work in response to World War One, because he 'ardently promoted the war effort to the very end.'[383] An example of Corinth's artistic responses to the war effort is *The Knight*, 1914. B. With argues, that this work makes 'veiled allusion to the antagonism between France and Germany and that the nude female could be interpreted as an allegory

---

[381] Ibid. 214.
[382] Deborah F. Sawyer. *God Gender and the Bible*. London: Routledge, 2002. 66.
[383] With. 'Work.' 217.

of Germany itself.'[384] The eponymous Knight protects the nude female in his arms, and this work sexualises and sensationalises the masculinity of warfare.

Lovis Corinth's artistic output from the *fin-de-siecle* and the following decade was full of religious themes, and he frequently utilised the femme fatale motif. His paintings were large, boisterous, and generally parody variations of commonly produced subjects from the *Belle Époque*. While Corinth's contemporaries, such as Franz von Stuck, were concerned with sexualising biblical women to create erotic femmes fatales, Corinth himself utilised the trope for his own purposes. Corinth was an outspoken nationalist who believed that artists cannot escape their geographic background. Therefore his pro-German spirit became apparent when he dealt with subjects which already contained a foreign-domestic dichotomy. Corinth's attitude towards the Munich political climate also influenced his attraction to particular subjects, and even after moving to a more liberal city this mutual antagonism would remain influential throughout his career. Corinth's Delilah is not the focal point of *Samson Taken Captive* but she remains significant to the scene, as she is the catalyst for Samson's suffering. The characterisation and appearance of Delilah serve to provoke Corinth's political adversaries, and while she is not intended to arouse, she remains a destructive force.

---

[384] Ibid. 220.

CONCLUSION: A BEAUTIFUL ERA OF DANGEROUS WOMEN

The *Belle Époque*, translated as the Beautiful Era, was filled with themes and attitudes that were considerably ugly. Misogyny, anti-Semitism, and racism were rife during this period, and these bigoted views manifested on the canvases of many male artists. The femme fatale archetype was used frequently, and in this thesis I have assessed three biblical women it was applied to: Salome, Judith, and Delilah. The biblical femme fatale did not belong to one particular movement, and she not only appeared in many forms (Salome, Judith, Delilah, Eve, Potiphar's Wife, and Jezebel) but also frequented the canvases of artists from every movement, from the nineteenth century Orientalists, to the Expressionist movement which began just prior to World War One. The Symbolists were particularly attracted to this theme, and several of the artists I discussed belonged to this movement. Gustav Klimt, Gustave Moreau, Gustave Mossa, and Franz Von Stuck can all be categorised as Symbolists, while Jean-Joseph Benjamin-Constant and Henri Regnault were Academic painters with a flair for Orientalism. Max Liebermann was an Impressionist and Max Oppenheimer an Expressionist. Finally, Lovis Corinth, the most difficult artist to place in any one particular movement, has been categorised as Impressionist, Expressionist, and even Symbolist by scholars.

My artists were all either French, German, or Austrian in origin, as most movements originated in one of these countries, and each had cultural and intellectual "hubs" – France had Paris, Germany had Berlin and Munich, and Austria-Hungary had Vienna. The relationship between the intellectual and artistic communities facilitated a knowledge exchange, which lead to prominent (generally male orientated) philosophies such as social Darwinism and anti-feminism becoming driving forces behind artistic work. Daniel

Zamani comments that the femme fatale 'was taken up both as a projection screen for female emancipation as well as a cipher of male violence and sexual fantasies.'[385] While the femme fatale does exist as a manifestation of male erotic fantasies, the rise of female emancipation was an inescapable influence on artists working in the *Belle Époque*. Nationalism, political upheaval, and imperialism are further social aspects which influenced the artists, and I also analysed their personal beliefs, histories, and relationships. Each artist in this thesis is male, as the subjects painted were primarily addressed by men in this era. Biblical women were sexualised by men, and they played a starring role in male fantasies, both literary and visual. Most of these paintings have sexual elements – some mild, teasing the viewer, while others border on pornographic. As the *Belle Époque* developed, so did the reasons for Salome, Judith, and Delilah's treatment: they were metaphors for male suffering, for rival nations, and for their scorn against fashionable modern woman.

Chapter one of my thesis was centred on the character of Salome. In my research, I discovered that Salome is the most popular of the three characters discussed in this thesis, and had been painted, staged, and sculpted constantly during the *Belle Époque*. She is seen dancing, seducing, teasing, and engaging in violent and sexual acts. The biblical character was originally unnamed, with an ambiguous age and appearance, and no personal motivation against John the Baptist. By the start of the *Belle Époque,* the name Salome had long been applied to her, but her vampish personality had yet to develop fully. It is easy to attribute Salome's influence and characterisation to Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley, however Gustave Moreau's Salon series of 1876 also significantly amplified her popularity. Henri Regnault's *Salome*, in all her Orientalist glory, should also not be neglected. This was the first instance of Salome's sadism, and it proved influential during

---

[385] Daniel Zamani. "Under the Spell of the Sphinx." In *Battle of the Sexes: From Franz Von Stuck to Frida Kahlo*, edited by Felix Krämer. New York: Prestel Publishing, 2017. 68.

the *Belle Époque*. I then looked at the German artist, Franz von Stuck, who produced a dream-based (and offensive) version of the narrative in his *Salome I*. By the 1900s, Salome had been fully realised as a femme fatale, and Stuck's Salome typifies this characterisation; seductive and gleeful, she takes pleasure in her dance and the resulting beheading. My final painting from chapter one was an uncomfortable version of the character which borders on necrophilic. Max Oppenheimer's *Salome* is a typical example of the Austrian Expressionist practice of utilising martyr figures to encompass the suffering they felt.

In chapter two, I addressed three different depictions of Judith. The character of Judith appears as a powerful woman during the *Belle Époque*, though that power manifested in varying ways, from renaissance style Amazons to dominatrices for masochistic fantasies. In the Book of Judith, she dresses up and functions with a performative sensuality to earn Holofernes' trust and admiration. Nutu argues, 'Judith cannot escape the role of the femme fatale, for it is precisely the part that God himself designs for her. He gives her special beauty, he gives her special strength, and he uses them both to his gains. God uses Judith to humiliate his challenger.'[386] The strength and beauty of Judith is apparent on all three canvases, however these qualities are emphasised in diverse ways, with each interpretation adding to the construction of Judith as a *Belle Époque* femme fatale. I first analysed Klimt's *Judith I*, a work where the character appears strong and beautiful. Judith functions as a dominatrix on Klimt's canvas, in complete control of the situation and of Holofernes. I then addressed an entirely different perspective of the character: Jean-Joseph Benjamin-Constant's *Judith*. The character is strong and confident, a symbol of strength and reminiscent of Amazonian women. Finally I looked at Gustav-Adolf Mossa's *Judith*. Mossa's femme fatale functions sadistically and her appearance is emphasised; a commentary on the modern French woman.

---

[386] Nutu. "Framing." 142.

My final chapter analysed three versions of Delilah, a character whose name has become synonymous with seduction. The paintings I addressed in this chapter all display three separate instances from the Judges 16 narrative. Gustave Moreau depicted the moment before Samson's haircut, Max Liebermann chose to feature Delilah's post-haircut triumph, and Lovis Corinth addressed Samson's subsequent suffering. Moreau's *Samson and Delilah*, features the character as a fully realised femme fatale. He used Delilah to explore the theme of morality, particularly the nature of evil and how this relates to women. Liebermann's *Samson and Delilah* places the couple in a tent, and although they have been intimate, Delilah's proud display of the cut hair reveals her callousness toward Samson. Nouwen argues that male anxiety 'may have been reinforced by the ubiquitous presence, around the turn of the century, of the figure of the "femme fatale".'[387] Female emancipation prompted artists such as Liebermann to use the motif to give their fears a platform, and by applying the trope constantly, they strengthen its presence across visual culture. This creates a repetitive cycle, as the increased presence of dangerous women in art caused further anxiety and prompted more artists to condemn, parody, or fetishise them. Finally, Corinth's *Samson and Delilah* displays the Philistines' attack on Samson after his haircut. This work is a commentary on the strict censorship from the Munich government, and also functions as a display of Corinth's pro-German rhetoric.

Each artist in this thesis framed their femme fatale to serve their personal interests; indicating their attitudes toward to a variety of topics, from female emancipation to nationalism. Some artists professed their admiration of foreign cultures (while simultaneously fetishising them), while others expressed their anxiety or distaste toward diversity. These paintings are just a few examples of the biblical femme fatale's treatment during the *Belle Époque*. Prior to this period, all three characters had appeared in literature,

---

[387] Nouwen. "Afraid." 168.

theatre, or painting, however their morality and motivations were often subject to debate. As the nineteenth century progressed their personalities were twisted, and any instances of innocence, a guilty conscience, or indeed heroism from the characters were replaced with sadism and cruelty. Male artists dictated their sexuality, designing it to be dominating enough to adhere to their fantasies. The characters began to take pleasure from their actions, no matter how brutal or gruesome, and their eroticism played a major part in the development of the femme fatale trope. *Belle Époque* artists were drawn to Salome, Judith, and Delilah because their actions all triggered the death of a man, and these painters decided how the women would be treated, or mistreated, on their canvases: eroticised, vilified, or allowed a reprieve. The downfall of the male character was ultimately dictated by the artist; he selected a female character, he directed her sexuality, and *he* determined how fatal she would be.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adam, Peter. *Art of the Third Reich*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, inc., 1992.

Apostolos-Cappadona, Diane. "Costuming Judith in Italian Art of the Sixteenth century." In *The Sword of Judith: Judith Studies Across the Disciplines*, edited by Kevin R. Brine, Elena Ciletti and Henrike Lähnemann, 325-344. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2010.

--------. "Imagining Salome, Or How La Sauterelle Became La Femme Fatale." In *From The Margins 2: Women of The New Testament and Their Afterlives*, edited by Christine E. Joynes and Christopher C. Rowland, 190-209. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009.

Allen, Virginia M. *The Femme Fatale: Erotic Icon*. Albany: Whitston Publishing Company, 1983.

Bach, Alice. *Women, Seduction, and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Bal, Mieke. *Lethal Love: Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.

Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." In *Image, Music, Text*, edited by Stephen Heath, 142-148. London: Fontana Press, 1977.

Becker, Edwin. *Franz Von Stuck 1863- 1928: Eros and Pathos*. Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum; Zwolle Waanders, 1995.

Benjamin, Roger. *Orientalist Aesthetics: Art, Colonialism, and French North Africa, 1880 – 1930.* Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003.

Bentley, Toni. *Sisters of Salome*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.

Berg, Marita. "The Nazis' take on 'Degenerate Music'." *DW*. May 2013. http://www.dw.com/en/the-nazis-take-on-degenerate-music/a-16834697.

Biale, David. "Masochism and Philosemitism: The Strange Case of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch." *Journal of Contemporary History*, 17:2 (1982): 305-323.

Birnie Danzker Jo-Anne. "Carnal Logic: Franz von Stuck." In *Battle of the Sexes: From Franz Von Stuck to Frida Kahlo*, edited by Felix Krämer, 78-95. New York: Prestel Publishing, 2017.

Bondil, Nathalie. "Which History Painting? Benjamin-Constant States his Case." In *Benjamin-Constant: Marvels and Mirages of Orientalism*, edited by Nathalie Bondil, 51-65. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

--------. "Eastern Beauty." In *Benjamin-Constant: Marvels and Mirages of Orientalism*, edited by Nathalie Bondil, 234-241. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

Borges, Ingo. "The Shock of the Real." In *Battle of the Sexes: From Franz Von Stuck to Frida Kahlo*, edited by Felix Krämer. New York: Prestel Publishing, 2017.

Brandlhuber, Margot Th. "'The Most Modern of the Modernists' Franz von Stuck's Impact: his Archetypes and Myths in Vienna." In *Sin and Secession: Franz von Stuck in Vienna*, edited by Agnes Husslein-Arco and Alexander Klee, 83-103. Vienna: Belvedere, 2016.

Brine, Kevin R. "The Judith Project". In *The Sword of Judith: Judith Studies Across the Disciplines*, edited by Kevin R. Brine, Elena Ciletti and Henrike Lähnemann, 3-22. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2010.

Bucknell, Brad. "On 'seeing' Salome." *ELH,* 60:2 (1993): 503-526.

Burrus, Virginia and Stephen Moore. "Performing Sadomasochism in the Song of Songs." *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory,* 13:1 (2002): 129-146.

Ciletti, Elena and Henrike Lähnemann. "Judith in the Christian Tradition." In *The Sword of Judith: Judith Studies Across the Disciplines*, edited by Kevin R. Brine, Elena Ciletti and Henrike Lähnemann, 41-70. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2010.

Clark, Carol and Robert Sykes, eds. *Baudelaire in English*. London: Penguin Books, 1997.

Clark, Constance A. *God or Gorilla: Images of Evolution in the Jazz Age*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008.

Cooke, Peter. *Gustave Moreau: History Painting, Spirituality, and Symbolism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

Cooper, Emmanuel. *The Sexual Perspective: Homosexuality and Art in the Last 100 Years in the West.* London: Routledge, 1994.

Craven, Toni. *Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith*, California: Scholars Press Chico, 1983.

Czaplicka, John. "Emigrant and Exiles: An Introduction to the Topic." In *Emigrants and Exiles: A Lost Generation of Austrian Artists in America 1920 – 195,* edited by John Czaplicka and David Mickenberg, 1-31. Illinois: Mary and Leigh Block Gallery, Northwestern University, 1996.

--------."Memory, Identity, and the Conditions of Exile." In *Emigrants and Exiles: A Lost Generation of Austrian Artists in America 1920 – 1950,* edited by John Czaplicka and David Mickenberg, 133-177. Illinois: Mary and Leigh Block Gallery, Northwestern University, 1996.

Davies, Andrew. *Double Standards in Isaiah: Re-Evaluating Prophetic Ethics and Divine Justice*. Leiden: Brill, 2000.

Delevoy, Robert L. *Symbolists and Symbolism*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1978.

Dijkstra, Bram. *Evil Sisters: The Threat of Female Sexuality and the Cult of Manhood*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Press, 1996.

--------. *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Dmitrieva-Einhorn, Marina. "Max Liebermann in Russia." In *Max Liebermann and International Modernism: An Artist's Career from Empire to Third Reich*, edited by Marion Deshmukh, Françoise Forster-Hahn, and Barbara Gaehtgens, 187-202. New York: Berghahn, 2011.

Druick, Douglas W. "Moreau's Symbolist Ideal." In *Gustave Moreau: Between Epic and Dream*, edited by Geneviève Lacambre, 33-39. Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago; Princeton University Press, 1999.

Exum, J. Cheryl. 'Feminist Criticism: Whose Interests Are Being Served?' In *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, edited by Gale A. Yee, 65-90. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

--------. *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub) versions of Biblical Narratives*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993.

--------. *Plotted, Shot, and Painted: Cultural Representations of Biblical Women*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.

--------- "Shared Glory: Salomon De Bray's Jael, Deborah, and Barak." In *Between the Text and the Canvas: The Bible and Art in Dialogue*, edited by J Cheryl Exum and Ela Nutu, 11-37. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009.

Exum, J. Cheryl and Ela Nutu. 'Introduction.' In *Between the Text and the Canvas: The Bible and Art in Dialogue*, edited by J. Cheryl Exum and Ela Nutu, 1-10. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009.

Facos, Michelle. *Symbolist Art in Context*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009.

Flavius, Josephus. *Antiquities of the Jews*, XVIII. 5. 4, translation by William Whiston, 1737. http://sacred-texts.com/jud/josephus/ant-18.htm.

Fleursdumal.org. "A Carcass" by Charles Baudelaire, translation by Richard Herne Shepherd (1869). In *Fleursdumal*. http://fleursdumal.org/poem/126.

Fraisse Geneviève. "A Philosophical History of Sexual Difference." In *A History of Women in the West: Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War,* edited by Geneviève Fraisse and Michelle Perrot, 48-114. Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993.

Gilbert, Barbara C. "Max Liebermann: A Long and Fruitful Career." In *Max Liebermann: From Realism to Impressionism*, edited by Barbara C. Gilbert, 21-61. Los Angeles: University of Washington Press, 2005.

Grew, Rachael. "States of Transition: The Femme Fatale in the Art of Fernand Khnopff and Leonor Fini." In *The Symbolist Roots of Modern Art*, edited Michelle Facos and Thor J, 71-84. Surrey: Ashgate, 2015.

Hansen, Helen and Catherine O'Rawe. "Cherchez la femme." In *The Femme Fatale: Images, Histories, Contexts*, edited by Helen Hansen and Catherine O'Rawe, 1-8. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Hoffmann-Curtius, Kathrin. "Constructing the Femme Fatale: A Dialogue between Sexology and the Visual Arts in Germany around 1900." In *Women and Death – Representations of Female Victims and Perpetrators in German Culture 1500-2000*, edited by Helen Fronius and Anna Linton, 157-168. Rochester: Camden House, 2008.

Hoerschelmann, Antonia. "Biographies of the Artists." In *Egon Schiele and His Contemporaries: Austrian Painting and Drawing from 1900 to 1930 from the Leopold Collection, Vienna,* edited by Klaus Albrecht Schröder and Harald Szeemann, 281-293. Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1989.

Hudson Jones, Anne, and Karen Kingsley. "Salome: The Decadent Ideal." *Comparative Literature Studies*, 18: 03 (1981): 344-352.

Janik, Allan. *Essays on Wittgenstein and Weininger*. Amsterdam: Rodopi Press, 1985.

Kelley, Susanne. "Perceptions of Jewish Female Bodies through Gustav Klimt and Peter Altenberg." *Imaginations* 3:1 (2011): 109-122.

Kissling, Paul J. *Genesis Volume 1,* Joplin MO: College Press, 2004.

Klein, Mason. "Gentleman's Agreement: Belief and Disillusionment in the Art of Max Liebermann." In *Max Liebermann: From Realism to Impressionism*, edited by Barbara C. Gilbert, 167-179. Los Angeles: University of Washington Press, 2005.

Kultermann, Udo. "The 'Dance of the Seven Veils.' Salome and Erotic Culture around 1900." *Artibus Et Historiae* 27:53 (2006): 187-215.

Lacambre Geneviève. *Gustave Moreau: Between Epic and Dream*. Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago; Princeton University Press, 1999.

Larson, Katie. "The Relocation of Spirituality and Rouault's Modernist Transformation of Moreau's Proto-Symbolist Techniques." In *The Symbolist Roots of Modern Art*, edited Michelle Facos and Thor J. Mednick, 193-210. Surrey: Ashgate, 2015.

Lawler, James R. *Poetry and Moral Dialectic: Baudelaire's Secret Architecture.* London: Associated University Press, 1997.

Ledger, Sally, and Roger Luckhurst. *The Fin de Siecle: A Reader in Cultural History c. 1880- 1900,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Lenman, Robin. "Art and National Identity in Wilhelmine Germany." In *Art, Culture, and National Identity in Fin-de-Siecle Europe*, edited by Michelle Facos and Sharon L. Hirsh, 119-136. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

--------. *Artists and society in Germany: 1850- 1914*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997.

Lenbachhaus.de. "Salome." In *Lenbachhaus Research*. http://www.lenbachhaus.de/the-museum/research/restoration/franz-von-stuck/?L=1

Levendig, Maarten, "Fatal Attraction." In *Rijksmuseum Amsterdam Blogspot*. April 10, 2013. http://rijksmuseumamsterdam.blogspot.co.uk/2013/04/franz-von-stuck-salome-1906-stadtische.html

Liggins, Emma. *Odd Women? Spinsters, Lesbians and Widows in British Women's Fiction, 1850s-1930s.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014.

Lloyd, Jill. "Lovis Corinth: Intimations of Morality." In *Lovis Corinth*, edited by Peter-Klaus Schuster, Christopher Vitali, and Barbara Butts, 69-76. Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1996.

-------. "The Viennese Woman: A Community of Strength." In *Klimt and the Women of Vienna's Golden Age: 1900- 1918*, edited by Tobias G. Natter, 16-33. New York: Prestel Neue Gallery, 2016.

Luczynska-Holdys, Malgorzata. *Soft-Shed Kisses: Re-visioning the Femme Fatale in English Poetry of the 19th Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013.

Makela, Maria. "Lovis Corith." *In New Worlds: German and Austrian Art 1890-1940*, edited by Renee Price, 154-163. New York: Neue Galerie, 2001.

-------. "Lovis Corinth's 'Themes': A Socio-Political Interpretation." In *Lovis Corinth*, edited by Peter-Klaus Schuster, Christopher Vitali, and Barbara Butts, 59-68. Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1996.

Marceau, Jo. *Art: A World History.* London: Dorling Kindersley, 1998.

Mathews, Patricia. *Passionate Discontent: Creativity, Gender, and French Symbolist Art.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Mathieu, Pierre-Louis. *Gustave Moreau: Complete Edition of the Finished Paintings, Watercolours and Drawings*, Oxford: Phaidon Press Ltd, 1977.

Menon, Elizabeth K. *Evil by Design: The Creation and Marketing of the Femme Fatale,* Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006.

Montiège, Samuel. "Judith." In *Benjamin-Constant: Marvels and Mirages of Orientalism*, edited by Nathalie Bondil, 76-79. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

Nouwen, Margreet. "Who's Afraid of Delilah? Liebermann Portraying Women." In *Max Liebermann and International Modernism: An Artist's Career from Empire to Third Reich*, edited by Marion Deshmukh, Françoise Forster-Hahn, and Barbara Gaehtgens, 157-170. New York: Berghahn, 2011.

Nutu, Ela. "Framing Judith: Whose Text, Whose Gaze, Whose Language?" In *Between the Text and the Canvas: The Bible and Art in Dialogue*, edited by J. Cheryl Exum and Ela Nutu, 117-144. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009.

Pal-Lapinski, Piya. *The Exotic Woman in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction and Culture: A Reconsideration.* Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2005.

Partsch, Susanna. *Gustav Klimt: Painter of Women*. Munich: Prestel Publishing, 2008.

Pasler, Jann. "Politics, Biblical Debates, and French Dramatic Music on Judith after 1870." In *The Sword of Judith: Judith Studies Across the Disciplines*, edited by Kevin R. Brine, Elena Ciletti and Henrike Lähnemann, 431-452. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2010.

Peltre, Christine. *Orientalism in Art.* Translation by John Goodman. New York: Abbeville Press, 1998.

Pierre, José. "Gustave Moreau: Through the Eyes of Succeeding Generations." *In Gustave Moreau: His Life and Work,* edited by Jean Paladilhe, 73-171. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1972.

Rapetti, Rodolphe. *Symbolism*. Translated by Deke Dusinberre. Paris: Flammarion, 2005.

Reis, Pamela Tamarkin. "Uncovering Jael and Sisera: A New Reading." In *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*, 19:1 (2005): 24-47.

Rosenthal, Donald A., *Orientalism: The Near East in French Painting 1800-1880.* Rochester, New York: Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester. 1982.

Rowlett, Lori. "Violent Femmes and S/M: Queering Samson and Delilah," in *Queer Commentary and the Hebrew Bible*, edited by Ken Stone, 106-115. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001.

Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2000.

Sawyer, Deborah F. *God Gender and the Bible*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Schmidt, Regine. "Rupture and Departure: A Survey of Austrian Artists in American Exile." In *Emigrants and Exiles: A Lost Generation of Austrian Artists in America 1920 – 1950,* edited by John Czaplicka and David Mickenberg, 233-243. Illinois: Mary and Leigh Block Gallery, Northwestern University, 1996.

Schröder, Klaus Albrecht. "Not Blind to the World: Notes on Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele." In *Egon Schiele and His Contemporaries: Austrian Painting and Drawing from 1900 to 1930 from the Leopold Collection, Vienna,* edited by Klaus Albrecht Schröder and Harald Szeemann, 17-33. Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1989.

Schubert, Gudrun. "Women and Symbolism: Imagery and Theory." *Oxford Art Journal; Women in Art*, 3:1 (1980) 29-34.

Schuster, Peter-Klaus. "Painting as a Passion: Corinth in Berlin." In *Lovis Corinth*, edited by Peter-Klaus Schuster, Christopher Vitali, and Barbara Butts, 37-58. Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1996

Showalter, Elaine. *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin De Siecle.* London: Virago Press, 1992.

Sine, Nadine. "Cases of Mistaken Identity: Salome and Judith at the Turn of the Century." *German Studies Review*, 11: 1 (1988) 9-29.

Sisson, Kathy. "The Cultural Formation of S/M: History and Analysis." In *Safe, Sane and Consensual: Contemporary Perspectives on Sadomasochism,* edited by Darren Langridge and Meg Barker, 10-34. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan Basingstoke, 2007.

Sledziewski, Elisabeth G. "The French Revolution as the Turning Point." In *A History of Women in the West: Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War,* edited by Geneviève Fraisse and Michelle Perrot, 33-47. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993.

Smith, Carol. "Delilah: A Suitable Case for (Feminist) Treatment?" In *Judges: A Feminist Companion to the Bible 4*, edited by Athalya Brenner, 93-116. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.

Steele, Valerie. "Femme Fatale: Fashion and Visual Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris." *Fashion Theory,* 8:3 (2004) 315-328.

Steiner, Wendy. *The Trouble with Beauty.* London: William Heinemann, 2001.

Streete, Gail Corrington. *The Strange Woman: Power and Sex in the Bible*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997.

Stocker, Margarita. *Judith Sexual Warrior: Women and Power in Western Culture.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998.

Stott, Rebecca. *The Fabrication of the Late Victorian Femme Fatale.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992.

Sully, Jess. "Challenging the Stereotype: The Femme Fatale in Fin-de-Siecle Art and Early Cinema." In *The Femme Fatale: Images, Histories, Contexts*, edited by Helen Hansen and Catherine O'Rawe, 46-59. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Taraud, Christelle. "Painting the Erotic and Exotic Oriental Feminine in Quiescence." In *Benjamin-Constant: Marvels and Mirages of Orientalism*, edited by Nathalie Bondil, 213-223. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

Ter Horst, Eleanor E. *Lessing, Goethe, Kleist, and the Transformation of Gender: From Hermaphrodite to Amazon.* New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2003.

Tolhurst Driesbach, Janice. *German and Austrian Expressionism.* Indiana: Indiana University Art Museum, 1977.

Treite, Corinna. *From A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004.

Uhr, Horst. *Lovis Corinth*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990.

Wagner, Ann Louise. *Adversaries of Dance: From the Puritans to the Present.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997.

Werkner, Patrick. "Body Language, Form and Idea in Austrian Expressionist Painting." In *Egon Schiele and His Contemporaries: Austrian Painting and Drawing from 1900 to 1930 from the Leopold Collection, Vienna,* edited by Klaus Albrecht Schröder and Harald Szeemann, 35-43. Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1989.

--------."Modernism in Vienna." In *New Worlds German and Austrian Art 1890-1940*, edited by Renee Price, 14-31. New York: Neue Galerie, 2001.

Werner, Yvonne Maria. 'Studying Christian Masculinity: An Introduction.' In *Christian Masculinity: Men and Religion in Northern Europe in the 19th and 20th Century,* edited by Yvonne Maria Werner, 7-18. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2011. 7

Whitford, Frank. *Expressionism.* London: Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1980.

--------. *Klimt*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1990.

Wilde, Oscar. *Salome*, edited by Kimberly J. Stern. Broadview Editions. Tonawanda, N.Y.: Broadview Press, 2015.

With, Christopher B. "'Work and Make It Better': Lovis Corinth, German Art and the Peril from Abroad." In *Imagining Modern German Culture: 1889-1910,* edited by

Françoise Forster-Hahn, 209-227. Washington: National Gallery of Art; University Press of New England, 1999.

Wolf, Norbert, *Symbolism*. Cologne: Taschen, 2016.

Wright, Barbara. "Baudelaire's Poetic Journey in Les Fleurs du Mal." In *The Cambridge Companion to Baudelaire*, edited by Rosemary Lloyd, 31-50. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Zagona, Helen G. *The Legend of Salome and the Principle of Art for Art's Sake.* Genéve: Droz. 1960.

Zamani, Daniel. "Under the Spell of the Sphinx." In *Battle of the Sexes: From Franz Von Stuck to Frida Kahlo*, edited by Felix Krämer, 62-77. New York: Prestel Publishing, 2017.

Ziolkowski, Theodore. "Re-Visions, Fictionalizations, and Postfigurations: The Myth of Judith in the Twentieth Century." *Modern Language Review*, 104:2 (2009) 311-332.

Zuffi, Stefano, *Love and the Erotic in Art,* translated by Stephen Sartarelli. Milan: Mondadori Electa S.p.A., 2008.