

Staging the Page: Visibility and Invisibility in Oscar Wilde's *Salome*

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Aubrey Beardsley's illustrations for the original English translation of Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (1894) are regarded by many critics as representing the illustrator's commentary on the playwright's relation to his play – although opinion is divided as to whether this commentary comprises an audacious lampoon of the author or a sophisticated appreciation of the drama. One of Beardsley's insights that found expression in his illustrations was that, like Wilde's other works, *Salome* (both the play itself and his picturing of it) was calculated to create a stir and publicise Wilde as an artist to take note of – ideally, by paying 15s. for a copy of the work (or 30s. for the *édition de luxe*)¹ – hence Wilde's appearance, the book of *Salome* in his hand, presenting to the audience and his readers the formidable mother of Salome, in the illustration entitled 'Enter Herodias.'²

The insight contained in Wilde's two appearances as the Moon in Beardsley's drawings, however, is not as transparent. Sarah Bernhardt claimed Wilde had informed her (whether with sincerity or levity is unclear) that the leading part of *Salome* was that of the Moon.³ The Moon is not a character, however, in the ways the humans in the play are; it is looked at by almost all the characters in a play in which, as Ian Fletcher notes, 'looking' is an almost obsessive activity.⁴ The Moon is a presence that, Fletcher argues, 'governs the action of the play.'⁵ Given the peculiar status of the Moon in the play and given that Wilde is pictured as the Moon by Beardsley, it is understandable that Fletcher imbues the Moon with a determinative agency, but the Moon (according to the text) neither governs nor changes in reaction to the unfolding of the play's sub-lunar tragedy,⁶ and Beardsley does not, in any apparent way, represent the Moon as the characters in the play describe it: as 'a woman rising from a tomb', 'a princess who has little white doves for feet' [1], 'a little piece of money, a little silver flower' and 'a virgin' [10–11], and as 'a mad woman' and 'a drunken woman' [27]. This raises two questions: what *is* the Moon doing in the Beardsley drawings, and, given that the Moon is a depiction of Wilde, what is the nature of Beardsley's commentary on the relation between author and text?



Plate 5

Aubrey Beardsley 'The Woman in the Moon' (showing The Moon, the Page of Herodias and Narraboth). From: Oscar Wilde, *Salome: A Tragedy in One Act: Translated from the French of Oscar Wilde with sixteen drawings by Aubrey Beardsley* (1907)

Excluding the Title Page and the List of the Pictures, which feature figures that are not related to the play, 'Enter Herodias' and the two other illustrations containing the Moon are, strangely, the only three that do not include Salome. The two illustrations which feature the Wildean Moon – 'The Woman in the Moon' (Plate 5) and 'A Platonic Lament' (Plate 6) – do not couple the Moon with any of the principal characters of the play, but rather feature the Page of Herodias with The Young Syrian, Narraboth. 'The Woman in the Moon' is given added prominence in that it forms the Frontispiece to the edition. Ian Fletcher suggests rather prosaically that it is the Frontispiece because it 'depicts the opening scene of the play,'⁷ but, extending this thesis, one asks why Beardsley did not then seize the opportunity to illustrate the subject of the very first line of the play, spoken by The Young Syrian – 'How



Plate 6

Aubrey Beardsley 'A Platonic Lament' (showing The Moon, the Page and Narraboth)
 From: Oscar Wilde, *Salome: A Tragedy in One Act: Translated from the French of Oscar Wilde with sixteen drawings by Aubrey Beardsley* (1907)

beautiful is the Princess Salome to-night!' (1) – an illustration which, by focussing on the title character, would have been more in keeping with the common-sense rationale Fletcher argues determined the subject for the Frontispiece. Beardsley, however, does not depict Salome at the feast,⁸ but instead illustrates the brief moment that follows this first line, where the Page distracts the Young Syrian's attention from Salome and they discuss the appearance of the moon, before the play shifts back to what is happening off-stage with the main characters in the banqueting-hall (2).⁹ Although from all appearances a character of little importance, the Page is again depicted in 'A Platonic Lament' mourning the dead Narraboth. Excluding Salome, the Page and Narraboth are distinguished by being, of all the characters shown by Beardsley, the only two that appear twice.¹⁰

Although Salome, Herod, and Herodias all comment on the Moon, Beardsley chose not to illustrate these scenes. In twice selecting the trio of Wilde/Moon, the Page, and Narraboth, Beardsley foregrounds Wilde-as-Moon's particular concern for, and investment in, the tragedy that befalls these lovers. He implies that as playwright, his inclusion of this tragedy is not just as a complement to the 'trivial' exposition engendered by the queries of the Cappadocian that serve to pass the time before Salome's entrance – not merely a harbinger of the biblically-significant death that is to come. If we take up Fletcher's point that Beardsley's illustrations represent the importance that looking assumes in the dynamics of *Salome*, what significance can be read from what Wilde, as depicted in Beardsley's illustrations, is looking at? In 'Enter Herodias,' as author/impresario, he is looking at the reader/audience. In 'The Woman in the Moon' and 'A Platonic Lament,' as the Moon, he looks at the Page and Narraboth. Chris Snodgrass suggests that in 'The Woman in Moon' the Moon is gazing 'apparently with longing sadness . . . at the male victim-to-be Narraboth'¹¹, and/or, one might add, with sympathy at the soon-to-be bereaved Page. In 'A Platonic Lament,' the Moon's downcast expression can be read as mourning with the Page, letting fall to earth the flower – perhaps a symbol of their brief love – which the Moon can be seen to hold in 'The Woman in the Moon.'¹²

Not only has this queer disproportion in Beardsley's illustrations been ignored in critical commentary on the play, but Beardsley's intent has generally been interpreted as impishly malicious, intended to broadcast Wilde's criminal and socially-vilified sexuality (a move in which Wilde and his publishers, inexplicably, must have been complicit) – a reading informed by a contradictory and rather absurd misunderstanding of Wilde's life as a series of increasingly blatant homosexual exposures countenanced by Victorian society until the crusading efforts of the half-derranged Marquess of Queensberry led to the catastrophic 'revelation' of what apparently had, according to this understanding of Wilde's life, been plainly in sight for some time. Another explanation for these drawings, however, is available: Brian Reade cautions that 'Beardsley had a habit of caricaturing his friends and acquaintances without real malice. And the notion he satirised the play and despised Wilde at the date of these drawings cannot be confirmed – especially as his earliest and gratuitous illustration to "J'ai baisé ta bouche, Iokanaan" . . . shows that originally he was fascinated by it.'¹³ Although the relationship between Wilde and Beardsley later soured, Beardsley's admiration of *Salome* was such that he once hoped to be the drama's English translator as well as its illustrator.¹⁴ Beardsley's *Salome* illustrations are not evidently a satire or parody of the play or its author, but instead can be regarded as offering, in pictorial terms, an interpretative reflection, not necessarily critical, on Wilde's play. In Beardsley's copy of the original French edition, Wilde wrote: 'For Aubrey: for the only artist who, besides myself, knows what the dance of the seven veils is, and can see that invisible dance. Oscar.'¹⁵ Beardsley's drawings can be read as offering his own return 'inscription' to Wilde, giving visibility to an aspect of the play that seems invisible to other viewers/readers.

This analysis of Beardsley's drawings suggests that a re-examination of the subplot and role of the Page of Herodias can yield some interesting insights into

Wilde and his play. Yet such a re-examination necessitates a re-examination of the role of Salome herself, since the conventional understanding of *Salome* as Wilde's queer autobiography has obscured how Salome's tragedy is not a story of a princess who, 'like a homosexual,' 'falls victim' to her perverted passions, but rather is a dramatisation of the collision of a young woman's anarchic passion with the perverse exercise of patriarchal authority. Salome's death is the result not of her perversity, which remains invisible to those in power, but her ultimate lack of power as a woman in her society, despite her royal status. By reaffirming the significance of Salome's status as a woman rather than a homosexual *manqué*, critical inquiry regarding same-sex subtexts in the play can be refocused on the subplot centred on the Page of Herodias. In both the critical and production history of Wilde's play – from the play's 1896 premiere in Paris to Ken Russell's 1987 film *Salome's Last Dance* – the Page's role has been curtailed, trivialised and even done away with – made invisible. As I also show with the character of Salome, is it only by visualising a staging of the play that is sensitive to the text's directions and implications that the significance of the Page comes into view. I will use Alla Nazimova's 1923 silent film version of *Salome* to illustrate this assertion.

My reading of the play finds the space between an understanding of Wilde's writing practice as primarily invested in self-revelatory queer signification and the persuasive argument that his writings were largely informed by the unromantic and homogenising pressures of the literary and theatrical marketplace in which he struggled to establish himself as a successful professional writer. The significance of the Page's story is that it makes visible Wilde's awareness of the problematics surrounding the public articulation of a love with no name or place in society, but which nevertheless existed and was struggling for public visibility. In an inversion of his refusal to make a spectacle of Salome's erotic consummation and thereby situate her execution as the cathartic moment for a repulsed audience, the presence of the tragic figure of the Page, foregrounded throughout the play, confronts the audience with a potent and unavoidable sign of 'unspeakable' desire.

Salome in the Moonlight

In a helpfully comprehensive essay, 'Distance, Death, and Desire in *Salome*,' Joseph Donohue observes that, 'much commentary has focussed on *Salome* as a covert homosexual work.'¹⁶ Referring to the possible homosexual significance of the 'little green flower' that Salome promises she will drop from her litter as a public sign of her favour for The Young Syrian, Narraboth, (15), Donohue writes: 'in retrospect one may speculate that it possessed a coded significance identifying Salome's sexuality as perversely and clandestinely male, suggesting that the Syrian thus kills himself out of homosexual jealousy over Salome's infatuation with Iokanaan.'¹⁷ What is odd about interpretations that 'homosexualise' Salome's desire, such as Donohue's rehearses here – following a well-established tradition – is that they are unable to accommodate – or can find little to say about, or ignore, or perhaps fail to see in the play – an enactment of same-sex passion that was legible to many in a

turn of the century audience and to many readers of the playtext. So drawn are 'homosexual' readings of the play into the vortex of Salome's 'perverse' sexuality that little note is taken of the tragic story of the one character whose rhetoric unavoidably resonates with nineteenth-century discourses of homosociality and, increasingly, as the century progressed, with same-sex desire: the Page of Herodias, about whom Donohue's otherwise wide-ranging essay, save for passing references,¹⁸ is silent.

What is the reason for the strange passing over of this 'obvious' same-sex aspect of Wilde's biblical play in favour of a homosexual tragedy centred on Salome? To a great extent the answer can be found in the pathologising of homosexuality, and a view of literature written by homosexuals as inevitably symptomatic of that pathology.¹⁹ When a photograph captioned 'Wilde in costume as Salome' appeared in Richard Ellmann's 1988 biography of Oscar Wilde, what was more extraordinary than the photograph itself was the way in which it was, without any critical scrutiny, eagerly accepted as genuine by Ellmann's readership and by Wilde scholarship generally.²⁰ The unreflecting credulity with which 'Wilde as Salome' was accepted is symptomatic of a stereotyped conception concerning Wilde of which the photograph constitutes a brilliantly precise visual incarnation: here is pictured the Life imitating the Art that was already presumed to be expressive of that Life. The photograph confirmed the governing assumption in a great deal of Wilde scholarship that his writings are, both in intent and in meaning, intimately and libidiously autobiographical: 'Wilde as Salome' is believable precisely because of the assumption that Wilde *is* Salome.

Salome's fate does not have to be seen as an enactment of the tragedy of homosexual passion, as Wilde's prefiguring of his own 'doom,' in order to make it interesting or intelligible. Kevin Kopelson, although he too sees Salome's tragedy as a homosexual one, sees this tragedy in terms of social destruction rather than homosexual self-destruction:

One of Wilde's disruptive innovations [of the Salome tradition] was to have Herod annihilate Salome, to give Herod the saga's final, murderous, say: 'Kill that woman!' More specifically: to have Herod – the tetrarch, the patriarch, the state – *execute* Salome because he finds her necrophilic love for Iokanaan perverse.²¹

Although I would dispute the reason he provides for Herod's execution of Salome, as Kopelson suggests, while it might be the engine that drives her into her fatal collision with the state, the real source of Salome's tragedy is not her 'perverse' sexuality, but rather her ultimate lack of any real authority within the court/state. The general problem with readings of Salome's desire as a dramatisation of the dangers of (homo)sexual perversity in an intolerant world of sexual normativity is that her desire, within the reference of the text, plays out in a world in which all desire, desire *per se*, is classifiable as perverse. Not only is Iokanaan's pathologically phobic celibacy the polar extreme of Salome's rampant and unbounded lust (and indeed it is the mutually exacerbating effect derived from the conflict of these two opposed perversities that provides the momentum of the play, rather than merely Salome's

desire), but the Page of Herodias's desire for Narraboth, Narraboth's obsessive eroticised idealisation of Salome and suicidal reaction to her desire for Iokanaan, Herodias's sexual excesses (as catalogued by Iokanaan), and Herod's incestuous lusts for his brother's wife and his young niece all fall within this classification. All desire (including all lack of desire) turns out to be perverse, the play suggests, if only because what constitutes 'normal desire' is either unknowable (definable only as what it is not) or unreal (has no basis in actual practice).

Consequently, the message of Salome's death cannot be that the wages of *perverse* sexuality are death: the fact that Herod and Herodias – the pair whose perversity is most elaborated on over the course of the play – live, clearly shows that, when it comes to death and life, there are the perverts, and then there are the perverts in power. When Herod orders his soldiers: 'Kill that woman!' (66), the order comes from a man whose political authority (the authority that enables him to give such an order), is maintained by little more than sycophancy to Caesar and brute force, and lacks any moral authority by which it might be rationalised as a righteous action by a just power. However much the viewer or reader of the play may be appalled by Salome's desire or her means of satisfying it, to find one's moral sensibilities appeased and ratified though a repulsive lecher like Herod is equally, if not more, distasteful.

What *Salome* dramatises is the collision of two distinct plays: a drama of female sexual empowerment and a religious/political revenge tragedy. That the play is comprised of these two distinct trajectories has been obscured in the history of criticism on *Salome* because of a tendency to ignore the implications staging has on an interpretation of the play (abetted in large part by stagings of the play that fail to be attentive to the text). A faithful staging of the play would foreground Herod's order as the response of a satiated autocrat superstitiously fearful of the personal/political repercussions of having effected the execution of a holy man and furious that this was the result of being outmanoeuvred by an intractable young woman who manipulated his lust, rather than a reaction of disgust to the witnessing of Salome's perverse act of kissing Iokanaan's decapitated head – the scenario which is usually enacted. The mistake that is inevitably made in critical commentaries is to see as identical the privileged knowledge of the viewer/reader and the limited knowledge of the characters. If one visualises the staging of the play based on the directions that Wilde provides, it becomes clear that Herod and the Court *are not aware and never are made aware* that Salome's motivation for demanding the head of Iokanaan arises out of thwarted desire. Indeed, the unfolding of Salome's passion for Iokanaan remains throughout the play a contained drama (the audience of which consists only of Narraboth, the Page, and perhaps the Soldiers and Naaman, the Executioner) to which the Court is never an audience. Neither Herod nor Herodias nor the guests at the banquet are party to the initial encounter between Salome and Iokanaan, nor are they informed about it during the course of the play. Because of this ignorance, both Herod and Herodias misread Salome's motivations for her demand as, Wilde maintained, did the writers of the biblical accounts.²² Herodias believes that Salome's request arises out of filial

loyalty: 'He [Iokanaan] has covered me with insults. He has said unspeakable things against me. One can see that she loves her mother well' (55); Herod, when he is finally forced to acquiesce to Salome's request, despite Salome's dismissal of his accusation that she is being manipulated by her mother ('It is not my mother's voice that I heed. It is for mine own pleasure that I ask . . .' [55]), also sees Salome's motive ultimately in terms of mother-daughter complicity both in terms of conspiracy and congenital disposition: 'Let her be given what she asks! Of a truth she is her mother's child!' (61–2).

The staging of the play demonstrates how the self-contained enactment of Salome's erotic fulfilment is maintained. Wilde's description of the scene at the start of the play refers to the two significant features of the set: '*To the right there is a gigantic staircase, to the left, at the back, an old cistern . . .*' (1). This description has great significance for the blocking of the play and the interpretation of the drama: the 'arrangement creates discrete areas of influence'²³ and action that are at opposite corners of the stage. When the Court finally does enter, since the cistern is in the background left, the logical place for Herod, Herodias and the Court (given that it is the focus of the dialogue for much of the play) to establish itself on stage is foreground right, leaving space for Salome's dance and avoiding the upstaging of the cistern. In a play which is comprised of discrete conversational clusters occurring simultaneously,²⁴ there are two separate scenes occurring on stage following Iokanaan's execution: Salome, backstage left, who '*leans over the cistern*' (62), then seizes and delivers her monologue to Iokanaan's head; and the Court, upstage right, with Herod, who '*hides his face with his cloak*' (63) at the sight of the head arising from the cistern, and who bickers with Herodias before he rises to go up the staircase into the palace. When Salome first receives the head, she says she *will* kiss the mouth, and appears about to, but the head's closed eyes distract her into a long harangue in which she simultaneously reproaches and mocks Iokanaan for his fatal intransigence: 'Yes, I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan. I said it; did I not say it? I said it. Ah! I will kiss it now . . . But wherefore dost thou not look at me Iokanaan? . . . Open thine eyes! Lift up thine eyelids, Iokanaan!' (63). In the concurrent dialogue centred on the Court (for obvious reasons, delivered consecutively on stage), Herod tells Herodias that her daughter is 'monstrous,' but this is not a reaction to Salome's harangue, which Herod and the rest of the court do not hear, but a reiteration of Herod's increasing dread of the consequences of the execution of a holy man. 'In truth, what she has done is a great crime. I am sure that it is a crime against some unknown God,' Herod asserts, that is, a crime against the unknown Christian (rather than the known Jewish) God that will be made flesh in his Son, whose Coming Iokanaan prophesises in his first lines: 'After me shall come another mightier than I' (6). Readings of Herod's character and motivations have typically failed to bring out the particular bond he shares with Iokanaan. Herod is not just Iokanaan's gaoler; he is, at the same time, his greatest adherent. When Salome asks about the identity of man whose voice she has just heard from the cistern, and is told in reply that it is the prophet, she responds: 'Ah, the prophet! He of whom the Tetrarch is afraid?' (11). Herodias, who repeatedly but ineffectually demands that

Herod silence Iokanaan's condemnations, taunts him with 'you are afraid of him,' claiming that this explains why he will not 'deliver him to the Jews who for these six months have been clamouring for him.' When a Jew says to Herod that 'it were better to deliver him into our hands,' Herod replies in such a way that it is obvious he has had this conversation before: 'Enough on this subject. I have already given you my answer. I will not deliver him into your hands' (34). He considers Iokanaan 'a very great prophet,' (33) 'a holy man,' a 'man who has seen God' (34), who is 'drunk with the wine of God' (44). Herod is a sinner, but a believer; he attends to and contributes to the doctrinal debate regarding the nature of Iokanaan and Messiah that ensues between the Jews, the Nazarenes, the Saducee and Pharisee, ignoring Herodias's demand that Herod 'command them to be silent' (39). He regards the prophet's fate as intimately bound up with his own fortunes. His elaborate and extended speeches that attempt to persuade Salome to ask for something else demonstrates Herod's deep-seated fear that his and Iokanaan's fates are entwined; as he pleads to Salome:

This man comes perchance from God. He is a holy man. The finger of God has touched him. God has put into his mouth terrible words . . . One cannot tell, but it is possible that God is with him and for him. If he die also, peradventure some evil may befall me. Verily, he has said that evil will befall some one on the day whereon he dies. On whom should it fall if it fall not on me? (59)

Herod's foreboding eventually gets the better of him: 'Put out the torches! Hide the moon! Hide the stars! Let us hide ourselves in our palace, Herodias. I begin to be afraid':

[The slaves put out the torches. The stars disappear. A great cloud crosses the moon and conceals it completely. The stage becomes quite dark. The Tetrarch begins to climb the staircase.] (66)

It is in this darkness in which the kiss occurs, but we only know this, not because Wilde provides a stage direction, but because we are to hear what is clearly distinguished as 'THE VOICE OF SALOME' (and aligning it with the earlier, apocalyptic pronouncements of the Coming issuing from 'THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN' from the cistern): 'Ah! I have kissed thy mouth, Iokanaan, I have kissed thy mouth . . .' (66).²⁵ Salome is only revealed *after* this invisible consummation and revelation has taken place – '[A moonbeam falls on Salome covering her with light.]' – and it is in this lunar transfiguration that Herod, high on the steps into the palace, '[t]uring around and seeing Salome,' orders her killed (66). The invisible act of kissing the head (a potent dramatic absence comparable to the literary effect of Dorian Gray's undefined sins), therefore, is dissociated from Herod's order, robbing it (and the viewer) of any justification that it is a righteous if summary reaction to the witnessing of a perverted act (a sort of 'normalising panic'), and therefore the order to kill Salome becomes, not an act to maintain the sexual normativity of the state, but an act of revenge for Iokanaan's death by which Herod hopes to propitiate the wrath of an unknown God. Like the Moon, the audience

understands Salome's illumination as an erotic apotheosis, but Herod, having obtained his erotic gratification with the dance performed by Salome, for a price he was unwilling to pay and unwillingly paid, orders her killed not because he witnesses a perverse act, but because he sees illumined a woman who has compromised his authority – sexually and politically.

Once it is understood that Salome's erotic triumph is short-lived not because her perversity is 'outed' and punished by the state, the principal reason for reading Salome's story as the enactment of the tragedy of homosexual desire (in pathological, cultural or autobiographical terms), it excised. What makes Salome sympathetic is her light-footed dance around patriarchal impasses – a fanatically misogynist religious tradition that demonises her, her sex, and her sexuality²⁶ and a corrupt political force that demands (as it had of her mother) her sexual compliance – to attain ecstasy, however fleeting.²⁷

The Page Onstage

Reappraising Salome's tragedy enables a reevaluation of the marginalised same-sex tragedy involving the Page of Herodias. The Page's relationship with Narraboth constitutes perhaps the most uncomplicated, and, because of the brevity of its exposition, the most direct depiction of an erotic relationship between men in Wilde's writing, unlike the intensely and complexly homosocial relationships in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and 'The Portrait of Mr W. H.', which are elaborated within and mediated by Hellenic and neo-Platonic rhetorics of friendship and artistic procreancy.²⁸ Yet the significance of the Page's role in the play remains largely unrecognised because this role has suffered in some of the most significant stage productions and film treatments of the play.

In the same way that Salome's story is misunderstood because of a failure to visualise how it plays out on stage, the centrality of role of the Page has gone unperceived because it has consistently been suppressed, as the performance history of *Salome* reveals. Since the first production of the play in 1896, the Page's story has consistently been marginalised and regarded as a trivial rather than an integral aspect of the play, a coy and compromising flourish tacked onto Salome's tragedy. Where the role has not been cut altogether (mainly in cinematic versions), what has typically occurred is a normalisation of the role, with an actress playing the Page as happened at the premiere of the play in 1896, produced by Aurélian Lugné-Poe (who played Herod) at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre in Paris.²⁹ When Richard Strauss adapted Wilde's play for the libretto of his 1905 opera, '[i]nformation deemed irrelevant to the central plot was . . . eradicated,' including the speeches pertaining to the relationship between Narraboth and the Page, 'a role which Strauss was always to insist be played by a woman.'³⁰ In 1905, when the New Stage Club, represented by Gwendolyn Brooks, contacted Robert Ross, Wilde's friend and literary executor, about premiering the play in London,³¹ Ross replied in a letter: 'I may venture to express a hope that none of the male parts may be taken by a lady, as that entirely ruined the original production in France. . . I remember very

well the author's instructions to Sarah Bernhardt, and his constant conversations to me when I was describing to him the production of it in France while he was still in prison.³² Ironically, it was Brooks who ended up playing the Page in the New Stage Club's production at the Bijou Theatre on 10 & 13 May 1905.³³ While Ross did not elaborate on Wilde's objection to the role of the Page being played by an actress, a possible objection was that, by making the Page of Herodias in effect a *travesti* role, this would end up trivialising and possibly even burlesquing the role of the Page and his tragedy. Actresses playing male roles was a theatrical convention with which nineteenth-century theatre audiences were familiar, and this convention generally took two forms: the 'saucy boy' type, which ranged from the broadly comic Principal Boy of pantomime to the roguish boy-heroes, full of dashing derring-do, of romantic adventures like J. B. Buckstone's *Jack Sheppard* (1839), and serious male roles, particularly Shakespearian, played by leading actress to showcase their versatility (and which sometimes ended up being little more than a gimmick).³⁴ An actress in the role of the Page, in reminding the audience of these cross-dressing practices, would inevitably lessen the impact of the Page's tragedy, especially because familiarity with the *travesti* convention would make it unthreatening and palatable to audiences. Such a casting decision would inevitably diffuse the homoerotic impact of a male actor delivering the Page's lament for Narraboth.

Another form of trivialisation of the Page's role can be seen in a film that uses (some would say abuses) Wilde's play, Ken Russell's *Salome's Last Dance* (1987).³⁵ The conceit of the film, has a certain promise: Alfred Taylor (later Wilde's co-defendant in the first criminal trial) enlists his friends and the rent boys who socialised in his rooms in Little College Street to stage a performance of *Salome*, banned by the Lord Chamberlain, for Wilde's delectation. Russell's scenario, however, does not limit itself to biographical probability: Alfred Taylor (Stratford Johns) becomes a (much older and seemingly heterosexual) professional brothel-keeper catering to all sexual tastes who privately produces the play for Wilde (Nikolas Grace) on 5 November 1892, Guy Fawkes Day. In explaining to Wilde why he has decided to stage the play and on this particular day, Taylor says, 'Guy Fawkes wanted to strike a spark for freedom and blow up a Parliament he considered oppressive; you have done the same with your play *Salome*.' Whatever politically radical intent is cryptically being attributed to Wilde's play in this line (which appears to be offered as the 'thesis' justifying the exposition to follow) is completely undercut by the movie's crass travesty of Wilde's play. Wilde himself seems less than entranced with the performance, since he appears to absent himself a number of times from the room; as he dryly observes to Taylor at the conclusion of the performance: 'I was delighted to find that I've written yet another comedy.'

The plot that drives the film (as opposed to the play) is wholly fictional as well: Lord Alfred Douglas, 'Bosie' (Douglas Hodge), is enamoured of the brothel's below-stairs bootblack (Russell Lee Nash). When Wilde punningly confesses to Bosie, 'I've taken quite a shine to him myself,' Bosie informs him that tonight, Wilde will see the bootblack 'shining like gold,' although he adds, with Mosaic

ominousness: 'But don't be tempted to worship the Golden Calf, or you'll feel my wrath.' It turns out that the bootblack, slathered in gold paint, is playing the Page of Herodias (with Bosie playing John the Baptist and Taylor playing Herod). Wilde, who, of course, can resist everything except temptation, ends up worshipping what he has been forbidden, and Bosie, his anger waxing hot, runs to the nearest police station and informs on Wilde and Taylor, whereupon they are arrested (Wilde, not just for gross indecency, but also for the corruption of minors; Taylor for running a bawdy house) and taken to prison. As the source of sexual rivalry between Bosie and Wilde, the character of the bootblack is crucial for the frame plot; however, as a result, the role of the Page ends up being little more than the means by which Wilde and the bootblack can be brought together and thus arouse Bosie's jealousy. The Page's love for Narraboth in this version appears both unrequited and undesired: Narraboth (Warren Saire) shakes off the Page when the Page touches him, and finally pushes the Page away so violently that he ends up sprawled in a far corner of the room. When Narraboth kills himself, the Page goes to the body, but (in a further reduction of emotional connection between the characters) only apparently to check his pulse to see if he is actually dead: unfeelingly letting Narraboth's arm fall to the floor, the Page gets up and snuggles up to Wilde on the divan. To Wilde, he delivers the first part of the 'He was my brother, and nearer to me than a brother' lament for his dead friend, but the seductive intonation of his voice and the closeness of his body to Wilde makes it clear that what is significant about this speech is not its meaning or its function in the play, but its function as the initiatory moment of the temptation that will end up costing Wilde his liberty. The rest of story is unimaginatively straightforward: Bosie spies Wilde and the Page exchanging a kiss in a corner of the room during the Dance of the Seven Veils; after the Dance, Wilde and the Page sneak out of the room; at the conclusion of the play, Wilde having re-entered the room, Bosie comments bitchily on Wilde having gold paint all over his lips.

The film's disavowal of eroticism or even affection in the relationship between Narraboth and the Page and the excision of any pathos in the enactment of their tragedy is paralleled by the depiction of the relationship between Bosie and Wilde, who, in terms of the film, seem to be merely two catty 'girlfriends' in pursuit of the same boy.³⁶ This downplaying of homoeroticism in both the script and acting is part of a larger problem with the film that Tydeman and Price note in their scathing analysis of *Salome's Last Dance*. Commenting on the 'wholly pointless presence of several nude women and a plethora of heterosexual acts,' they argue it is not accidental that 'while Russell's camera lingers titillatingly on the heterosexual acts, when the homosexual ones are to take place he cuts away.'³⁷ Similarly, as the performance of the play progresses, both the Page and Wilde become narratively and visually pushed to the margins: Herod, having collapsed on the divan on which Wilde and the Page were watching the play, displaces Wilde as the main spectator of *Salome*/Salome, a displacement which continues with their absence in subsequent shots and their exit from the room, after which the Page is not seen again.



Plate 7

Opening scene (showing the Page and Narraboth centre) Still taken from *Salome* (1923).
 Director, Charles Bryant; Costume, Natasha Rambova; *Salome*, Alla Nazimova



Plate 8

'How strange the moon seems!' (Intertitle. The Page and Narraboth)
Salome (1923)

An interpretation of Wilde's play that is as radically homosexual as Russell's is heteronormative, Lindsay Kemp's 1977 all-male production at the Roundhouse (London), ultimately has the same effect in terms of the role of the Page. This is the result of the locus of the homoeroticism in the play being shifted onto the relationship between Salome and Iokanaan. As Donohue's article acknowledges, reading *Salome* as a homosexual is a well-established convention. Indeed Tydeman and Price, in their discussion of Kemp's production, seem to take as a given that the homosexuality of the plot is in some more 'real' or meaningful way centred on Salome, when they observe that one of the innovative features of Kemp's interpretation is 'its foregrounding of the homosexuality which previously has almost invariably been treated with extreme caution.' They clearly believe, given the ensuing analysis that their readers will think, not of the Page and Narraboth, but of Salome.³⁸ What Tydeman and Price see as the epiphanic moment of Kemp's interpretation of *Salome*, the moment which finally brings out the submerged



Plate 9

'Oh! How strange the moon looks!' (Intertitle.) *Salome* (1923)



Plate 10

The Page mourns over the body of Narraboth. *Salome* (1923)

homosexuality of *Salome/Salome*, is Kemp's version of the Dance of the Seven Veils, where 'Salome' is revealed as a persona – drag – which is discarded to reveal the real gay man beneath: 'beneath the layers of adornment was a middle-aged man making no pretence at conventional sexual attractiveness . . . The implication is that this was an unveiling of the self, an honest exposure of the actor's essential being.'³⁹ While this type of interpretation is stimulating, it comes at the expense of the Page's role, which appears to have been cut out of the drastically reduced and modified version of the play Kemp used for his production.⁴⁰

A third interpretation of the play, Alla Nazimova's 1923 silent film,⁴¹ offers an illustration of the significance that Page assumes onstage that, I argue, captures what Wilde was attempting to achieve with that role. While, as a silent film, Nazimova's version is certainly not a perfect realisation of Wilde's play, it, unlike other productions, does not marginalise the Page, and is helpful in visualising how the Page's story might play out over the course of *Salome*.⁴² Given that Ken Russell had, in *Valentino* (1977), featured Nazimova and her protégé (and Valentino's wife) Natacha Rambova (*Salome's* costume and setting designer) made reference to this silent film, it is likely that Russell had seen it, and the



Plates 11–13

Narraboth's body is removed. The Page watches. *Salome* (1923)

opening poses of Narraboth and the Page in *Salome's Last Dance* constitute a visual allusion to the opening poses of these two characters in Nazimova's film (Plates 7, 8). But, the physical intimacy between Narraboth and the Page is much more in evidence in Nazimova's film (Plate 9). Since the characters of the Cappadocian and Nubian are cut, as is the dialogue between the Soldiers, this allows the opening scenes of the film to give a full treatment of this first tragedy.⁴³ What is of particular interest is how the Page (Arthur Jasmine) is dealt with after Narraboth (Earl Schenck) kills himself. Despite the drastic telescoping of the dialogue (which necessitates cutting most of the secondary characters and/or their speeches⁴⁴), each of the moments featuring the Page from the play is included in



Plate 14

The Page, looking in the direction in which Narraboth's body has been taken.
Salome (1923)



Plate 15

'What is it that thou wouldst have, Salome?' (Intertitle.) *Salome* (1923)



Plate 16

'Give me the head of Iokanaan!' (Intertitle.) *Salome* (1923)

the film. In place of an intertitle with the Page's lament, there is a protracted scene in which the Page is the focus of the film's attention: the soldiers run and cluster around the Page who is bent in mourning over Narraboth's body (Plate 10), a tableau which is disrupted by the entrance of the Court, which forces the Page to retreat and kneel. After Herod has slipped in Narraboth's blood and orders the



Plate 17

‘Thou wert the friend of him who is dead. I tell thee there are not dead men enough!’
(Intertitle.) *Salome* (1923)



Plate 18

Final appearance of the Page. *Salome* (1923)

body removed, the viewer’s attention is again drawn towards the kneeling Page, isolated to the left of the screen from the clustered members of the Court, his outstretched arms following Narraboth’s body as the soldiers bear it off-screen right; he remains with hands clasped, still looking after Narraboth, as seats are set in front of him for Herod and Herodias and the rest of the court take places to the side and behind the thrones (Plates 11–13). The Page then slowly rises, and sits dejectedly in the foreground at Herodias’s feet, again looking off-screen right (Plate 14). Not only does the Page feature prominently in the scene where Salome demands the head of Iokanaan (Plates 15–16), but the scenes where Herodias demands her fan and where Salome brings her attention to bear on the ‘friend of him who is dead’ are also represented: in the latter scene, Salome seizes the Page by the shoulders, and throws him off screen – a symbolic death, for the Page is not seen again (Plates 17–18). More broadly, in a film whose cinematography upon the entrance of the Court is built upon three basic shots – a long shot of the terrace with the Court on the right facing in profile the cage over Iokanaan’s cistern to the left, the parapet at back; a frontal shot of the Court, focussed on Herod and Herodias; and a frontal shot of the cage over Iokanaan’s cistern (where

Salome stands through most of the film) – the Page is often inescapably in the centre (in long shot) or the foreground (in the Court shot) of the drama. Within the conventions of silent pictures, the relatively restrained acting of Arthur Jasmine in the role of the Page, particularly in the witnessing of his silent suffering for the brother he has lost, results in powerful scenes, especially when the viewer sees this stoic mourning set against the antics of a clownish (in terms of both acting and make-up) Herod (Mitchell Lewis), the virago Herodias (Rose Dione), and the petulant, and bloodthirsty, Salome. Nazimova's production has the virtue, like her interpretation of Salome's dance, of making visible what Wilde leaves invisible on the surface of his text.

Incorporating the Tragedy That Dare Not Speak Its Name

Wilde's deployment of the Page of Herodias offers a *via media*, a means of reconciling two seemingly irreconcilable understandings of Wilde as a writer: firstly as a professional writer, and secondly, as an artist and an uranian with an investment in exploring the viability of a public discourse of same-sex desire expressed through art. *Salome* marks the convergence of a couple of important trends in Wilde's writing career. The first, as Joseph Donohue notes, consists of Wilde's 'persistent attempts over nearly the whole of his career to write producible poetic drama'⁴⁵ – an aspiration that was shared by many other writers of the period – seen in his *The Duchess of Padua* (staged in New York as *Guido Ferranti* in 1881⁴⁶), the incomplete *A Florentine Tragedy* and *La Sainte Courtisane*, the lost (or never written) 'The Cardinal of Avignon,' the talked about but never written 'Pharaoh' and 'Ahab and Isabel'.⁴⁷ The second trend was his long-standing efforts to sell himself as *un écrivain français*. This he did not only by writing his play in French, but also by putting his own individual stamp on a story which a number of French artists of the time had treated – for instance, Mallarmé's 'Hérodiade,' Flaubert's 'Hérodiad' in *Trois Contes* (1877), Laforgue's 'Salomé' in *Moralités légendaires* (1887) and the paintings of Gustave Moreau (described by Huysmans in Chapter Fourteen of *A Rebours*) – thus inviting comparison of his work with theirs. Significantly, the subject of Salome was one of Wilde's key topics in conversations with French writers during his eight-week stay in Paris in 1891; according to Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, Wilde told him 'he was writing a play in French to be acted at the [Comédie] Français[e]. He is ambitious of being a French Academician.'⁴⁸ Kerry Powell's argument that Wilde wrote the play for Sarah Bernhardt,⁴⁹ and therefore in French (Bernhardt neither spoke nor acted in English), would then represent a calculated effort by Wilde to achieve these multiple goals by association with an international star of Bernhardt's magnitude, thereby increasing the chance of a commercial success that would also, given Bernhardt's prominence in French theatre, demand the attention of French writers.

Another trend in Wilde's career as a writer that *Salome* has been seen as a part of is a fascination with exploring – and thereby exposing his own – sexuality. In response to the perennially revisited notion that Wilde's works can be read as

symptoms of his homosexual pathology – for example, the ‘Wilde as Salome’ photograph as ‘proof’ that Wilde wrote *Salome* in order to fulfil a compulsive desire to dress up and be photographed as his supposed *alter ego* – gay/queer studies has offered salutary reconceptualisations of the place of Wilde’s sexuality in his art, reorienting Wilde as a sophisticated gay writer *avant la lettre* who ‘twitted’ the obtuseness of the heterosexual majority by means of coded gay subtexts. In Christopher Craft’s exuberant and dazzling reading of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, for example, Wilde emerges as an equally exuberant and dazzling writer who engages in some ‘serious Bunburyism,’ defined by Craft as a discursive strategy whereby,

an ‘illicit’ signification could be insinuated into the text even as it was also withdrawn under the cover of a licit one . . . Via such strategic equivocation Wilde could introduce into *Earnest* both a parodic account of his own double life . . . as well as a scathing critique of the heterosexist presumption requiring, here statutorily, that such a life be both double and duplicitous. And that *Earnest* is such a text . . . is simply a Wilde fact whose closeting or imprisonment we must no longer forbear.⁵⁰

Claims that Wilde intentionally inscribed such elaborate queer significations throughout his work, however, are rejected by Alan Sinfield, who argues that the search for gay subtexts ends up by eclipsing the text: ‘Many commentators assume that queerness, like murder, *will out*, so there must be a gay scenario lurking somewhere in the depths of *The Importance of Being Earnest*. But it doesn’t really work. It might be nice to think . . . of Bunburying as cruising for rough trade, but it is an upper-class young heiress that we see Algernon visiting, and they want to marry.’⁵¹ Against Craft’s observation that Wilde’s ‘serious Bunburyism’ was the result of a theatrical and publishing culture in which ‘he could neither stage nor publish an uncloseted gay play’⁵² must be placed alongside Josephine Guy and Ian Small’s observation that ‘[t]he emphasis on the institutional presupposes a politics of constraint and censorship which in turn assumes an ‘ideal’ work which Wilde wanted to write, but which he was constantly prevented from so doing. Unfortunately, the evidence fails to support this view.’⁵³ Guy and Small’s *Oscar Wilde’s Profession: Writing and the Culture Industry in the Late Nineteenth Century* critiques the basic presumption that Wilde’s writings are governed by an ‘expressive aesthetic’⁵⁴ – in which the writings are read as transmutations of the content of Wilde’s private erotic life – by examining Wilde as a professional writer. In their analysis, Wilde emerges as a borrower and synthesiser (of himself and others) whose literary aspirations were informed not by a need for self-confession but by financial pressures, time constraints, the requirements of publishers, magazine editors, theatre managers, and the tastes of consumers of mainstream literature and drama. Above all, they show Wilde’s goal was to be a marketable writer. Despite the persuasiveness of the arguments of Sinfield and Guy and Small, these critics fail to respond to the evidence that Wilde *was* interested in the issue of incorporating same-sex characters, themes and narratives in art – albeit on the periphery. Wilde was associated with that group of writers dubbed the ‘uranians’ (a prominent member of which was

Lord Alfred Douglas), and his fascination with, for example, the relations between Balzac's *Vautrin* and Lucien de Rubempré and with novels like Rachilde's *Monsieur Venus* all testify to this interest.⁵⁵ The challenge comes in showing how this interest may have influenced Wilde's practice as a professional writer and playwright.

One of the challenges for any interpreter of *Salome* is the issue of staging, in picturing how exactly how the drama might play out on stage. The playtext itself offers little guidance; as Tydeman and Price observe: 'Wilde never saw *Salome* presented live on stage, and left frustratingly few explicit instructions as to its proper staging.'⁵⁶ In publishing *Salome*, Wilde did not follow his usual practice when preparing his playscripts for the press. Although specifically made in reference to *An Ideal Husband*, Russell Jackson's comments are broadly representative of Wilde's practice:

He elaborated the stage directions, adding adverbs and adjectives to the bald entrances and exits of the drafts and providing elaborate descriptions of the principal characters . . . Although he had misgivings concerning the propriety of bothering his readers with the colour of a character's hair and other physical details, Wilde was joining in the movement towards the effective presentation of plays for the reading public.⁵⁷

It is thus surprising that Wilde did not provide lavish descriptions for the various editions of *Salome*, especially given the relative shortness of the play and the artificiality of the dialogue, which, unadorned, seemed to highlight what for some readers was its parodic quality: one critic called it a 'pastiche' of Gautier, Flaubert and Maeterlinck,⁵⁸ another commented that 'the opening scene reads to us very like a page from one of Ollendorff's exercises' (which used repetitive phrasing as a method of language instruction).⁵⁹ That Wilde chose not to elaborate on the script of *Salome* (especially since an enlargement of the text would have potentially enabled him to ask for more money for a edition of a play he had faint hope of seeing in the public, commercial theatre), combined with his extreme economy in stage directions, I would argue, makes those directions Wilde does provide of particular significance.

The difficulties that result from the laconic nature of the stage directions are compounded by the text's implication that almost all of its substantial cast (totalling at least 28 speaking and non-speaking roles), once they have entered, remain on stage until the end of the play. At the opening of the play, on stage are The Young Syrian, The Page of Herodias, the First, Second and Third Soldiers (the last a non-speaking role), The Cappadocian, The Nubian, and the Executioner Namaan (another non-speaking role). There are three entrances: Salome, alone; A Slave, alone, who comes onto the terrace to inform Salome that Herod wishes her to return to the feast; Iokanaan, brought up from the cistern; and Herod, Herodias and 'all the Court' (26), which includes the speaking roles of Tigellinus, five Jews, two Nazarenes, a Saducee and a Pharisee and at least three slaves (non-speaking roles) who Herod refers to by name: Manasseh, Issachar, and Ozias. Besides the Slaves of Salome, who come to prepare her for her dance, other extras, such as additional slaves and soldiers, may have been envisioned by Wilde, as well as other banquet guests, since Salome, in her

first speech, mentions that there are also at the banquet barbarians, Greeks, Egyptians, and Romans (besides Tigellinus). Only four exits are indicated: that of the slave who entered to inform Salome of Herod's desire that she return to the banquet (14);⁶⁰ Iokanaan's return to the cistern (26); the removal of Narraboth's body by the Soldiers (30); and Namaan's descent into the cistern to behead Iokanaan (62) (it is unclear if Namaan, after handing up the head, is to come out of the cistern). No other exits are indicated or implied in the text.

In terms of stage dialogue and activity, while the primary characters – Salome, Iokanaan, Herod, Herodias – have prominent and constant roles to play in the unfolding of the main plot, the roles of all the secondary characters are limited to discrete sections of the play, after which, although remaining on stage, they have no dialogue or business, or serve in only a subservient capacity by performing business necessary for the advancement of the main plot. The Cappadocian and Nubian have no further lines nor are they referred to after Salome's entrance. Narraboth kills himself before the Court's entrance, soon after which his body is taken away. The First and Second Soldiers cease to play a prominent role in the dialogue when they are displaced as the focus of the drama by the entrance of the Court⁶¹ and thereafter (with Namaan and the Third Soldier) are used for the stage business concerning the deaths of Iokanaan and Salome. Similarly, the slaves are all used for ancillary dramatic purposes: A Slave comes on to the terrace to inform Salome that Herod wishes her to return to the feast, a wish Salome defies, which functions to foreshadow the murderous wilfulness of her character; the Slaves of Salome prepare Salome for her dance; slaves (presumably Manasseh, Issachar, and Ozias) fulfil Herod's commands to lay carpets, light torches, bring tables, wine, fruit (all of which have a specific plot function⁶²), and put out the torches at the end, which allows the stage to be darkened in preparation for Salome's kiss. The Court – Tigellinus with his news of Rome, the Jews, Nazarenes, Saducee and Pharisee with their doctrinal debates – like the Cappadocian and Nubian upon the entrance of Salome, cease to have any explicit role in the drama after Herod's first request that Salome dance for him (45), save for an 'Oh! Oh!' interjection by the Jews when Herod offers her the veil of the sanctuary (62), and when (as a stage direction indicates) the Nazarenes '*fall on their knees and begin to pray*' (63) after seeing the decapitated head of Iokanaan. In sum, unless they are employed for some stage business that is essential for the development of the main plot, the secondary characters cease to have specified role in the action of play – though their continued onstage presence implies a role 'as witness'.

Of all the secondary characters, it is only the Page of Herodias who is singled out throughout the play for especial attention – through the sparse stage directions – long after his ostensible dramatic function as Narraboth's foil in the opening dialogue has ended, and his own story has concluded tragically with the death of Narraboth. The blindness to, and lack of concern for, the relationship of Narraboth and the Page that has characterised both productions and criticism of *Salome* is a reflection of the attitude of the other characters in the play. Not only is the suicide of Narraboth barely acknowledged:

THE YOUNG SYRIAN 'Ah! [*He kills himself, and falls between Salome and Iokanaan*] . . .

FIRST SOLDIER Princess, the young captain has just slain himself.

SALOME Suffer me to kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan' (24)

The Page's two speeches about his love for Narraboth are not acknowledged by any of the other characters on stage. The speeches are not flagged as 'asides', but there are no character or characters to which these laments are directed, and they generate no reaction, no response. His first speech comes between Narraboth's suicide and the First Soldier's attempt to draw Salome's attention to this act; and his second speech is bracketed by a discussion between the soldiers:

FIRST SOLDIER We must bear away the body to another place. The Tetrarch does not care to see dead bodies, save the bodies of those whom he himself has slain.

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS He was my brother, [etc . . .].

SECOND SOLDIER You are right; we must hide the body. The Tetrarch must not see it. (26)

The Page's love for Narraboth is rendered invisible (just as the subject of it is about to be made physically 'invisible', hidden by the soldiers); although publicly expressed, it generates neither sympathy nor condemnation. (This dynamic is also operative in Nazimova's film: as the Page looks to the right foreground of the screen, where the soldiers exit with Narraboth's body, the Court takes its position right before him but ignores him, instead facing towards Salome at the cistern [see Plates 11–13].) This encoding in the text itself of the Page's tragic invisibility, constitutes an inscription by Wilde of his recognition, as a professional writer concerned about the commercial viability of his work who was always aware of the public, theatrical producers and publishers, that audiences (and the theatrical and social institutions who 'protected' them from witnessing any indecency) simply would not listen to this particular 'cry in the wilderness.' The lack of acknowledgement of the Page's lament is an example of the heteronormative maintenance of the social invisibility, the social inaudibility and unintelligibility of the voice of same-sex desire, and, I would suggest, is emblematic of a conundrum that was at the heart of any late nineteenth century project of developing a distinct and positive discourse of male love. Wilde offers no solution to this conundrum, but, through the Page, expresses it through embedded, rather than verbalised, enactment.

The nature of playtext also suggests that Wilde crafted it to circumvent the prohibition of the depiction of same-sex content on stage, in the same way that one of the climatic moments of the play is indicated by an anti-climatic stage direction – '[*Salome dances the dance of the seven veils*]' (54) – and the infamous kiss is not indicated by any stage direction at all, the paucity of descriptions and directions seems aimed at preventing a, censorious, reader from seeing too clearly what might happen on stage. Wilde's particular skill as a playwright has been located in his brilliantly constructed epigrammatic dialogue, and *Salome* similarly exhibits his talent

for writing highly mannered speech; yet in the case of the Page's tragedy, Wilde constructed what might be termed a 'play without words.' The Page is mute throughout the rest of the play; however, he is subject to a pathologising observation by Herodias –

HERODIAS Well! My fan? [*The Page gives her the fan.*] You have a dreamer's look. You must not dream. It is only sick people who dream. [*She strikes the Page with her fan.*] (39)

– and a comment by Salome which carries a certain murderously homophobic resonance, given that she recognises and refers to him according to his own characterisation of his relationship with Narraboth (rather than according to his office).

SALOME Come hither. Thou wert the friend of him who is dead, wert thou not? Well, I tell thee, there are not dead men enough. (63)

Although she only wants him to go and bid the soldiers to go into the cistern to retrieve Iokanaan's head, it is not surprising that the Page 'recoils' from her.

Thus, although mute, the Page is the only subsidiary character towards whom the audience's attention is directed for purposes that are not related to the tragedy centred on Salome and Iokanaan. The audience is compelled to refocus on the page and remember *his* tragedy in a way that is unique. Salome's address to the 'friend of him who is dead' is both a foreshadowing of the death that is about to be effected for Salome and a reminder of the tragedy of the 'brother' of the Young Syrian who has already killed himself for her. In a potent collision of the earlier with the imminent tragedies, the audience is explicitly reminded of the suicide of the Young Syrian and the bereavement of the Page of Herodias as the first phase of a tragedy that will conclude in the executions of Iokanaan and Salome. Because the unfolding of the Page's personal tragedy through the remainder of the play is enacted on the plane of the visual alone, it is a 'hidden' history that, like so much else in this play, only becomes tangible in production. This, I would suggest, is where the 'covert homosexuality' of this play lies: only as Wilde's non-existent/ideal spectators, not readers, might we be able to witness, amidst the histrionic verbosity in which the tragedy revolving around Salome is played out, the voiceless, constrained suffering of the nameless friend of the dead Narraboth, performing his court duties. In an inversion of the potent invisibility of Salome's kiss, Wilde's explicit indications that the Page remains onstage throughout are designed to give visibility to a tragedy that could not be heard. The Page's 'unheard' lament and continuous stage presence constitutes a defiant enactment of the refusal to accept what an audience cannot avoid seeing, the 'love that dare not speak its name.'

Notes

- 1 Josephine M. Guy and Ian Small, *Oscar Wilde's Profession: Writing and the Culture Industry in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 283.
- 2 Oscar Wilde, *Salome: A Tragedy in One Act: Translated from the French of Oscar Wilde*

- with sixteen drawings by Aubrey Beardsley (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head; New York: John Lane Company, 1907). Illustration facing p. 25. All subsequent references to the text are from this edition.
- 3 Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (New York: Knopf, 1988), p. 371.
 - 4 Ian Fletcher, *Aubrey Beardsley* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), p. 65.
 - 5 *Ibid.* p. 78.
 - 6 The characters certainly *read into* the moon's appearance presentiments of the tragedy that is to come, but that the moon itself visibly foretells or reacts to the tragedy is not supported by the text: the directions only indicate that the moon 'is shining very brightly' (1), until a 'great black cloud crosses [it] and conceals it completely' (66). Charles Ricketts recalled how in preliminary discussions with Wilde about the set design for the (ultimately banned) London premiere that while he (Ricketts) 'desired that the moonlight should fall upon the ground, the source not being seen; Wilde himself hugged the idea of some "strange dim pattern in the sky"' (quoted in William Tydeman and Steven Price, *Wilde: Salome, Plays in Production* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], p. 46). Some critics have assumed that when Herod says 'Ah! look at the moon! . . . She has become red as blood. Ah! the prophet prophesied truly [see Iokanaan's speech, 43] . . . Do ye not see it?' the moon is indeed meant to turn red, but this is contradicted by Herodias's sarcastic rejoinder, 'Oh yes, I see it well, and the stars are falling like unripe figs, are they not? and the sun is becoming black like sack-cloth of hair, and the kings of the earth are afraid. That at least one can see' (52).
 - 7 Fletcher, *Aubrey Beardsley*, p. 77.
 - 8 Arguably, 'The Eyes of Herod' illustration would have been more suitable for the Frontispiece, illustrating as it does the entrance of the title character: 'SALOME: I will not stay. I cannot stay. Why does the Tetrarch look at me all the while with his mole's eyes under his shaking eyelids?' (9). A number of Beardsley's illustrations are similarly 'moveable,' as they have no explicit grounding in the text.
 - 9 Given the protective gesture of the Page, 'The Woman in the Moon' may also illustrate the moment following the Young Syrian's order to bring Iokanaan up from the cistern, when the Page once again distracts him by observing: 'Oh! How strange the moon looks! Like the hand of a dead woman who is seeking to cover herself with a shroud' (16). Although Tydeman and Price posit the opposite suggesting that the characters are observing the offstage feast, rather than the Moon (Tydeman and Price, *Wilde: Salome*, p. 120), most commentators follow Fletcher in seeing the nude figure as The Page and the other figure as The Young Syrian (Fletcher, *Aubrey Beardsley*, p. 77).
 - 10 Besides the two appearances of his decapitated head, Iokanaan is only pictured once, but Beardsley's 'John [i.e. Iokanaan] and Salome' (illustration facing p. 20) was originally rejected by the publishers. Herodias and Herod only appear once each. Narraboth is possibly pictured a third time as the figure with Salome in 'The Peacock Skirt' (illustration facing p. 20), his hand upraised perhaps to signal to the soldier to bring Iokanaan out of the cistern (16); alternately, since the costume of this male figure is unique in the series, and not match that of Narraboth in 'The Woman in the Moon,' it is equally likely it may depict one of the exchanges between Salome and the First or Second Soldiers, or the exchange between Salome and the Slave (11–15).
 - 11 Chris Snodgrass, *Aubrey Beardsley, Dandy of the Grotesque* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 278.
 - 12 Neil Bartlett makes some interesting observations about the cultural interconnections between flowers and homosexuality in *Who Was That Man? A Present for Mr Oscar*

- Wilde (London: Serpent's Tail, 1988), pp. 39–59. With regard to the 'A Platonic Lament' title, the *OED* notes that the Italian neo-Platonist Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) used the terms *amor platonicus/amor socraticus* 'to denote the kind of interest in young men with which Socrates is credited . . . As thus originally used, it had no reference to women.' ('Platonic,' *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1989, <<http://dictionary.oed.com/>>, accessed 3 June 2006). Used to distinguish spiritual from sensual love, 'platonic' became an increasingly loaded term in homosocial rhetoric with the emergence of theories of sexual orientation in mainstream discourse: for a male to characterise his relations with another male as 'platonic' would be to acknowledge the possibility that a sensual (mis)construction might be placed on it. Thus the illustration's caption, by seeming to disavow a carnal reading of the Page and Narraboth's relationship, by distinguishing it as 'platonic,' subtly foregrounds the possibility of the sensual dimension in the Page and Narraboth's relationship.
- 13 Brian Reade, *Aubrey Beardsley* (New York, London: Viking Press, Studio Vista, 1967), p. 336, n. 283. Apparently on his own initiative, Beardsley had pictured the line 'J'ai baisé ta bouche, Iokanaan' from Wilde's play; the drawing was published in the April 1893 issue of *The Studio*, which led to Beardsley being commissioned to illustrate the English translation of the play (Reade, *Aubrey Beardsley*, plate 272; pp. 333–4, n. 261).
 - 14 According to Lord Alfred Douglas, Beardsley had 'declared that he could do a splendid translation, and that he thoroughly understood the spirit of the play' (quoted in Stanley Weintraub, *Beardsley: A Biography* [New York, London: Allen, 1967], p. 56–7).
 - 15 Oscar Wilde, *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, eds. Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Henry Holt & Company, 2000), p. 578.
 - 16 Joseph Donohue, 'Distance, Death and Desire in *Salome*,' *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde*, ed. Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 127.
 - 17 *Ibid.* p. 127.
 - 18 *Ibid.* pp. 125, 130–1.
 - 19 Clifford Allen's 'Homosexuality and Oscar Wilde: A Psychological Study,' *Homosexuality and Creative Genius*, ed. Hendrik M. Ruitenbeck (New York: Astor-Honor, 1967) is representative. Advancing the common theory that '[h]omosexuality is mixed inseparably with a whole host of other perversions . . . The writer has seen cases in which it has been mixed with sadism, masochism, exhibitionism, voyeurism, transvestism' (p. 65), Allen claims that Wilde's 'abnormality formed a hidden pivot round which circled his whole life. There would be little point in discussing this abnormality . . . but for the fact that it has a tremendous importance in his work . . . [A] writer's work rapidly reveals his personality and little pieces of his anomaly become discernible in the whole' (p. 62).
 - 20 For the misattribution of this photograph of the Hungarian soprano Alice Guszalewicz in costume as *Salome* for the 1906 Cologne production of Richard Strauss's opera, see Merlin Holland, 'Wilde as *Salomé*?' *Times Literary Supplement* 22 July 1994, p. 14, and Holland, 'Biography and Art of Lying,' *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde*, ed. Raby, pp. 10–12.
 - 21 Kevin Kopelson, 'Wilde's Love-Deaths,' *Love's Litany: The Writing of Modern Homoerotics* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 43.
 - 22 The biblical accounts are found in Matthew 14:6–11 and Mark 6:17–28. According to Enrique Gómez Carrillo, a Guatemalan diplomat and writer who met Wilde in Paris when he was thinking through his *Salome*, Wilde found the biblical version 'dry and colourless' (194): 'I cannot conceive of a *Salome* who is unconscious of what she does,

- a Salome who is but a silent and passive instrument' (193). Enrique Gómez Carrillo, 'How Oscar Wilde Dreamed of Salomé' [Transl. of 'Comment Oscar Wilde rêva Salomé,' *La Plume* (1902): 1147–52], *Oscar Wilde: Interviews and Recollections*, ed. E. H. Mikhail, vol. 1 (London & New York: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 192–5.
- 23 Tydeman and Price, *Wilde: Salome*, p. 48.
- 24 For example, at the start of the play, there are two distinct conversations occurring: one between the Page and Narraboth, and one between the First and Second Soldiers, which the Cappadocian and the Nubian join.
- 25 Max Beerbohm, in his reviews of the 1905 and 1906 London productions, criticised the staging on just this point, arguing in 1905 that in this scene Salome 'ought to remain at the back of the stage, in as dark a shadow as can possibly be thrown on her' and in 1906 stating 'that Salome ought to be in the far background, and in the deepest shadow, while she holds in her hands the head of the prophet.' Max Beerbohm, 'Salomé' (1905) in *Around Theatres* (London: Hart-Davis, 1953), p. 378; 'A Florentine Tragedy and Salomé' (1906) in *Last Theatres, 1904–1910* (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co, 1970), p. 252. In the 1905 review, Beerbohm explains his reasoning for this criticism, a criticism which also intuits Wilde's thinking on why the kiss should be invisible on stage: 'The bitter triumph of Salome's lust for John the Baptist [i.e. Iokanaan], as she kneels kissing the lips of the severed head, is a thing that we can read of, and vaguely picture to ourselves, with no more than the thrill of horror which tragedy may rightly inflict on us. But when we see the thing – when we have it illustrated to us in sharp detail by a human being – then we suffer something beyond the rightful tragic thrill: we suffer qualms of physical disgust' (p. 378). For an interesting visualisation of this scene, which clearly isolates from the rest of the court the delivery of Salome's monologue to the severed head and 'de-picts' the invisible kiss, see David Shenton's comic-book version of the play: David Shenton, illus., *Salome*, text by Oscar Wilde (London: Quartet Books, 1986), n.p.
- 26 One of the first things Iokanaan says to her is: 'daughter of an incestuous mother, be thou accursed!' (25). When Salome first confesses to Iokanaan that she is 'amorous of [his] body,' and rhapsodically apostrophises his beauty, he responds with that famous sanctimonious cliché: 'Back! daughter of Babylon! By woman came evil into the world' (21). Although, given his biblical status, Iokanaan is usually assumed to be a heroic figure in the play, his depiction is not calculated to generate sympathy in the reader or audience member: Iokanaan is, to borrow Wilde's later characterisation of a morally censorious friend, 'Tartuffe in the style of Termagant' (Holland & Hart-Davis *Complete Letters*, p. 963).
- 27 Elliot L. Gilbert, 'Tumult of Images': Wilde, Beardsley, and *Salomé*, *Victorian Studies* 26 (1983): 133–59, perceptively argues that '*Salomé* is essentially a play about power . . . From the start, the lines of the battle are very clearly drawn. Gathered on one side, apparently at odds but deeply conspiratorial, are Caesar and Christ, Herod and Iokanaan, soldiers and Jews – the familiar establishment against which Wilde struggled all his life even as he sought to find a place in it. Plainly, it is gender more than any other consideration that determines admission to this establishment; even a despised and rejected prophet is more central to it, is taken more seriously by it, than is the nominally important 'Princess of Judea,' who, with her mother, represents the opposing side – the female side – in this struggle for power and influence . . . From their own point of view, the women in the play perceive themselves to be trapped between these two extremes of a patriarchal establishment gone wrong, and Wilde portrays them with an

intensity that reflects his own hostility toward the values of such an establishment' (p. 150). Gilbert's argument here is particularly compelling because it suggests an identification of Wilde with his title character on the level of the political and not the psychosexual (that is, an identification on the basis of the shared, if differing, social subjugation of women *and* uranians, rather than on the basis of the belief that female and uranian sexuality is inherently perverse and dangerous, thereby justifying society's keeping those sexualities violently suppressed). In such a reading the Page becomes significant as a locus of identification for Wilde because he is the only male character similarly trapped between the political and religious extremes of this establishment, lacking political power as a servant (slave?) and condemnable by religious authorities as a 'sodomite.' Gilbert's otherwise insightful essay is marred, however, by its unthinking recourse to an ossified and dogmatic Freudianism, as evinced in his reiteration of the familiar canard that Wilde's depiction of Salome demonstrates the homosexual fear of female sexuality as devouring and castrating (neither a universal or even common homosexual fear nor one which has any demonstrable relevance for Wilde himself), and his dismissive judgement that 'the Page's homosexual devotion to the Young Syrian' is 'a form of masturbatory self-love' (p. 146) (that is, masturbatory and narcissistic *because* homosexual). Regenia Gagnier, *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1986), also emphasises the importance of the theme of power in Wilde's play: 'Salome subverts both divine and secular law to get the body of Iokanaan. As she comes closer to her object, Wilde also has it that she accomplishes the destruction of the kingdom . . . When [Herod] is finally forced to submit to the law that a king fulfil his oath, his submission includes an effective abdication of authority. When he says 'Hereafter let no king swear an oath,' he cuts off his office of making commitments to his people' (p. 168). Gagnier notes that critics have seen Salome's execution as representing Herod's ultimate triumph, but she points out that this does not alter Herod's 'political impotence' (p. 168).

- 28 Linda Dowling cautions that Wilde's deployment of Victorian Hellenism cannot simply be understood as a periphrastic rhetoric for what we understand as homosexuality: see *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 125–7. Regarding the erotic relationship of the Page and Narraboth, the Page mentions the intimate gifts he gave to Narraboth, 'a little box of perfumes and ear-rings wrought in silver' (24) and 'a ring of agate that he wore always on his hand,' recalling their relationship using courtship imagery which suggest classical, biblical and orientalist influences: 'In the evening we were wont to walk by the river, and among the almond-trees, and he used to tell me of the things of his country. He spake ever very low. The sound of his voice was like the sound of the flute, of one who playeth upon the flute. Also he had much joy to gaze at himself in the river. I used to reproach him for that' (26). The significance of this imagery cannot be adequately explored here, but to give one example, the 'box of perfumes' alludes to the 'alabaster box of ointment' that the woman sinner 'who loved much' pours over Jesus' feet and wipes off with her hair (see Luke 7:36–50). Since *Salome* is a biblical play, the Page's description of his relationship with Narraboth is intended to put the spectator/reader in mind of the biblical rhetoric of David describing his love for his slain friend Jonathan, 'I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women' (II Samuel 1:26). The Page laments: 'He was my brother, and nearer to me than a brother' (26). As Jeffery Richards has pointed out in "Passing the love of women': Manly Love and Victorian

Society,' *Manliness and Morality: Middle-class Masculinity in Britain and America*, eds. J. A. Mangan and James Walvin (New York: St Martin's Press, 1987), the David and Jonathan relationship was 'a recurrent text' in the nineteenth-century discourse of male friendship as well as being simultaneously invoked by 'homosexual' apologists (pp. 92–3). The paradigmatic instance where these two discourses spectacularly intersected, Richards observes, came when Wilde, during his first criminal trial, was asked by the prosecutor, 'What is 'the love that dare not speak its name'?' Wilde's reply began: "The love that dare not speak its name' in this century is such a great affection of an elder for a younger man as there was between David and Jonathan . . ." (p. 93). That the Page's lament was seen as approximating David's lament and that this approximation was anxiogenic due to the increasing conflation between homosocial and homosexual deployments of the David and Jonathan story is evinced by the need to modify the Page's role in the history of the play's production and the tendency to pass over it in earlier criticism on the play. The other intense male-male biblical relationship that would have come to mind is that between Jesus and the 'beloved disciple.' In 1817, Jeremy Bentham argued the relationships of these two male couples in the Bible were representative of sexual love between men: see Louis Crompton, *Byron and Greek Love: Homophobia in 19th-Century England* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 287–9. In a July 1898 letter to Robert Ross, Wilde recounts the conversation at a dinner hosted by Frank Harris: 'Frank was wonderful on the subject of the Greek passions of Christ . . . He insisted that the betrayal by Judas was the revenge of a great lover discarded for "that sentimental beast John"' (Holland & Hart-Davis *Complete Letters*, p. 1090).

29 Tydeman and Price, *Wilde*: Salome, p. 29.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 123.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

32 *Ibid.*, pp. 29–30.

33 The cast list for this production is reproduced in the Halcyon House edition: Oscar Wilde, *Salome*, illustrated by Aubrey Beardsley (Garden City NY, n.d.), p. 11. Unfortunately, Robert Tanitch, *Oscar Wilde on Stage and Screen* (London: Methuen, 1999), almost never includes the role of the Page in his cast lists of productions of the play, so his book is of no help in determining how pervasive the playing of the Page by actresses has been, and comprehensive cast lists are not accessible in any of the published sources on Wilde. In relation to Ross's recollections, cf. Wilde's 6 December 1898 letter to Reginald Turner: 'André Gide . . . has written an astonishing play on Saul, whose madness he ascribes to his hopeless love for David, and his wild jealousy of Jonathan: it is to be played at the Théâtre Antoine, but the parts of the lads are to be filled by women, which is, artistically, to be regretted' (Holland & Hart-Davis *Complete Letters*, p. 1108).

34 A paradigmatic instance is Sarah Bernhardt's Hamlet, where, according to contemporary reviewers, the overwhelming persona of the actress eclipsed the character she was playing: she was never Hamlet, she was always Bernhardt playing Hamlet. As Max Beerbohm observed in his 1899 review, 'Hamlet, Princess of Denmark,' in her interpretation of the role 'she betrayed nothing but herself, and revealed nothing but the unreasoning vanity which had impelled her to so preposterous an undertaking . . . Yes! the only compliment one can conscientiously pay her is that her Hamlet was, from first to last, *très grande dame*' (Beerbohm, *Around Theatres* p. 37). For a brief discussion of cross-dressed actresses in the nineteenth century, see George Taylor, 'Introduction,'

Trilby and Other Plays [Jack Sheppard; *The Corsican Brothers*; *Our American Cousin*]: *Four Plays for Victorian Star Actors*, ed. Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. xiv-xvi.

- 35 *Salome's Last Dance*, dir. & screenplay Ken Russell (Artisan Pictures, 1987).
- 36 There is an attempt, which is too little and comes too late, to give some dubious pathos to the film. When Salome (Imogen Millais-Scott) delivers her long speech to John the Baptist's head, rebuking it for rejecting her passion – 'thou wert the man that I loved alone among men!' – a few tears run down Wilde's cheek. Since John the Baptist is played by Bosie, one reading of this moment is that, like the Page and Salome with Narraboth and John the Baptist, Wilde's passion for Bosie is unreciprocated.
- 37 Tydeman and Price, *Wilde*: Salome, p. 172. A scene that offers a perfect illustration of this critique comes when Herod and Herodias (Glenda Jackson) are fighting over which one of them is sterile. The camera follows Herod as he walks around the back of the divan where Wilde and the Page are reclining. As the viewer likewise follows Herod, Wilde and the Page are left behind to the side of the screen as he moves towards three Jews (little people dressed as Hasidim) lying on their backs on the floor while three nearly naked showgirls straddle them mimicking intercourse. Herod thereupon delivers his line, 'I would be happy at this moment,' which leads to a completely gratuitous dance party where Herod prances about scattering rose petals, although the camera spends much of its time focussed on the bosom-shaking belly dancing of the showgirls. The scene concludes with Herod, who, in company of a showgirl, is now blocking Wilde and the Page from sight, falling backwards on the divan causing Wilde and the Page to leap off on each side to avoid being crushed. The divan then becomes an extension of the stage, and Wilde and the bootblack seem to completely disappear until they are revealed by the passing camera to be standing in a corner during Salome's dance.
- 38 This unexamined presumption leads to some problematic interpretations: in their discussion of a 1908 St Petersburg production, which was set 'inside a giant scenic vagina,' they suggest that this is 'the first attempt to signify visually the 'castrating woman' which many have detected in Wilde's *Salome*, and would subtly gesture towards the homosexual subtext' (Tydeman and Price, *Wilde*: Salome, p. 60). Tydeman and Price fail to state explicitly why they feel the homosexual subtext of the play is suggested by the representation of a castrating vagina, since this seems to be dependant on anachronistically applying a psychoanalytic formula with a heteronormative subtext.
- 39 *Ibid.* p. 102.
- 40 The fundamental problem with locating the homosexual subtext in the relationship between Salome and Iokanaan is that this results in dissipating much of the complicated sympathy that is built up for Salome during the course of the play. As has been suggested earlier, the tragic power of Salome's fate is an effect of her rebellion *as a woman* in the context of the state; the fulfilment of her murderous desire for Iokanaan is given an awesome power because, for a moment, it manages – terribly – to manipulate the patriarchal hypocrisy that governs the state's regulation of sexuality in order to achieve that desire. But if Salome is essentially viewed as but another *male* player in and the active agent of an interpersonal tragedy of homosexual desire, if Salome and Iokanaan are seen as an extension of the same-sex attraction of the Page for Narraboth, the tragic pathos of Salome's fate is diminished when seen alongside the pathos of the Page, the only victim of 'her' desire for Iokanaan to remain alive as a spectacle of suffering and a locus of sympathy and who is not only significantly less powerful than Salome in terms of social status, but is also, unlike Salome, not responsible for two deaths.

- 41 *Salome*, dir. Charles Bryant, screenplay Peter M. Winters [Alla Nazimova] (1923) (DVD Image Entertainment, 2003).
- 42 See also Shenton's comic-book version, which makes explicit the homoeroticism of the relationship between the Page and Narraboth.
- 43 Nazimova's scenario adds another tragedy to Wilde's play: the Slave (played by an uncredited African-American actor) who comes to convey to Salome Herod's command to return to the feast, after being rebuffed by Salome and then glimpsing Herod glowering in the banquet-hall, runs to the parapet and dives off it to his death.
- 44 For example, the Jews are briefly shown arguing about the existence of angels at the banquet; Tigellinus's dialogue is cut, although he is present as the queasy object of Herodias's flirtations.
- 45 Donohue, 'Distance, Death and Desire', p. 116.
- 46 Katharine Worth, *Oscar Wilde* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1983), p. 40.
- 47 The first three plays were published in the 1908 collected edition of Wilde's works. For references to 'Pharaoh' and 'Ahab and Isabel' see Holland & Hart-Davis *Complete Letters* (pp. 873, 950). See Thomas Wright, *Table Talk: Oscar Wilde* (London: Cassell and Co, 2000) for versions of the last four as recalled by persons who remembered Wilde telling them.
- 48 Quoted in Tydeman and Price, *Wilde: Salome*, p. 15.
- 49 Kerry Powell, 'Salomé, the Censor, and the Divine Sarah.' *Oscar Wilde and the Theatre of the 1890s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 33–54.
- 50 Christopher Craft, *Another Kind of Love: Male Homosexual Desire in English Discourse, 1850—1920*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 120.
- 51 Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde and the Queer Moment*, (London: Cassell, 1994), p.vi. Laurence Senelick adds: 'I suspect that some future issue of *Modern Language Notes* is bound to feature a disquisition on the not-very-covert significance of 'cucumber sandwiches'. 'Wilde and the Subculture of Homosexual Blackmail,' *Oscar Wilde: Contextual Conditions*, ed. Joseph Bristow (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), p. 176.
- 52 Craft, *Another Kind of Love*, p. 113.
- 53 Guy and Small, *Oscar Wilde's Profession*, p. 243.
- 54 Ian Small, 'Love-Letter, Spiritual Autobiography, or Prison Writing? Identity and Value in *De Profundis*,' *Wilde Writings*, ed. Bristow, p. 86.
- 55 See Timothy d'Arch Smith, *Love in Earnest: Some Notes on the Lives and Writings of English 'Uranian' Poets from 1889 to 1930* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970); for Wilde's interest in *Monsieur Venus*, see Alexander Michaelson [pseud. Marc-Andre Raffalovich]. 'Oscar Wilde' (1927), reproduced in Brocard Sewell, *Footnote to the Nineties: A Memoir of John Gray and Andre Raffalovich* (London: C. & A. Woolf, 1968), p. 110. There is also the irresolvable issue of Wilde's role in the composition of the pornographic homosexual novel *Teleny*.
- 56 Tydeman and Price, *Wilde: Salome*, p. 174.
- 57 Russell Jackson, ed. & introduction, *An Ideal Husband*, text by Oscar Wilde, *The New Mermaids*, 2nd ed. (London & New York: A. & C. Black, 1996), p. xliii.
- 58 Karl Beckson, ed., *Oscar Wilde: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1970), p. 136.
- 59 *Ibid.*, p. 133.
- 60 In the original French text, neither the Slave's entrance nor exit is noted in a stage direction: Oscar Wilde, *Salomé, La Sainte Courtisane, A Florentine Tragedy*, ed. Robert Ross (London: John Lane, 1908), pp. 19, 20.

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- 61 Their only other exchanges come when they repeat twice their dialogue from the first scene about the Tetrarch having a sombre look (as he stares obsessively at Salome) in the lines leading up to Salome's dance (3, 46, 48).
- 62 For example, the wine is used as a the opening gambit (along with the fruit) in Herod's attempts at Salome's seduction ('Pour me forth wine. [*Wine is brought.*] Salome, come drink a little wine with me') (31); to avoid further discussion about the source of Iokanaan's imprecations being Herod's murder of his brother and marriage to his brother's wife ('Let us not speak of this matter. Noble Herodias, we are not mindful of our guests. Fill thou my cup, my well-beloved . . . I will drink to Caesar. There are Romans here, we must drink to Caesar') (42); and as an indication of Herod's increasing desperation to avoid having to order Iokanaan's execution (58–9).

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