

**Where Music Meets Science:  
Traces of Nineteenth-Century Scientific Naturalism in  
Representations of Madness in Richard Strauss's *Salome***

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## Abstract

This thesis seeks to explore the impact of scientific theory on representations of madness in opera. More specifically, it questions: to what extent do dialogues of nineteenth-century scientific naturalism manifest themselves in the depiction of the title character in Richard Strauss's *Salome*? The intellectual climate of Strauss's Europe may have caused the protagonist to be perceived as one of opera's 'madwomen' by turn of the century audiences. Much literature on the work raises questions about the protagonist's mental state, and arguably, madness is at the heart of the opera. Though dissected by musicologists for decades, *Salome* has long escaped analysis from the dedicated viewpoint of scientific history.

The current study begins with a review of existing literature and an introduction of key themes, which forms a foundation for a case study of *Salome*. Traces of the formative evolutionary principles of Darwin and Spencer can be recognized within Strauss's opera, and this thesis outlines the ideas of evolutionary naturalism and natural selection from their scientific origins, to their emergence within dialogues about the development of music, and their appearance upon the operatic stage within *Salome*. This thesis does not claim the existence of any direct allusions in the opera to scientific naturalism, but rather, aims to showcase the (possibly indirect) engagement with ideas relating to mental illness within a naturalistic framework at the time surrounding *Salome's* composition. The wider implications of these naturalistic ideas are also explored, such as the development of concepts that, despite rising from a culture of progress, ushered in an all-encompassing fear of degeneration and decline. Focussing on the so-called 'lower races' and the weak members of society, the era's nihilistic attitudes to race, gender and disease are shown, along with their relation to the era's naturalistic intellectual climate, and their reflection within the representation of madness in *Salome*.

This thesis starts from the basis that no artistic endeavour exists apart from the society in which it was written. My research, in constructing a specific cultural narrative, contributes to existing *Salome* literature by uncovering not only how madness is portrayed, but also why Strauss's protagonist may have been considered to be mad, and to what extent her type of insanity mirrors the era's naturalistic mind-set.

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## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This thesis has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other university. All sources are acknowledged as references.

## Introduction

**Madness, n.** **1.** *Imprudence, delusion, or (wild) foolishness resembling insanity; an instance of this.* **2.** *Insanity; mental illness or impairment, esp. of a severe kind; (later esp.) psychosis; an instance of this.* **3.** *Wild excitement or enthusiasm; ecstasy; exuberance or lack of restraint.*<sup>1</sup>

Distorting our identity and unhinging the facets of our humanity, madness has haunted the intellectual imagination from the times of ancient mythology, to the introduction of psychoanalysis in the late 1800s, and into the present day. It has been the subject of both scientific and artistic scrutiny for centuries, but what of the correlation between these disparate fields? During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, science gradually freed itself from the domination of theological concerns, and in the wake of the Enlightenment, a period of investigation and discovery gave way to the emergence of new disciplines. Naturalism provided a diverse cultural backdrop upon which various biological and evolutionary ideas were built. These naturalistic dialogues often turned to explorations of human behaviour, and eventually ushered in the birth of psychology. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, representations of insanity within opera mirrored certain developments in the field of psychology, highlighting the potential function of madness as a catalyst for a union of art and science. The history of this relationship begs further investigation, and this dissertation therefore seeks to address the enigmatic coupling of opera and biomedical science at the turn of the twentieth century. As an era abounding in exploration, investigation and discovery, a comprehensive understanding of each area of scientific enquiry, along with its influence on the operatic genre, lies outside of the bounds of this thesis. I will therefore focus specifically on the scientific naturalist movement and its particular relevance to the representation of madness in Richard Strauss's *Salome*.

The far-reaching nature of the ideas that emerged from the naturalist movement resulted in the fragmented appearance of certain scientific ideas within artistic contexts. With regards to the matter of mental illness, it led to some striking representations of madness that had their roots in the era's naturalistic approach to science and medicine. More specifically, operatic mad scenes at this time often

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<sup>1</sup> 'Madness, n.', *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, 2015), available at: <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/112066?redirectedFrom=madness> (accessed 13.01.2015).

reflected the turbulent culture of psychological investigation. Written at the turn of the twentieth century, *Salome* sits amongst the most controversial operatic works of all time, and John MacKenzie suggests that it reflects the ‘cultural, intellectual and psychiatric state’ of Strauss’s Europe.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the work is perceived to this day as a scandalous examination of feminine eroticism, and a ‘study in obsession’.<sup>3</sup> The question of the protagonist’s mental state is at the very heart of the opera, and the reimagining of Salome’s character – adapted from Wilde’s 1893 play – reflects various attitudes towards human behaviour which emerged during the naturalistic cultural climate of the nineteenth century. This thesis does not suggest the existence of any direct allusions to scientific naturalism within *Salome*, or suggest any intention on Strauss’s part with regards to the representation of ‘madness’ in the work. Rather, by taking the opera as a case study, it aims to showcase the (possibly indirect) engagement with ideas relating to mental illness within a naturalistic framework at the time of the opera’s composition.

Chapter One provides a review of relevant literature and familiarizes the reader with the *Salome* story from its biblical origins until its retelling in Strauss’s opera. This chapter outlines some important contemporary discussions of the work, and aims to introduce a number of key ideas, including the historical role of madness in opera and understandings of ‘madness’ itself. Chapter One also briefly refers to Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and the views on women and madness in the nineteenth century which the opera encapsulates. This, I hope, serves as a pertinent example of the way in which opera’s mad scenes can be viewed through a wider cultural lens, therefore showcasing the kind of approach that I will take to my case study of *Salome*.

Chapter Two introduces the fundamental philosophies of the naturalist movement, therefore forming a foundation for the study that will comprise the second half of the thesis. This chapter traces the development of naturalistic approaches to madness throughout history, and outlines the affect of the Darwinian revolution on attitudes towards psychology in the nineteenth century.

Chapter Three sees exclusive focus on the naturalist ideas of the nineteenth century and their fragmented manifestation within Strauss’s opera. From the

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<sup>2</sup> John MacKenzie, *Orientalism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 161-162.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Kennedy, *Richard Strauss: Man, Musician, Enigma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 147.

formative evolutionary principles of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, this chapter traces the ideas of evolutionary naturalism from their scientific origins, to their emergence within dialogues about the development of music, and their appearance upon the operatic stage within Strauss's *Salome*. This chapter will also explore the translation of the principles of scientific naturalism into the trend of naturalism in the arts, which came to full fruition in music and the theatrical arts at the twilight of the Romantic era. The existence of certain artistic features upholds the naturalistic character of Strauss's opera – from simple tone painting, to psychological symbolism in the tonalities of the music, and the use of various theatrical devices – creating an ultimate exploration of human emotion and expression that nods (albeit indirectly) to the era's scientific context.

Chapter Four seeks to understand the development of ideas which, despite rising from a culture of progress, ushered in an all-encompassing fear of degeneration and decline. Returning to the ideas at the heart of evolutionary naturalism, I will trace the emergence of concerns regarding the supposed collapse of society, and the assumed responsibility of the so-called 'lower races' and the weak members of society. This chapter will discuss the era's nihilistic attitudes to race, gender and disease, the relation of these ideas to the era's naturalistic intellectual climate, and their reflection within the representations of madness in *Salome*. The intellectual backdrop of the late-1800s arguably connects the opera's opulent fin-de-siècle atmosphere with a widespread Western fascination with the East. The exotic façade of *Salome* brims with connotations of exoticism and allure, which seem to function alongside the associated connotations of xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and misogyny, all of which are represented in the music and drama of the opera.

This thesis will survey diverse sources that challenge the boundary between the scientific and the musical, in order to examine the representation of madness in *Salome* from the historical perspectives of opera, science, and by association, psychology. It aims to uncover not only how madness is portrayed, but also to what extent, and why Strauss's protagonist may be considered to be mad. These questions will be approached from the perspective of the era's naturalistic mind-set, therefore examining how the composer's contemporary audience might have viewed the protagonist. *Salome* has been dissected by musicologists for decades, but has long escaped analysis from the dedicated viewpoint of scientific history.

## **1. Literature Review and Introduction of Key Themes**

### **Salome: An Introduction**

The central figure in historical depictions of the *Salome* myth is thought to derive from the 'Biblical' Salome of Mark 6:17-29. Referred to simply as 'the Daughter of the said Herodias', the story goes that she danced for her stepfather, Herod II, and in pleasing him, was offered anything she desired. Upon her request for the head of John the Baptist, Herod was 'exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake...could not reject her'.<sup>4</sup> From the relative sparseness of this account, subsequent interpretations bring Salome to the forefront of the narrative, as she comes to represent three basic elements as outlined by Carmen Skaggs: 'the worship of beauty, the power of prophecy and the perversion of desire'.<sup>5</sup> This fundamental trio appears to remain at the heart of many interpretations of the story, along with the inclusion of certain socio-political subtexts, depending on the cultural and artistic tendencies of a given time.

Barbara Wright outlines the development of the *Salome* myth through the medieval and Renaissance periods: as John the Baptist became a figure of increasing veneration, his untimely death rendered Salome's request predatory and malevolent.<sup>6</sup> Wright explains that during this period, the legend 'thrived on the medieval dichotomy between the life of the spirit and the world of the flesh', which provided inspiration for artistic depictions of Salome's iconic dance.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, Renaissance art drew upon Salome's femininity, as she developed into a symbol of beauty. Frequently smiling and always curious, her doe-eyed gaze became known as that of the insatiable virgin, as connotations of sex and sin soon accompanied depictions of her character. This new dimension was to be of monumental significance in later years, particularly during the nineteenth century, when the *Salome* myth experienced a triumphant revival, and towards the turn of the century,

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<sup>4</sup> Mark 6:17-29, New King James Version (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982), 1513.

<sup>5</sup> Carmen Trammell Skaggs, 'Modernity's Revision of the Dancing Daughter: The Salome Narrative of Wilde and Strauss', in *College Literature* 293 (Summer 2002), 131.

<sup>6</sup> Barbara Wright, 'Salome: a "fin de siècle" legend', in *European Review* 2/3 (July 1994), 233.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

when the myth arguably reached its representational pinnacle with the re-tellings of Wilde (1891) and Strauss (1905).

Linda and Michael Hutcheon describe the eruption of a trend around the mid-nineteenth century, in which ‘the body of this exotic dancing princess soon became the subject of operas, poems, stories, plays, sculptures, decorative objects, ballets, films and paintings’.<sup>8</sup> Gustave Moreau’s interest in Salome was a particularly significant one, and he left ‘hundreds of oils, watercolors and drawings as testimony to his fascination’.<sup>9</sup> For Des Essentia, Moreau’s Salome ‘had become, as it were, the symbolic incarnation of undying lust, the Goddess of immortal Hysteria, the accursed Beauty exalted above all other beauties by the catalepsy that hardens her flesh and steels her muscles, the monstrous Beast, indifferent, irresponsible, insensible, poisoning, like Helen of ancient myth, everything that approaches her, everything that sees her, everything she touches’.<sup>10</sup> His alignment of Salome with Helen – whose will for revenge and disruption earned her a place in the predominantly masculine narratives of antiquity – is reminiscent of the Victorian ‘New Woman’. For Wilde, Salome’s unveiling during the dance may be seen to correspond with a new awareness for, and understanding of female independence and identity that emerged alongside various manifestations of the ‘New Woman’ towards the end of the nineteenth century (which will be discussed in Chapter Four).

Toni Bentley suggests that ‘...Oscar Wilde gave Salome what she had heretofore lacked: a personality, a psychology all her own. Wilde transformed Salome from an object of male desire and fear into the subject of her own life. Wilde saw Salome from her own point of view and completed her evolution into a real woman with real motivations’.<sup>11</sup> In the chapter ‘Necrophilia and Enchantment’, Kirkby Farrell refers to Wilde’s initial rise to fame, which was brought about by Wilde’s ‘defenses of homosexuality’, which focused not on sexual gratification, but on ‘fantasies of edifying spiritual perfection’.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, Farrell suggests that

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<sup>8</sup>Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon, *Bodily Charm: Living Opera* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 90.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in: Joris-Karl Huysmans, *A Rebours (Against Nature)*, trans. Robert Baldick (London: Penguin, 1959), 66.

<sup>11</sup> Toni Bentley, *Sisters of Salome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 28.

<sup>12</sup> Kirkby Farrell, ‘Necrophilia and Enchantment’ in *Refiguring Oscar Wilde’s Salomé*, ed. Michael Y. Bennett (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 106.

whilst Wilde was ‘preaching to America’s workaday philistines about how to live’, the playwright’s ‘peculiarly serious moral streak’ was simply a disguise for his ironic derision of this ‘fantasy of transcendence’ above life’s physical pleasures.<sup>13</sup> In this sense, we are able to understand the play – and more specifically, the seemingly unusual sexual appetites of the protagonist – as a celebration of sexuality, whilst Jokanaan, who preaches ‘misogynistic sexual disgust’, acts as a caricature of the need to rise above the gratification of physical pleasures.<sup>14</sup> It certainly seems possible that Wilde’s re-telling of Salome’s tale renders her a feminist icon, and he appears to do so in a way that calls to mind important issues of gender and sexuality, and the associated notions of eroticism and transgression that abounded in fin-de-siècle modernist aesthetics. Farrell’s reading of the play stands in stark contrast to some earlier analyses, such as those by Kate Millett (1970) and Edmund Bergler (1956), which are summarized by Joseph Donahue in *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde*.<sup>15</sup> Donahue refers to the connection that was drawn by these writers ‘between demonic female sensuality and the author’s homosexuality’, and their description of *Salomé* as a ‘drama of homosexual guilt and rejection’, and a vehicle through which the playwright consoled and justified his own homosexuality by showcasing the ‘cruelty of women’.<sup>16</sup> However, based on Wilde’s tendency towards cynicism and parody, it seems more likely that, as suggested by Petra Dierkes-Thrun, the playwright would make a mockery, or even wage artistic war against the ‘traditional institutions of moral, religious, and philosophical authority’.<sup>17</sup> Dierkes-Thrun suggests that Wilde’s Salome is a character doomed by her sexuality, yet empowered by her ability to re-write the rules, and she is therefore ‘committing to the beauty of immanence and the violence of the human struggle’.<sup>18</sup> This reading encapsulates the complexity, escapism and fashionable despair that characterized the artistic climate of the Western European fin-de-siècle. And so, from her brief mention in the Old Testament, Salome came to represent ‘everybody’s favourite bad girl, the original dancing vamp, a launch pad for

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 107.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Donahue, ‘Distance, Death, and Desire in *Salomé*’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde*, ed. Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 127-128.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Petra Dierkes-Thrun, *Salome’s Modernity: Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetics of Transgression* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), 2-3.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

discussions of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century insecurities and fascinations with women, national identity, imperialism, the Oriental 'Other', and the female body'.<sup>19</sup> This description certainly fits the *Salome* of Strauss's opera, which incorporates a rich mixture of contemporary principles and taboos.

Anton Linder approached Strauss in 1902 with an unfinished libretto based on Wilde's *Salomé*, which the composer is said to have deemed 'clearly versified but not truly inspiring'.<sup>20</sup> However, he must have discovered some creative stimulus within the subject matter, for he turned to Lachmann's original translation, and found it suited to musical interpretation. Strauss's *Salome* is thus thought to be one of the first examples of 'literature opera': a work that 'uses pre-existing text without the mediating stage of a libretto'.<sup>21</sup> Strauss tackles the weighty themes of love, jealousy and revenge, and amplifies them into a more sinister context against Wilde's fin-de-siècle backdrop. Walter Frisch notes the trend amongst German composers in the 1800s, which was characterized by 'responses to and adaptations of Italian verisimo as a way of getting beyond Wagner',<sup>22</sup> who Frisch refers to as the 'first great Naturalist'.<sup>23</sup> Towards the end of the nineteenth century, this desire to move beyond Wagner resulted in what Frisch refers to as 'hyper-naturalism',<sup>24</sup> which he later describes as a 'deeply psychological, nerve-sensitive naturalism', and is evident in Strauss's *Salome* and *Elektra*.<sup>25</sup> His words call to mind the burgeoning movement of Freudian psychoanalysis at the time of *Salome's* composition, and the way in which Strauss's representation of the protagonist – which is both 'deeply psychological' and somewhat nervous – can be seen as a translation of some of the fundamental principles of the era's psychology. Indeed, Strauss is known to have had an interest in the wider intellectual sphere, with several biographies – Gilliam (1999) and Kennedy (1999), for example – noting his education at the University of Munich from 1882 to 1883, where he studied philosophy, aesthetics and art history. This educational background allowed him to gain an appreciation for philosophical

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<sup>19</sup> Mary Simonson, *Body Knowledge: Performance, Intermediality, and American Entertainment at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 27.

<sup>20</sup> William Mann, *Richard Strauss: A Critical Study of the Operas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966) 41, quoted in Skaggs, 'Modernity's Revision of the Dancing Daughter', 133.

<sup>21</sup> Walter Frisch, *German Modernism: Music and the Arts* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 82.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

thought, as well as a context and methodology for approaching its associated texts. His life's work resulted in a varied compositional output that reflects both the musical developments of the time, alongside the era's stimulating intellectual landscape. Indeed, Strauss's philosophical background led him to take inspiration from the likes of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, and the composer's self-confessed interest in 'the development in the human race from its origin through the various phases of development' alludes to his possible familiarity with the burgeoning movement of psychology.<sup>26</sup>

Strauss's opera certainly seems to reflect some of the era's psychological ideas, along with the connected fears of sexuality and degeneration. As such, the composer reinforced his association with the social and cultural avant-garde, thus appalling some of the Wagnerians amongst his 1905 audience. Cosima Wagner described the work as 'inane' and 'wedded to indecency'.<sup>27</sup> Cosima was not alone in her revulsion towards the work's subject matter, for Strauss's *Salome* plays host to a seething undercurrent of degeneracy and psychosexual turmoil. Showcasing features of the archetypal femme fatale, the Salome of both Wilde and Strauss is a temptress and an agent of destruction, who functions within a decadent fin-de-siècle exterior; an ambiance of luxury and extravagance prevails, and is reminiscent of the age of Roman decadence where the story has its roots. Interestingly, in both literary and historical contexts, 'decadence' refers to periods of 'excess' and 'decline', and in this sense, we begin to understand Strauss's inclusion of such sinister subtexts.<sup>28</sup> The intellectual backdrop of the turn of the twentieth century connects the opulent atmosphere of the *Salome* myth with a widespread Western fascination with the East. The exotic façade of Wilde's *Salomé* brims with connotations of exoticism and allure, whilst Strauss augments these ideas with (not necessarily intentional) suggestions of xenophobia and counter-cultural ethics. In the wake of a period of scientific progression and enlightenment, the closing years of the nineteenth century were characterized by an all-encompassing air of cultural pessimism. Representing the darker side of progress, the doctrine of degeneration swept across Europe, and declared 'a downward spiral of decline and reversion', both in the

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<sup>26</sup> Richard Strauss, quoted in Norman Del Mar, *Richard Strauss: A Critical Commentary on his Life and Works, Vol. 1* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1962), 134.

<sup>27</sup> Tim Ashley, *Richard Strauss* (London: Phaidon Press, 1999), 86.

<sup>28</sup> Skaggs, 'Modernity's Revision of the Dancing Daughter', 126.

world of science and beyond.<sup>29</sup> The language of degeneration was increasingly used to project Otherness onto certain groups. These groups usually comprised the supposedly 'weakest' members of society, whose labeling as such was derived from considerations of race, gender and disease. Of course, the perceived difference of these lowest members of society was measured against more idealistic figures. One such figure is Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, who plays an important role in a number of Strauss's works, and encapsulates several ideas relating to psychology. The term refers to an 'over-man' – a being above and beyond humanity and a vehicle for the ultimate enhancement of the human race. According to Thomas Bauer, the *Übermensch* played an important role in the development of certain ideas that culminated in Nazism, and as such, is also representative of ideas relating to degenerationism – such as madness as a signifier of human decline.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, disease was commonly thought to be a signifier of degeneration, and Daniel Pick notes the way in which crime, sexual deviancy and addiction began to pervade 'medico-psychiatric investigations'<sup>31</sup>, and became signifiers of the transgression and relapse of society. Soon, there began to develop an association between immoral behaviour and mental instability, especially with regards to sexual deviance. And in addition, sociocultural and medical attitudes towards insanity at this time also commonly connected diseases of the mind with considerations of race and gender.

Wilde's *Salomé* encapsulates the era's degenerationist mind-set, as the playwright translates the myth into a context of decadence, depravity and corruption. Arguably, Strauss pushes this ambience to its very limits, as the opera draws upon a sexually anarchized protagonist, and departs radically from its predecessors in the creation of potent psychosexual subtexts. The air of perversity and sexual suggestion may also be seen to reflect the tendency of certain nineteenth-century psychologists, such as Otto Weininger and Cesare Lombroso, to infer insanity from sexually deviant behaviour, a notion that will be discussed at length in my third chapter. For many members of Strauss's then-contemporary audience, Salomé's behaviour throughout the opera might have been perceived as 'madness', since her sexual awakening and desire for Jokanaan becomes an erotic obsession

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<sup>29</sup> Graham Richards, *Psychology: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 55.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Bauer, *Nietzsche and Nazism* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2007), 2.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, C.1848-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 43.

that culminates in the kissing of his severed head. This act comes uncomfortably close to necrophilia, which for nineteenth and early twentieth-century psychologists was an indicator of mental pathology. The views of two notable psychologists at this time are summarized by Lisa Downing in her *Perversion: Psychoanalytic Perspectives/Perspectives on Psychoanalysis*.<sup>32</sup> In his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud condemns acts of necrophilia as ‘so far removed from normal that we cannot avoid pronouncing them “pathological”’.<sup>33</sup> In a similar vein, Richard von Krafft-Ebbing refers to necrophilia as ‘so monstrous that the presumption of a psychotic state is, under all circumstances, justified’.<sup>34</sup> When analysed within the intellectual setting of Strauss’s Germany, we begin to see the way in which the protagonist’s actions reflect the some of the era’s darkest concerns about human behaviour. This is the foundation of my final chapter, where I will examine the connotations of race, gender, and sexuality in the opera, and discuss whether Salome’s apparent insanity can be seen as a reflection of these significant ideas.

An exploration into the role of psychology in Strauss’s music is expanded through consideration of his mother, Josephine, who suffered from a so-called nervous disorder. Yeomans suggests that Strauss lived in constant hope of his mother’s recovery, whilst ‘his experience with mental illness at close quarters left its mark’.<sup>35</sup> In April 1885, she was first admitted to a nursing home, and spent several periods in institutions from this point until her death in 1909. The experimental nature of her treatment often resulted in side effects, such as paranoia and overdose, one of which ‘brought on an attack of raving insanity’.<sup>36</sup> Written at the time of her suffering, *Don Quixote* was Strauss’s first discernible representation of madness, and in contrast to his usual working speed, it took a relatively long time for the composer to orchestrate. Strauss perhaps found difficulty in painting a musical picture of the protagonist’s decaying sanity and eventual psychosis due to the familiarity of the subject. The trauma of his mother’s madness may also have

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<sup>32</sup> Lisa Downing, *Perversion: Psychoanalytic Perspectives/perspectives on Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac, 2006), 151-152.

<sup>33</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (London: Hogarth, 1905), 161, quoted in Downing, *Perversion*, 151.

<sup>34</sup> Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke 1886), 580, quoted in Downing, *Perversion*, 151.

<sup>35</sup> Charles Youmans, *The Cambridge Companion to Richard Strauss* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 170.

<sup>36</sup> Willi Schuh, *Richard Strauss: A Chronicle of the early Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 83.

incited Strauss's fascination with female psychosis, which manifests itself in *Salome* and *Elektra*. The overt and unsettling sexuality of these works is hard to attribute to his mother's illness, but nonetheless provides an example of Strauss's possible familiarity with the era's psychological developments: this familiarity seems to have endured throughout his compositional career, and reaches a representational highpoint in the aforementioned operas. Morton Kristiansen refers to 'Richard Strauss's attraction to "nervous" opera subjects and psychological states',<sup>37</sup> and Youmans reflects upon the prevalence of 'the physical or a psychological obsession with the physical' within his works.<sup>38</sup> Psychological distress and an obsession with the physical are at the core of *Salome*, which can be viewed as a particularly 'nervous' work, and has been described as a 'marvellous study of a diseased woman's mind'.<sup>39</sup>

For Strauss, Modernism provided an ideal canvas upon which to paint what can be understood as an unsettling portrait of madness. From expressionistic melodies and tempestuous orchestration, to experimental tonality and the composer's staple Romantic gestures, he creates – whether intentionally or unintentionally – an evocative picture of feminine insanity. The music that accompanies the events of the drama – much like the events themselves – is simultaneously alluring and repulsive. Indeed, Strauss's rich romantic gestures, luscious orchestration, and opulent harmonic palette provide a contrast to moments of unnerving and uncomfortable music, such as the unexpected discordance of the 'Salome Chord' and the eerie echoing of leitmotifs, which suggest a constant undercurrent of sexual desire, perversity and misused power. In addition, Salome's musical character incorporates a number of the archetypal musical features of the mad scene (which will be outlined in my section 'Madness in Opera: An Introduction'), as her vocal writing appears to correspond with her seemingly unhinged temperament. Her role sees the inclusion of vocal lines so angular that they inhabit a middle ground between song and speech, perhaps imitating her emotional irrationality. Arguably, the climactic final scene is the ultimate exploration of the apparent insanity and passionate – though arguably perverse –

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<sup>37</sup> Morton Kristiansen, 'Richard Strauss's *Feuersnot* in Its Aesthetic and Cultural Context: A Modernist Critique of Musical Idealism' (PhD diss., Yale University, 2000), 24.

<sup>38</sup> Youmans, *Richard Strauss's Orchestral Music and the German Intellectual Tradition: The Philosophical Roots of Musical Modernism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 171.

<sup>39</sup> Derrick Puffett, *Richard Strauss: Salome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 7.

sensuality of the protagonist. Both the controversial thematic content of the opera, and the music used in its depiction proved somewhat problematic for Strauss, whose original cast refused to perform the work. His choice for the starring role, Marie Wittich, protested, firstly because of her aversion to the 'unsingable' quality of the music, and secondly, because of the opera's inappropriate sexual subtext. 'I won't do it', the singer is reported to have objected. 'I'm a respectable married woman'.<sup>40</sup> This thesis examines the use of dramatic and musical devices throughout Strauss's work, and, in conjunction with a wider reading of the period's attitudes towards madness from both sociocultural and scientific perspectives, aims to establish if and how Salome can be seen as one of opera's 'madwomen', and in what ways madness is represented and explored throughout Strauss's opera. In order to establish a context for my research, the next part of this chapter introduces some of the prevalent contemporary discussions on the opera, focussing specifically on questions of gender and sexuality.

### **Contemporary Discussions of *Salome*: An Introduction**

With nineteenth-century science and medicine as a point of central focus, this thesis explores the idea that much like the science and medicine of the day, the so-called 'Salome Craze' that emerged during the second half of the nineteenth century 'sought to legitimise new forms of control by men over the bodies and behaviours of women'.<sup>41</sup> Lawrence Kramer proposes this idea in his thought-provoking article 'Culture and Musical Hermeneutics: The Salome Complex', which is illustrative of his desire to establish a wider cultural context for musicological study, and also forms part of a broader conversation surrounding Salome's role as both a dangerous threat to male authority and a victim of masculine oppression.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, issues of gender and sexuality pervade a number of contemporary considerations of Strauss's *Salome*. At the forefront of these dialogues are the notable works of Carolyn Abbate and Lawrence Kramer, who – along with the likes of Toni Bentley, Linda and Michael Hutcheon and Susan McClary – view Salome in conflicting positions of authority and subjugation. This section will focus primarily on two key texts, the aforementioned

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<sup>40</sup> Ashley, *Richard Strauss*, 85.

<sup>41</sup> Lawrence Kramer, 'Culture and Musical Hermeneutics: The Salome Complex' in *Cambridge Opera Journal* 2/3 (Nov 1990), 269.

<sup>42</sup> Kramer, 'Culture and Musical Hermeneutics: The Salome Complex', 269-294.

article by Kramer, and Carolyn Abbate's chapter 'Opera; Or, The Envoicing of Women', which forms part of the volume *Musicology and Difference* (1993), edited by Ruth Solie. These interpretations of *Salome* encapsulate a number of the work's most prevalent issues regarding the body, gender, and sexuality, and will help to outline the ways in which this thesis will utilize and contribute to the existing canon of literature on the opera.

Kramer suggests that Strauss's opera sits within a period that was defined by a 'compulsion to retell the *Salome* story with lavish attention to misogynist imagery'.<sup>43</sup> On the one hand, the protagonist is the embodiment of the patriarchal fear of female sexuality that is so frequently attributed to the nineteenth-century male mind set. This common reading of the work as an expose of the 'castrating *femme fatale*'<sup>44</sup> calls to mind the link between the widespread fascination with the Salome figure and the cultural unrest of the late-nineteenth century, which was characterized by shifting attitudes towards taboos and social mores. Toni Bentley summarizes the effects of this cultural sea change on the representations of *Salome* at this time, suggesting that 'the passive child Salome of the Bible had been converted by her nineteenth-century fathers into a classic *femme fatale* of knowing evil and vicious intent'.<sup>45</sup> The idea that Salome possesses self-aware ill-intention is questionable, but Bentley's suggestion that the protagonist was transformed by the narratives of Flaubert, Huysmans, Wilde, and eventually Strauss, into an archetype of the era's dangerous women is one that proliferates in *Salome* literature. (This is the basis of my exploration of madness and femininity in Chapter Four, for in addition to her apparently overt sexuality, the *femme fatale* figure was frequently coupled with the notion of hysteria.)

'Who could avoid it?' A reading of *Salome* as *femme fatale* is inescapable for Kramer, who asserts, 'it seems clear enough that the *Salome* craze constituted an effort to normalise, by means of aesthetic pleasure, the epidemic male neurosis that coupled sexual potency with loathing and dread of women'.<sup>46</sup> His consideration of the nineteenth-century male gaze – which was 'grounded in the exercise of assured power' – outlines this aesthetic pleasure as he notes that 'the sexual pleasure of

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 271.

<sup>45</sup> Bentley, *Sisters of Salome*, 28.

<sup>46</sup> Kramer, 'Culture and Musical Hermeneutics: The *Salome* Complex', 271.

looking, scopophilia, can plausibly be said to rival physical penetration as the chief means of satisfying sexual desire'.<sup>47</sup> His suggestion calls to mind the wider cultural fascination with women's bodies in art, and the parallel fixation with the female anatomy in science and medicine. The treatment of female bodies in both the arts and sciences during the time of *Salome's* composition forms a foundation for my argument regarding the protagonist's madness, which will be pondered carefully throughout my thesis. Kramer uses the narratives of Flaubert and Baudelaire to establish a pattern of gendered logic regarding male and female decapitation, suggesting that a decapitated man is all head, and a decapitated woman is all body.<sup>48</sup> Such a body, he argues is the 'ideal scopic object, because it is totally abandoned...to the power of the gaze'.<sup>49</sup> Whilst Salome is objectified and subjugated by Herod's gaze as he enjoys her dance, his attention can simultaneously be seen as a vehicle for her empowerment, and the dance, according to Kramer, becomes a means through which she denies, or defers, her subjection to the gaze.<sup>50</sup> To explain, he returns to Flaubert's *Hérodias*, recounting that Flaubert stages the dance as 'a form of motion that the eye cannot frame: polymorphous, continuously changing, often divided into simultaneous currents', therefore rendering it impossible for the male spectator to 'structure the visual field', resulting in the subversion of the gaze, and Salome's usurpation of the gaze's power.<sup>51</sup> Abbate appears to agree with Kramer here, adding that this is 'Salome's revenge', and like Medusa – 'on whom no male eye can ever safely fall' – she makes herself monstrous in order to escape objectification.<sup>52</sup> In doing so, she becomes unseen, invisible, and by association, powerful.

This transformation from the role of the observed is a consideration that abounds in texts by both Kramer and Abbate, but also highlights their differences. Both writers propose ways in which the protagonist transcends the bounds of typical female characterization through the empowerment she gains through subverting the male gaze. For Abbate, this empowerment allows the protagonist to assume a male role, both within the plot, and in terms of the authorship of her own

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 273.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 274.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Carolyn Abbate, 'Opera: Or, the Envoicing of Women' in *Musicology and Difference*, ed. Ruth Solie (London: University of California Press, 1993), 240.

story. Kramer too suggests something of a gender reversal for Salome, who 'subjugates the eye that subjugates her'.<sup>53</sup> But in contrast, he also believes that she must 'be relegated to the sphere of desire, where she can become the object of both enjoyment and disgust, in keeping with the standard routines of fin-de-siècle misogyny'.<sup>54</sup>

In terms of plot, Abbate claims that Salome's usurpation of masculinity takes place because her so-called monstrousness is associated with grotesque sexual desires, which challenge nineteenth-century gender stereotypes and push the boundaries of even the most repressed taboos – 'she wants sex and says so...and thus claims a powerful male privilege'.<sup>55</sup> These ideas will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four, where I will consider the link between madness and the concept of dangerous female sexuality. Abbate proposes an additional argument for the way in which Salome appropriates the male authoritative role. First, she notes the superiority of the audible singing voice as opposed to the visible body, which instigates a reversal whereby the audience becomes entranced and passive because of the power of the female voice.<sup>56</sup> Abbate refers to Laura Mulvey's argument that there exists a generally accepted cultural opposition of male as active subject and female as passive object, additionally proposing the way in which, when *seeing* a female figure on stage, the audience unconsciously accepts this binary: 'visually, the character singing is the passive object of our gaze'.<sup>57</sup> However, when *hearing* the female singer, 'she is resonant; her musical speech drowns out everything in range, and we sit as passive objects'.<sup>58</sup> Abbate continues, suggesting that the voice of the female performer allows her to slip 'into the "male/active/subject" position'.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, through the power and associated annexation of the authorial voice, the singing voice becomes a 'little drama of usurpation that powerfully disperses the "composer's voice"'.<sup>60</sup> For Abbate then, the empowered voice of the female singer is a vehicle through which she is able to stand 'before us having wrested the

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<sup>53</sup> Lawrence Kramer, 'Modernity's Cutting Edge: The Salome Complex' in *Opera and Modern Culture: Wagner and Strauss* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 142.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Abbate, 'Opera: Or, the Envoicing of Women', 237.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 254.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

composing voice away from the librettist and composer who wrote the score'.<sup>61</sup> Kramer also refers to 'the drama of separation and empowerment', and touches upon the idea of reversed authorship roles, suggesting that in each of her nineteenth-century appearances – namely the works of Huysmans, Flaubert and Wilde – Salome 'appears not as a kind of art but as a kind of artist'.<sup>62</sup> Brushing aside his suggestion that Salome thus encapsulates the 'feminization of the artist', Abbate proposes that the protagonist is in fact, 'something more distressing: a female author'.<sup>63</sup> Whilst for Kramer, Salome's various artistic roles are dependent upon her male creators, Abbate's suggestion is that, in assuming a male authorship role, she is the architect of her own masculinity.

Kramer's article 'Murderous Women in German Opera' discusses the so-called 'eye-ear problem', which was a popular topic of debate amongst musicologists during the 1990s, and raises the question as to 'whether the music debased Salome by binding her to the stage spectacle or, on the contrary, empowered her by freeing her from the spectacular apparatus'.<sup>64</sup> Kramer outlines that for some, the music mirrors each detail of the dramatic action, while for others, the on-stage spectacle is incomparable to Strauss's 'brilliantly orchestrated sonic tapestry'.<sup>65</sup> Kramer appears to hold the music and plot in opposition. In 'Culture and Musical Hermeneutics', he concludes that Salome's assumption of a masculine role is ultimately deemed worthless by the authority of the opera's music, which 'faithfully preserves Herod's attempt to blot Salome out'.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, Kramer claims to treat Salome not as 'a monstrous sexual icon but as a focal point for the representation of a bundle of instabilities produced by the fin-de-siècle gender system'.<sup>67</sup> He suggests evidence of a two-part pattern in the plots of Wilde and Strauss, which are defined by a reversal that 'yields an affirmation of indestructible masculine power'.<sup>68</sup> He summarizes that 'Salome comes to appear, not as the personification of castrating feminine sexuality, but as the reverse, a figure for precisely those threatening aspects of the feminine

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Kramer, 'Culture and Musical Hermeneutics: The Salome Complex', 279.

<sup>63</sup> Abbate, 'Opera: Or, the Envoicing of Women', 237.

<sup>64</sup> Lawrence Kramer, 'Murderous Women in German Opera' in *Women and Death: Representations of Female Victims and Perpetrators in German Culture (1500-2000)*, ed. Helen Fronius and Anna Linton (New York: Camden House, 2008), 147.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Kramer, 'Modernity's Cutting Edge: The Salome Complex', 142.

<sup>67</sup> Kramer, 'Culture and Musical Hermeneutics: The Salome Complex', 271.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 272.

that the masculine can subjugate'.<sup>69</sup> Abbate responds directly to this idea in the section 'There Are Other Herods, Too', where she suggests that certain critics of the opera – specifically Kramer – adopt a 'Herodian tactic', whereby like Herod, they firstly compliment Salome's claims to male force, but eventually conclude that they are empty: 'women must act as women: they should not gaze and cannot compose'.<sup>70</sup> Abbate may be suggesting that like Herod's bribes – which are offered to Salome in an attempt to change her mind about her request for Jokanaan's beheading, but ultimately symbolize the delusion of Salome's power – these critics can be seen to 'argue for the unreality of her [Salome's] self-identification with maleness'.<sup>71</sup>

Kramer certainly seems to victimize, even patronize the protagonist, and in the process, he epitomizes Abbate's 'Herodian' *Salome* critics, who appear to withdraw from the argument for Salome's empowerment, and consider that 'plot must crush Salome in the end'.<sup>72</sup> Kramer's approach seems closer to that of Catherine Clément, who refers to opera as 'the infinitely repetitive spectacle of a woman who dies, murdered'.<sup>73</sup> Kramer's position can thus be summarized by his acceptance that Salome represents the era's fears of female sexuality, whilst simultaneously falling victim to male authority through acting upon her burgeoning sexuality. In this sense, despite Kramer's aim to 'offer a feminist approach' to the fin-de-siècle retellings of the *Salome* myth, his article seems to touch upon certain ideas that might make such a reading possible, but fails to develop them into anything beyond the so-called 'essentialist' voice that Abbate derides.<sup>74</sup> Nonetheless, the interdisciplinary aim of his article proves to be a useful tool for shaping the aims of my own research. Kramer claims 'to find a meeting ground for literary criticism and musicology as both disciplines aspire to become vehicles of a more comprehensive criticism of culture',<sup>75</sup> and in a similar vein, I hope to bring musicology together with the histories of science and psychology, in an attempt to uncover the ways in which cultural attitudes towards madness informed its apparent representation within

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Abbate, 'Opera: Or, the Envoicing of Women', 238.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Catherine Clément, *Opera: The Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997; f.p. 1987), 47.

<sup>74</sup> Abbate, 'Opera: Or, the Envoicing of Women', 256.

<sup>75</sup> Kramer, 'Culture and Musical Hermeneutics: The Salome Complex', 269.

*Salome*. Abbate's chapter, by contrast, offers a refreshing approach to the opera in the way in which it can be seen to reverse certain gender roles in both plot and performance. I am inclined to agree with a number of Abbate's points, for example, her protest against the assumption in opera analysis that 'the music underscores the moral of the libretto', a stance which she believes symbolizes the acceptance of a powerful, omniscient, and most importantly, a masculine composing voice.<sup>76</sup> Nonetheless, Abbate's reference to such vastly fluid gender roles – for example, the usurpation of masculinity by Salome, and the associated dissolution of traditional gender roles, along with references to castration and disembodied (and by association, disengendered) voices – also raises certain questions about the use of feminist theory. If we are to accept Salome as a powerful force of overturned masculine energy who cannot be crushed by the score and does not perish in light of her apparent abnormality, do we then run the risk of dismissing the struggle of women and the ways in which they have overcome oppression? Furthermore, when approached from the mind-set of Strauss's early twentieth-century audience, do the traits that Abbate describes as 'masculine' actually facilitate a view of Salome as mad, as opposed to male? My thesis aims to highlight the ways in which, for a turn of the century audience, Salome may have been seen as a warning sign for the dangers of female sexual excess, and an embodiment of the associated 'abnormalities', such as hysteria.

It is interesting to note the absence of any discussion of Salome's mental state in these texts. But their content introduces and summarizes a context for examining *Salome* from the perspective of gender studies, and brings to light a framework for the opera that incorporates attitudes of change, fear and instability – especially with regards to women and their sexuality. Indeed, many writers refer to the growing fear of female sexuality across Europe and America in the 1800s, alongside what Bentley calls the "medical" preoccupation with the virus of female insatiability'.<sup>77</sup> Her comment reminds us of the significance of contemporary science in the development of the perceived danger of women at the time of *Salome's* composition, and the overlap between the fascination with women's bodies in the arts and in

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<sup>76</sup> Abbate, 'Opera: Or, the Envoicing of Women', 239.

<sup>77</sup> Bentley, *Sisters of Salome*, 23.

science. Recent explorations of the opera refer to the ‘*Salome* Epidemic’,<sup>78</sup> the ‘representation of a sexual hysteric’,<sup>79</sup> and the protagonist’s ‘solipsistic pathology’.<sup>80</sup> These choice phrases certainly call to mind the language of disease and psychological decay that flowed through medical and scientific discourse at the time of the opera’s composition, and was echoed in a number of the era’s cultural commentaries. As such, it seems curious that the question of Salome’s pathology remains unspoken here. Nonetheless, I believe that in emphasizing the contemporary debate on gender theory and feminism, Kramer and Abbate help to form an image of the way in which women in Strauss’s time were examined and perceived by society. In the context of the current study, this calls to mind questions of how and why Salome may have been seen as mad by audiences and critics at the turn of the twentieth century. Indeed, Stephen A. Willier’s article on the operatic mad scene in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* suggests that by the late 1800s, despite the fact that the atypical ‘mad scene’ was largely obsolete, ‘madness as an operatic preoccupation only became more pronounced after that date, with obsession, *Angst* and paranoia playing a central part in many operas’.<sup>81</sup> In this sense, a useful question regarding the opera might be: in what ways do the suggestions of madness in *Salome* adhere to and deviate from the archetypal operatic mad scene?

Of course, the present discussion centers primarily around questions of gender and sexuality, which certainly bear significant weight within my thesis, but function alongside a number of other ideas that circle back to the naturalist movement and its impact upon attitudes towards madness during the late nineteenth century. Within the opera, Salome’s apparent madness reveals traces of ideas from the psychology the time, and it can be explored within the context of several key movements of the period, specifically naturalism. The case study that comprises the following chapters of this thesis is built upon a reading of *Salome* through the lens of

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<sup>78</sup> Marlis Schweitzer, ‘The Salome Epidemic: Degeneracy, Disease, and Race Suicide’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Theater*, ed. Nadine George-Graves (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 893.

<sup>79</sup> Sander L. Gilman, ‘Strauss and Racial Science’ in *Opera in a Multicultural World: Coloniality, Culture, Performance*, ed. Mary Ingraham, Joseph So, Roy Moodley (London: Routledge, 2015), 130.

<sup>80</sup> Bryan Gilliam, *Rounding Wagner’s Mountain: Richard Strauss and Modern German Opera* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 64.

<sup>81</sup> Stephen A. Willier, ‘Mad scene’ in *Grove Music Online*, available at: <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/0007756> (accessed: 12/01/16).

psychological naturalism, with regards to both the protagonist's insanity and the opera's wider contextual implications, including questions of national identity, orientalism, hereditary degeneration and the collapse of society. Given the basis of this thesis then, it seems logical to begin by summarizing the long-standing role of madness within opera.

### **Madness in Opera: An Introduction**

Madness has pervaded the operatic canon since the 1640s – a time when ‘every new opera had its mad scene’ – attesting to the fact that it so often lurks near the surface of creative and intellectual thought.<sup>82</sup> Though commonly believed to belong in the realm of science, considerations of madness are commensurately prevalent within the arts. Psychiatrist Mark Jones refers to the arts as ‘an expression of man's attempt to understand himself and his environment’, but his definition also rings true of science, particularly psychology, and thus highlights the potential for madness to act as a catalyst for the union of art and science.<sup>83</sup> Sure enough, depictions of insanity in music, drama and the visual arts have reflected the steps taken towards its scientific understanding since the Graeco-Roman period, but the role of madness in music came to full fruition with the emergence of opera in the late Renaissance. In her study on seventeenth-century opera, Ellen Rosand discusses ‘temporary madness’ and its long-standing literary heritage.<sup>84</sup> She describes madness in the drama of the time as a vehicle through which actors were freed from both normative theatrical behaviour, and from the bounds of acceptable practices on stage, so as to convincingly portray the insanity of their character. More often than not, actors would use song as a means to represent madness, but in opera of course, singing alone was not distinctive enough – hence the creation of the mad scene.

The article on the operatic mad scene in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* summarizes the prevalence of madness in opera since the mid-seventeenth century, with the likes of Cavalli's *Egisto* (1643) and *Giasone* (1649) focusing on madmen, and others portraying madwomen, for example, Saccati's *La*

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<sup>82</sup> Ellen Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice: The Creation of a Genre* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 358.

<sup>83</sup> Mark Jones, ‘The Psychiatry of Opera’ in *Psychiatric Bulletin* 14 (1990), 306.

<sup>84</sup> Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, 358.

*finta pazza* (1641).<sup>85</sup> But whilst the canon of operatic mad scenes at this time seems to suggest that madness was neither a specifically male nor female phenomenon, Ellen Rosand remarks that the topos of madness ‘became a favorite tour de force for some of the most famous actors (or, more often, actresses)’ in seventeenth-century Italy.<sup>86</sup> Handel’s *Orlando* (1733) sees King Orlando embark upon a murderous rampage with the discovery of his beloved’s betrayal, and the composer’s *Ariodante* (1734) – equally celebrated for its mad scene – outlines the decaying sanity of the princess Ginevera, whose jealousy also drives her to insanity. Whilst Rosand’s comment suggests a tendency towards depictions of madness in female characters, at this time, it would seem that envious lovers were predisposed to insanity, regardless of their sex.

Against the rich intellectual backdrop of the nineteenth century, composers soon began to take their thematic cues from ideas emerging within popular culture and psychology. The budding relationship between artistic representations of insanity and scientific treatise on madness only grew stronger in subsequent years, with the mad scene representing ‘a symptom of the post-Revolutionary treatment of hitherto taboo topics’.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, as the era saw the establishment of a relationship between contemporary science and popular culture – which will be explored in Chapter Two – representations of madness reflected the insecurities and cultural unrest of the period, which was characterized by fluctuating attitudes towards social norms. The nineteenth century thus provided a provocative framework for some of the most celebrated and poignant operatic depictions of madness to date, which included Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835), and Verdi’s *Lady Macbeth* (1847). Despite a handful of operas that depicted the madness of male characters – for example Mussorgsky’s *Boris Godunov* (1874) and Thomas’s *Hamlet* (1868) – it certainly seems that mad scenes at this time were now weighted heavily towards female characters, typically protagonists. Willier defines the operatic mad scene as one in which ‘a character, usually the soprano heroine, displays traits of mental collapse, for example through amnesia, hallucination, irrational behaviour or sleepwalking’.<sup>88</sup> He also proposes the popularity of two dramaturgical themes, the

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<sup>85</sup> Willier, ‘Mad scene’ in *Grove Music Online*.

<sup>86</sup> Rosand, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice*, 346.

<sup>87</sup> Willier, ‘Mad scene’ in *Grove Music Online*.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

'sleepwalking heroine' and the 'Nina story' (made famous by Donizetti's *Lucia*), which were popular in opera's mad scenes around this time.<sup>89</sup> As the stereotype of the madwoman grew to pervade the genre of Romantic melodrama, the operatic 'diva' became synonymous in the minds of many with the notion of insanity. In his aptly named *Demented, the World of the Operatic Diva*, Ethan Morden explores diva culture within the Romantic era and argues that 'demented' was the highest accolade to be bestowed upon the performance of the operatic *prima donna* soprano.<sup>90</sup> McClary deals with the sensationalization of madness in modern culture: as it became 'perceived *tout court* as feminine', and solidified the link between women and madness, whilst others (Clément, 1988; Hutcheon and Hutcheon, 1996; Smart, 2004) offer an enhanced feminist perspective on the female body, sexuality and gender roles within operatic representations of madness.<sup>91</sup> The relationship between women and madness in science and popular culture will be introduced in Chapter Two, and will see detailed examination with regards to *Salome* in Chapter Four.

Willier refers to the nineteenth-century mad scene as a 'brilliant vehicle for the display of a singer's histrionic and vocal talents'.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, representations of madness around this time often appealed to singers who possessed both technical skill and dramatic talent. Both Willier's article and Damien Colas's 'Madmen and Fools: The Depiction of Madness' outline a number of ways in which madness has been portrayed both musically and dramatically in opera since the emergence of the mad scene. Willier notes that coloratura became a staple of the mad scene during the 1800s,<sup>93</sup> and indeed, accounts of the prevalence of coloratura in representations of madness are echoed throughout many opera studies that deal with the nineteenth century. For example, Celetti's *A History of Bel Canto* (1996) and Parr's *Melismatic Madness: Coloratura and Female Vocality in Mid Nineteenth-century French and Italian Opera* (2009) both refer to the prevalence of coloratura in operatic mad scenes during this time.<sup>94</sup> According to Willier, the nineteenth-century mad scene is

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ethan Morden, *Demented, the world of the operatic diva* (New York: Franklin and Watts, 1984), 11-12.

<sup>91</sup> Susan McClary, 'Excess and Frame: The Musical Representation of Madwomen' in *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 84.

<sup>92</sup> Willier, 'Mad scene' in *Grove Music Online*.

<sup>93</sup> Willier, 'Mad scene' in *Grove Music Online*.

<sup>94</sup> Rodolfo Celletti, *A History of Bel Canto* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 193-196, and

also characterized by ‘unfocussed tonalities’ and ‘the abandonment of melodic periodicity’,<sup>95</sup> and McClary also refers to the ‘excessive ornamentation and chromaticism that mark the madwoman’s deviance’.<sup>96</sup> These attributes seem to endure into the early-twentieth century, and will be examined in my case study of *Salome*. For Colas, ‘the portrayal of madness is simply one category in the portrayal of suffering, for which they [composers] possess tried and true dramaturgical skills’.<sup>97</sup> These skills, he continues, have been developed throughout operatic history, and each one is ‘appropriate to the musical portrayal of a particular symptom’.<sup>98</sup> He notes the time-honored use of recitative for its ability to shift ‘between ferocious execration and desperate supplication’ in a way that mimics the ‘sudden, unpredictable shifts’ that occur in the speech of the mad, which is ‘chaotic, erratic, rambling, and unpredictable’.<sup>99</sup> The use and function of recitative in *Salome* is discussed in my second chapter, and enables us to understand the connection between traditional representations of madness in opera, and the wider context of contemporary science and culture. In contrast, Colas also outlines the ability of aria to depict other forms of mental instability, namely obsession.<sup>100</sup> Unlike recitative, which evokes ‘chaotic discourse’, he believes that aria is characterized by unity and repetition, and can therefore ‘be viewed as a metaphor for obsession’.<sup>101</sup> Susan McClary lists several other musical attributes of madness, suggesting that ‘dementia is delineated musically through repetitive, ornamental, or chromatic excess’.<sup>102</sup> The part of the operatic madwoman would often include florid coloratura, which according to Willier, ‘takes on a dramatic-psychological quality, its range and speed suggesting vulnerability and instability’.<sup>103</sup> He also suggests the common participation of a single wind instrument in opera’s representations of insanity, usually the flute or English horn.<sup>104</sup> In addition to the musical markers of madness, there exist a number of visual stereotypes of what Rebecca Harris-Warrick refers to

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<sup>95</sup> Willier, ‘Mad scene’ in *Grove Music Online*.

<sup>96</sup> McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 81.

<sup>97</sup> Damien Colas, ‘Madmen and Fools: The Depiction of Madness’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Opera*, ed. Helen M. Greenwald (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 180.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 81.

<sup>103</sup> Willier, ‘Mad scene’ in *Grove Music Online*.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

as “inevitable” stage madness’, including ‘a white dress, a pale face, floating hair, and jerky movements’.<sup>105</sup> Many of the features outlined here play a role in *Salome*, and will be examined in more detail throughout this thesis, along with several other musical and dramaturgical choices that allow us to develop a view of the protagonist (and others) as mad.

Though many academic texts make reference to opera’s mad scenes during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, few examine them within their cultural context, and fewer still question why operatic works at this time are saturated with representations of insanity, and how such poignant depictions were created. This dissertation seeks to address each of these issues with regards to Strauss’s *Salome*, examining the work’s rich intellectual backdrop, the relevance of the era’s naturalist ideas, and the way in which these principles contribute to the creation of one the most notable illustrations of insanity on the operatic stage. As such, the next part of this chapter is concerned with defining madness.

### **Defining Madness**

‘If sanity and insanity exist, how shall we know them?’<sup>106</sup> David L. Rosenhan’s infamous question encapsulates one of the most problematic issues with any attempt to define, or indeed, to study madness.<sup>107</sup> His article ‘On Being Sane in Insane Places’ tackles the fascinating question of whether or not psychiatrists are able to distinguish the sane from the insane in a place specifically designed to diagnose and treat the latter: the asylum.<sup>108</sup> He concludes, ‘[i]t is clear that we cannot distinguish the sane from the insane in psychiatric hospitals. The hospital itself imposes a special environment in which the meaning of behavior can easily be misunderstood’.<sup>109</sup> The article, however, makes a far more salient point: that notions of normality and abnormality are not universal. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental disorder as comprising: ‘...a broad range of problems, with different symptoms. However, they are generally characterized by some

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<sup>105</sup> Rebecca Harris-Warrick, ‘*Lucia goes to Paris: A Tale of Three Theaters*’ in *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830-1914*, ed. Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2009), 203.

<sup>106</sup> David L. Rosenhan, ‘On Being Sane in Insane Places’ in *Science* 179 (Jan. 1973), 250.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

combination of abnormal thoughts, emotions, behaviour and relationships with others'.<sup>110</sup> When compared to the paradigm of mental 'health', the terms mental illness and mental disorder convey the underlying assumption of some form of deficiency.

Foucault outlines the way in which discussions about reason and unreason emerged in the seventeenth century.<sup>111</sup> At the heart of these discussions, especially those focused on mental illness, there seems to exist a linguistic and conceptual opposition.<sup>112</sup> Derridean thought suggests that dichotomous notions of normality and abnormality, health and illness, and order and disorder, rely not only on the two terms of a binary opposition, but also on the interdependence between themselves.<sup>113</sup> In other words, illness and disorder cannot exist without health and order. This notion is significant in Derrida's *Différance* – meaning to both differ and defer – which Jack Balkin simplifies as follows:

Différance simultaneously indicates that (1) the terms of an oppositional hierarchy are differentiated from each other (which is what determines them); (2) each term in the hierarchy defers the other (in the sense of making the other term wait for the first term), and (3) each term in the hierarchy defers to the other (in the sense of being fundamentally dependent upon the other).<sup>114</sup>

Drawing upon the binary opposition between normality and abnormality, an abundance of texts – scientific and otherwise – that attempt to define madness refer principally to a deviation from the supposed 'norm' (Szasz, 1970; Jodelet 1991; Trout, 2010, to name but a few). With this in mind, Derrida also proposes that the Western tradition accommodates a trend in which one binary is privileged or valued over the other.<sup>115</sup> This certainly seems to be the case with regards to normality and abnormality.

In *Opera and Modern Culture*, Lawrence Kramer ruminates that 'the concept of

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<sup>110</sup> *Mental Disorders*, available at: [http://www.who.int/topics/mental\\_disorders/en/](http://www.who.int/topics/mental_disorders/en/) (accessed: 19.04.2015).

<sup>111</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 74.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Positions* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), 39-40.

<sup>114</sup> J.M. Balkin, 'Deconstructive Practice and Legal theory' in *The Yale Law Journal* 96/4 (March 1987), 752.

<sup>115</sup> Kenneth J Gergen, *An Invitation to Social Construction* (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 2009), 20.

the norm, like the thing, is all too familiar; it needs no definition'.<sup>116</sup> He goes on to suggest that the notion of 'normal' carries with it a weighty perspective that draws upon the 'basic procedure of referring human conduct and identity to a central ideal type'.<sup>117</sup> This idea, it is suggested, has the potential to fall victim to 'a vast number of approximations, variants, deviations, and perversions'.<sup>118</sup> A definition of madness, then, might involve deviation from or perversion of the supposed norm, which, as Alexander Liazos indelicately suggests in his 1972 consideration of the sociology of deviance, is commonly considered the case for 'nuts, sluts and perverts'.<sup>119</sup> Andrew Scull's understanding of madness as 'theoretically indeterminate' suggests that it is impossible to define by scientific means alone, and as such, it becomes difficult to ignore the central issue with any attempt to define madness.<sup>120</sup> This issue has been a salient theme throughout many reflections on the nature of madness (e.g. Kluckhohn 1944; Rezneck 2005; Inkeles, 2015). These writers point out the protean nature of the norms from which madness supposedly strays, and highlight the difficulties that arise when attempting to define it as deviation or abnormality. These complications are developed into a concise understanding by Greg Eghigian, who stresses the importance of first defining the norms used to measure deviations in cases of mental illness, and the subsequent need to question: 'Who defined the norms and hence the deviation?'<sup>121</sup>

### **Madness as a Variable Social Construct**

Michael MacDonald aptly notes that madness is 'the most solitary of afflictions to the people who experience it; but it is the most social of maladies to those who observe its effects'.<sup>122</sup> The late twentieth century saw mental illness and psychiatry become the object of widespread critical attention, as the likes of R.D Laing, David Cooper and Thomas Szasz founded the 'Anti-Psychiatry' movement, questioning the moral

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<sup>116</sup> Kramer, *Opera and Modern Culture*, 6.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Alexander Liazos, 'The Poverty of the Sociology of Deviance: Nuts, Sluts, and Perverts' in *Social Problems* 20/1 (Summer 1972), 103.

<sup>120</sup> Andrew Scull, *Social Order/Mental Disorder: Anglo-American Psychiatry in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 8.

<sup>121</sup> Greg Eghigian, *From Madness to Mental Health: Psychiatric Disorder and Its Treatment in Western Civilization* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 2009), 350.

<sup>122</sup> Michael Shepherd, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 1.

and political motives behind diagnosing the mad.<sup>123</sup> Subsequent work on madness sought to remedy the lack of historically informed accounts of the development of psychiatric ideas found within previous writers' work, and certainly there seems to have been a surge in the 1960s and 1970s of sociological and historical texts about the history of psychiatry, most notably led by Michel Foucault and Klaus Doerner. In contrast to the interpretation of psychiatric practice as a vehicle for social control, as stressed by the Anti-Psychiatry school, these writers engaged with the definition of mental illness as a deviance from cultural norms. They utilized a historiographical account of psychiatric developments to suggest that madness is a variable social construct, as opposed to an unchanging entity. It has been suggested that today, madness is 'detected by laypersons before it is referred to doctors', and in this sense, as Carol Neely suggests, it 'must be defined and read within some framework...within a particular historical movement and within a particular social order'.<sup>124</sup> Foucault articulates this view throughout his *Madness and Civilisation*, which was first published in 1961 under the title *Folie et Dérison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*. Whilst the book has attracted criticism, praise for Foucault's work tends to place emphasis on his approach to madness as both a concept and as a historiographical topic – a method since employed by most historians of madness and psychiatry. Indeed, the historical particularity of madness – and by association the 'norm' – makes it nigh on impossible to think of a natural and unchanging example of 'normality' when it comes to human psychological behaviour.

Studies in psychopathology that – like Foucault's work – are categorized as post-structuralist (Chestler, 1974; Parker, 1995) often challenge the oppositional poles of normality and madness in an attempt to trace changes in the meanings of madness within various times and places. These accounts will be examined throughout this thesis, but as a starting point, a basic understanding of their outlook proves useful in considering madness a product of the time in which it functions. The tendency of these authors to deconstruct the fixed boundary between madness and normality aims to – as eloquently described by Carol Long and Estelle

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<sup>123</sup> R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self* (London: Pelican, 1965) 41–43, and Thomas Szasz, 'Anti-psychiatry: the paradigm of the plundered mind' in *New Review* 3/29 (1976), 3–14.

<sup>124</sup> Carol Thomas Neely, "'Documents in Madness': Reading Madness and Gender in Shakespeare's Tragedies and Early Modern Culture' in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42/3 (Autumn 1991), 315–33.

Zietkiewicz – ‘disrupt, unsettle or explode the neat categorization of madness’.<sup>125</sup> Reflections on the cultural and racial variations of mental illness have reasserted themselves in contemporary academia as a valuable source of insight into the etiology of diverse behavioral deviations from the norm. Lara Trout, in her book *The Politics of Survival: Peirce, Affectivity, and Social Criticism*, highlights two inter-related types of madness: ‘first, “madness” linked to speaking out against communal norms, and, second, “madness” linked to simply being different from communal norms in the first place’.<sup>126</sup> The latter, she suggests, is linked to ‘presumed cognitive inferiority’ – which has historical links to the ‘hegemonically enforced classification of groups’, and has allowed the classification of certain groups as morally and rationally defective due to colour, religion, and gender.<sup>127</sup> During the late-nineteenth century, these ideas were couched in somewhat hereditarian, even racist and sexist forms, as the link between madness, abnormality and inferiority was frequently implied. Those fitting the notion of abnormality at this time – namely women and the racial ‘other’ – stood in stark contrast to the white, male, and ‘proper’ prototype of humanity. These ideas are comprehensively explored in Chapter Four of this thesis, but for now, the idea of these historiographical considerations of socio-cultural differences also allows us to trace perceptions of the norm itself. As early as 1934, American anthropologist Ruth Benedict pointed out that ‘all kinds of abnormalities (in our culture) function with ease and honour in other cultures...’ and in a similar vein, the works of both Porter and Foucault outline a number of contending interpretations of the phenomenon of madness throughout history.<sup>128</sup> In fact, almost any reading on the history of madness points to various manifestations within different times and places, and amongst various ‘othered’ groups, highlighting the fact that as a deviation from a present norm, we cannot define madness without first understanding the culture in which it functions.

In 2007, Scull’s review of Foucault’s *The History of Madness* criticized the

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<sup>125</sup> Carol Long and Estelle Zietkiewicz, ‘Unsettling Meanings of Madness: Constructions of South African Insanity’, Qualitative Methods Conference, September 1998: “Histories of the Present”, Johannesburg, South Africa, available at: <http://www.criticalmethods.org/carol.htm>, (accessed: 31.03.2015).

<sup>126</sup> Lara Trout, *The Politics of Survival: Peirce, Affectivity, and Social Criticism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 113.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>128</sup> Ruth Benedict, ‘Anthropology and the abnormal’, *Journal of General Psychology* 10 (1934), 59-82, Roy Porter, *Madness: A Brief History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), and Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (London: Tavistock, 1967).

historical inaccuracies that apparently abounded in the French philosopher's work. In the recent *Madness in Civilization*, Scull's aim is to 'discuss the encounter between madness and civilization over more than two millennia'.<sup>129</sup> The title itself nods to – or perhaps corrects – Foucault's infamous work, and his subject matter is equally vast, encompassing the ancient civilizations such as Greece, Rome, China and Persia, the birth of Christianity and Renaissance attitudes towards madness, World War One and brain imaging, amongst many other topics. His most salient point, and one which transcends the various guises of madness and its treatments through the centuries, is that 'madness is not at odds with civilization but a crucial, often creative, ingredient'.<sup>130</sup> In a similar vein, Kramer echoes the suggestion that the norm is subject to cultural redefinition, and functions in a number of contexts throughout history as 'a regulatory device'.<sup>131</sup> With this in mind, it is clear that the potential to misjudge normal for abnormal behavior applies not only to psychiatric hospitals – as suggested by Rosenhan – but rings true for any study of madness, which in itself, is revealed to be a hazardous term.

Though once used by medics, madness is not a medical word, and any scholarship surrounding insanity during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is surely underpinned by the infamous captivation with medical science at this time, which accommodated the shift from the concept of madness to the idea of mental illness. Early psychiatry sought to examine the causes and cures of behavioural abnormality against the era's rich cultural and intellectual backdrop, and as scientific inquiry took several monumental steps towards an understanding of madness as mental illness, insanity in opera mirrored progressions in the development of psychology. Nonetheless, madness still carried with it a certain appeal, and its sensationalized representation within the arts was perfectly suited to the operatic stage. Many works provided an accurate cultural commentary on the steps being made in the psychological field during this time. Donizetti's *Lucia* provides an interesting example of the way in which opera's mad scenes can be read

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<sup>129</sup> Andrew Scull, *Madness in Civilization: A Cultural History of Insanity from the Bible to Freud, from the Madhouse to Modern Medicine* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2015), 12.

<sup>130</sup> Salley Vickers, 'Madness in Civilization: from the Bible to Freud, from the Madhouse to Modern Medicine by Andrew Scull, review: 'ambitious and gruesome'' in *The Telegraph* (29.03.2015), available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/11496799/Madness-in-Civilization-from-the-Bible-to-Freud-from-the-Madhouse-to-Modern-Medicine-by-Andrew-Scull.html> (accessed: 12.06.2015).

<sup>131</sup> Kramer, *Opera and Modern Culture*, 7.

within the context of nineteenth-century psychological thought. The next part of this chapter will briefly explore an approach to *Lucia* that sees the work as a reflection of humanitarian psychology, and the associated attitudes towards women and madness in the nineteenth-century. This, I hope, will help to illustrate my methodology for the case study of scientific naturalism in *Salome*

### **Lucia's Freedom: Humanitarian Psychiatry in Operatic Madness**

Donizetti depicts Lucia's descent into madness on her wedding night, and the opera plays host to an archetype of the nineteenth-century operatic mad scene. Susan McClary outlines the 'excess' that accompanies the protagonist's madness, which manifests itself in the repetitive, ornamental, and chromatic character of the vocal line.<sup>132</sup> Like most operatic madwomen of the period, Lucia is subject to a life 'characterized by indifferent irrationality',<sup>133</sup> but several interpretations of the work see her murderous and suicidal actions as enabling the evasion of an unhappy, coerced marriage. In conjunction with the argument put forward by Charles Rosen and Susan McClary – in which the mad scene functions as an emblem of freedom from social reality – Lucia breaks the figurative shackles of her confinement in a male-dominated society.<sup>134</sup> When placed into the context of psychological history, Lucia's madness can be seen as an allegory for the moral treatment implicated by humanitarian psychiatry during the late 1700s. The strength of this reading is contestable, but it certainly proves to be an interesting example of the way in which psychological history can enhance our understandings of operatic madness.

The medicalization of madness coincided with the emergence of humanitarian psychiatry after the establishment of the York Retreat in 1792. Subsequent years saw the formation of treaties implementing 'moral care' throughout Europe, as insanity was no longer thought to have supernatural origins, but was subject instead to rationalization. The emergence of 'moral therapy' emphasized the need for familial surroundings, the classification of individual patients into diagnostic groups, and communication as a possible antidote for madness. These humanitarian ideals

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<sup>132</sup> McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 82.

<sup>133</sup> A. Erfurth and P. Hoff, 'Mad scenes in early 19<sup>th</sup>-century opera' in *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica* 102 (2000), 312.

<sup>134</sup> Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 646-647 and McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 98.

acted as a prelude to the birth of psychoanalysis, and confronted the punitive somatic approach of previous years. Instead of patients being held in chains and subject to beatings, minimal restraint and constructive activity prevailed in the new asylums. The therapeutic success of the Retreat's moral therapy was renowned throughout Europe, and is well known in the history of psychiatry. In conjunction with the development of these humanitarian ideals, mad scenes like Lucia's might be seen to address the conflict between 'indifferent rationality... and a life space where freedom and affection can develop'.<sup>135</sup> Charles Rosen draws upon William Blake's summary of the Romantic attitude towards madness as 'a refuge from unbelief', and in this sense, Lucia's mad-scene can be viewed as an exhibition of her 'withdrawal from the distress of everyday life, a protest against intolerable social conditions or against a deliberating philosophy'.<sup>136</sup> Such an argument certainly calls to mind the new-fangled 'freedom' that was commonplace within the humanitarian movement, as Lucia's madness becomes a mode of escape from a society where 'brute force, authority and aspiration' prevail.<sup>137</sup>

Nonetheless, moral therapy is the cornerstone of long-lasting historiographical debate. Whilst Porter's account of the York Retreat reveals that letters sent from patients record their contentment with the care and treatment received, Foucault argues that the Retreat imposed religious morality, a strong work ethic and 'substituted for the free terror of madness the stifling anguish of responsibility...'<sup>138</sup> Kathleen Jones dismisses Foucault's argument on the one hand, suggesting that 'the good middle class family, with its warmth and affection, was the best model available at the time...' but goes on to refer to the conditions at the retreat as 'paternalistic'.<sup>139</sup> Indeed, despite the Humanitarian methods now prevalent in asylums, female patients were arguably disempowered by moral treatment, as the 'cornerstone of Victorian psychiatry claimed that male dominance was

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<sup>135</sup> Erfurth and Hoff, 'Mad scenes in early 19<sup>th</sup>-century opera', 312.

<sup>136</sup> Rosen, *The Romantic Generation*, 646.

<sup>137</sup> Erfurth and Hoff, 'Mad scenes in early 19<sup>th</sup>-century opera', 312.

<sup>138</sup> Roy Porter, *Mind Forg'd Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the Regency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 223-229 and Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (London: Tavistock, 1967), 244-247.

<sup>139</sup> Kathleen Jones, *Asylums and after: a revised history of the mental health services: from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century to the 1990s* (London: Athlone, 1993), 41.

therapeutic...the doctor ruled the asylum'.<sup>140</sup> With this in mind, Rinaldina Russell's understanding of Lucia's madness as a method of escape from an oppressive lifestyle seems to be misguided. She suggests that the protagonist's madness serves as a metaphor for the 'leap to freedom from the male order that denied her choice and happiness in love'.<sup>141</sup> This leap, it seems, simply transfers the operatic madwoman from one patriarchal system into another. Kramer's words come to mind, as he suggests that the new-fangled fascination with science and medicine sought to 'legitimize new forms of control by men over the bodies and behaviours of women', thus outlining the widespread belief that madness was a condition more commonly attributed to women.<sup>142</sup>

### **'The Female Malady': Women and Madness in the Nineteenth Century**

At the time of *Lucia's* composition, musical representations of madness – as previously outlined – were characterized for the most part, by virtuosic vocal excess and coloratura. In this period, these features were generally exclusive to the female (specifically soprano) voice, and as such, also began to denote the link between madness and femininity that pervaded contemporary attitudes towards mental health. Lucia's dualistic role in the history of operatic madness is thus revealed: alongside her invocation of humanitarian psychology and its associated freedom, she symbolizes the nineteenth-century view of insanity as a distinctly female phenomenon, which Elaine Showalter calls 'The Female Malady'.<sup>143</sup> Arguably, the tendency to construct opera's mad characters as women was linked to attitudes towards madness in contemporary society, and the preoccupation with the female form in science, psychology, and popular culture. The operatic madwomen of the mid-nineteenth century represented the belief that women were more disposed to mental breakdown, as psychology placed emphasis on the 'problem' of women. Put forward by the likes of Otto Weininger and Cesare Lombroso, this belief will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

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<sup>140</sup> *Women and Psychiatry*, available at:

<http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/broughttolife/themes/mentalhealthandillness/womanandpsychiatry.aspx> (accessed: 21.1.15).

<sup>141</sup> Rinaldina Russell, *The Feminist Encyclopedia of Italian Literature* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Inc., 1997), 7.

<sup>142</sup> Kramer, 'Culture and Musical Hermeneutics: The Salome Complex', 269.

<sup>143</sup> Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980* (New York: Penguin Press, 1985), 1-23.

For McClary, madness was considered almost exclusively a female phenomenon, and she suggests that ‘the socially perceived differences between male and female were, in other words, often mapped onto the differences between reason and unreason’.<sup>144</sup> An abundance of material on the historic relationship between women and madness (eg. Chestler, 1972; Gilman, 1995; Ussher, 2011) will play a significant role within this thesis, particularly in connection with issues surrounding the etiology, diagnosis, and proposed cures for various forms of mental illness, as the foundations of modern psychology were laid. In 1895, Freud and Breuer’s *Studies in Hysteria* corroborated the supposed connection between madness and the female sex, and instigated a ‘growing interest in sexual complexes and neuroses’ during subsequent years.<sup>145</sup> Hysteria was soon believed to be not only exclusive to the female gender, but to have its roots in excessive or repressed sexual energy: the hysterical seizure representing ‘a spasm of hyper-femininity, mimicking...both childbirth and the female orgasm’.<sup>146</sup> As such, the alleged connection between madness, femininity and sexuality is revealed – an idea that was to be of profound importance in both the psychological advances and the associated operatic portrayals of madness around the turn of the century. These attitudes towards women arguably had their roots in the scientific naturalist movement, upon which my analysis of *Salome* is based.

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<sup>144</sup> McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 81.

<sup>145</sup> Caroline Harvey, ‘Words and Actions’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera*, ed. Mervyn Cooke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 50.

<sup>146</sup> Mark S. Miacle, ‘Hysteria and its Historiography: A review of Past and Present Writing, II’ in *History of Science* 27 (1989), 319-351.

## **2. Naturalism and its Approaches to Madness**

### **Naturalism: An Introduction**

In accordance with the belief that the concept of madness is a product of the culture within which it exists, any examination of madness in late nineteenth-century opera ought to take into account the scientific developments of the time. With regards to psychology, the nineteenth century marked a significant departure from the spiritual/religious view of the past centuries, as madness was seen once again as a product of the human body. More importantly, the brain was recognized as a part of that body, and gained recognition as a springboard, if not the nucleus of all abnormal human behaviour. The relationship between contemporary science and culture also came to fruition during this time, and as such, this thesis seeks to discover the relationship between scientific and artistic forms of the naturalist movement and their role in the depiction of madness in opera. Although considerable literature has accumulated surrounding the prevalence of madness in opera during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, musicologists and critics have rarely sought to understand the traditions outside of the arts from which the trend emerged. This thesis aims to explore the scientific naturalism movement as an integral source of inspiration for explorations of madness and psychology within operatic works at this time. These ideas provide the central focus of the ensuing case study, but the purpose of the present section is to briefly introduce the scientific naturalist movement and its relationship to madness.

The advocates of scientific naturalism during the Victorian era adopted a methodology that investigated the natural world without appealing to supernatural forces. Frank M. Turner suggests that in contrast to their forebears, scientific naturalists after the enlightenment 'helped to sow and reap a rich harvest from advancing research in geology, biology, physics, psychology and physiology...' but 'did not exhibit the reserve of the philosophers about bringing harsh truths of religion and nature to a broad public'.<sup>147</sup> The figureheads of nineteenth-century naturalism constituted one of the most 'vocal and visible groups on the Victorian

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<sup>147</sup> Frank M. Turner, 'Victorian Scientific Naturalism and Thomas Carlyle' in *Victorian Studies* 18/ 3 (March 1975), 326.

intellectual landscape', and as such, were the guardians of the blossoming connection between contemporary science and the arts.<sup>148</sup> Indeed, strands of the naturalist movement seeped into the farthest corners of the academic – and by association – the artistic spheres, as many contemporary artistic mediums channelled the period's innovative scientific developments. In order to bridge the gap between the scientific and artistic forms of naturalism, it is useful to refer to its philosophical definition, which outlines an understanding that only natural laws and forces operate in the world, as opposed to those associated with supernatural or spiritual belief.<sup>149</sup> With regards to madness, contemporary scientific naturalists most commonly interpreted insanity as a benign but inborn anomaly. This thesis seeks to demonstrate that, with regards to human psychological behaviour, the naturalist movement was at the heart of nineteenth-century scientific discovery, which, in turn, proved indispensable to informing ideas about madness within operatic works.

I therefore argue that just as madness became a symptom of demonic possession and witchcraft and a vessel for the reinforcement of spiritual ideals during the Middle Ages, during the nineteenth century, madness was allied solely with the human body, and acted as a vehicle through which aspects of the naturalist movement – which lay at the heart of the era's intellectual mindset – were channeled into areas beyond science. Much like the early operatic mad scenes made reference to the ancient heroic fables and Graeco-Roman gods; much like Lucia's madness can be read as an allegory for Romantic attitudes towards madness and freedom, and potentially aligns with ideas surrounding Humanitarian Psychology; much like she also reflects the scholarship surrounding women and madness; this thesis aims to illustrate the way in which Strauss's *Salome* is written against a backdrop of scientific exploration and discovery, at the heart of which are the core principles of the naturalist movement. Nonetheless, any attempt to comprehend nineteenth-century naturalist dialogues on madness in their historical and cultural context surely necessitates a critical understanding of the history of naturalism and the associated attitudes towards madness. The following section of this chapter will therefore focus specifically on naturalistic explanations of the origins of insanity and

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 325.

<sup>149</sup> 'Naturalism, *n.*' in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, 2015), available at: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/naturalism> (accessed: 11.06.2015).

the birth of psychology, which in turn, will provide clarity for the examination of naturalistic ideas within *Salome* to follow.

### **The Ancient World and the Emergence of the Modern Mental Landscape**

With regards to the history of psychology, Robert Castel suggests that ‘if the endeavor to reconstruct this historic context provides a certain interest today, it is because this past of mental medicine is not yet dead’.<sup>150</sup> Indeed, the construction of ideas surrounding madness at certain points in history is reflected in various critical implications for its development in subsequent times. Whilst Kramer’s aforementioned idea that the notion of the norm functions in a number of historical contexts as ‘a regulatory device’ is insightful, his supposition that the concept of normality emerged from the European Enlightenment seems to be an oversight.<sup>151</sup> Indeed, with regards to human behaviour, madness has in fact challenged the norm from long before the establishment of Western civilization, and many texts on the history of madness outline the importance of several classical cultures in the birth of quasi-scientific attempts to explain symptoms of insanity. For example, the psychological histories of Foucault and Porter highlight the prevalence of madness within the arts from the times of early mythology and ancient heroic fables.<sup>152</sup> The matter of these dialogues surrounding madness – particularly within Ancient Greek and Roman culture – begs further investigation if we are to understand naturalist attitudes towards psychology within the nineteenth century.

In his *From Melancholia to Prozac: A History of Depression* (2012), Clark Lawler discusses the ‘unbridgeable’ void between two oppositional perspectives on depression as either biologically hard-wired or as ‘entirely culture bound’.<sup>153</sup> This dichotomy, it seems, is not exclusive to ideas about depression, but is central to explorations of mental illness throughout ancient history. In literature, Andrew Scull notes the continued popularity of the ‘notion of the divine origin of human mental suffering’, which had its roots in biblical accounts of madness, as the likes of

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<sup>150</sup> Robert Castel, ‘Moral treatment: mental therapy and social control in the nineteenth century’ in *Social Control and the State: Historical and Comparative Essays* ed. Stanley Cohen and Andrew Scull (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1983), 261.

<sup>151</sup> Kramer, *Opera and Modern Culture*, 6.

<sup>152</sup> Porter, *Madness: A Brief History*, 11.

<sup>153</sup> Clark Lawler, *From Melancholia to Prozac: A History of Depression* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 23-24.

Nebuchadnezzar and Saul were made mad as punishment for offending the savage and jealous God of the Old Testament.<sup>154</sup> Lawler suggests that centuries later, the first example of madness within Greek literature is Homer's *Iliad*, in which Odysseus, having offended the gods, is 'a lonely wanderer', and one of the first literary sufferers of depression.<sup>155</sup> Those at the mercy of supernatural forces inhabit the work, as 'divine anger is ubiquitous, and Homer's characters are at its mercy': but they are not alone, and Scull suggests that the idea of the supernatural origins of unreason continued to hold sway up until the case of Cleomenes, king of Sparta, in the late fifth and early sixth centuries BC.<sup>156</sup> His madness led to brutal self-mutilation in the stocks where his family had placed him on account of his so-called 'lunatic behaviour'. Interestingly, the historian Herodotus summarizes that whilst the Greeks attributed his savage end to corruption, sacred intervention and divine punishment, the Spartans themselves suggested that his madness was linked to 'the habit of taking wine without water'.<sup>157</sup> Herodotus too pondered causes of the king's madness that were not connected to the gods, recounting 'a story that he had suffered from childbirth from the serious disease that some call sacred'.<sup>158</sup> With these accounts then, we see Cleomenes' madness as one of the foremost instances of a shift in the theoretical relationship between madness and the Gods (one of Lawler's 'culture-bound' explanations), and madness and the human body. Herodotus continues: 'there would then be nothing strange in the fact that since a serious disease affected his body, so too he was not well in the mind'.<sup>159</sup> His statement showcases the apparent link between madness and bodily disease, and in this sense, it is important to note that the manner of thinking that led to the emergence of naturalistic psychological thought had its roots in the fifth century BC in a broader exploration of disease as naturally occurring.

The naturalistic approach developed with the growth of a perceived inadequacy of supernatural justifications of disease. The traditional religious paradigm became discredited with the expunging of the Olympian gods from

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<sup>154</sup> Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 20.

<sup>155</sup> Lawler, *From Melancholia to Prozac: A History of Depression*, 24.

<sup>156</sup> Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 22.

<sup>157</sup> Herodotus, quoted in *In The Grip of Disease: Studies in the Greek Imagination*, trans. G.E.R. Lloyd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 131-133.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

intellectual thought from Thales onwards. Herodotus' approach to Cleomenes' madness marks first steps towards a breakthrough that cast aside supernatural and demonic theories of illness – particularly madness – and instead focussed on promoting a new idea: that disease is a naturalistic event that can be understood by natural causes. In contrast to biblical accounts of epidemics as divine punishment for sin and disobedience, Thucydides' narrative of the plague of Athens (430 BC) during the Peloponnesian war describes the outbreak as a natural event with no reference to the occult or supernatural. Similar reports abounded in 5<sup>th</sup> century Greece, where the supernatural view of disease was overcome, and the first embodiment of a scientific, medical paradigm was born. This was a rational, a secular, and most importantly, a naturalistic form of medicine, that was established in its infancy with Hippocrates (c.460-377BC), the so-called 'father of modern medicine'.

The first ostensibly scientific approaches to medicine took place in Athens during the fourth and fifth centuries BC with the emergence of Humouralism. Humouralism was defined by an analogy between the four elements of the universe, and the four fluids that made up the humours of the human body. The universe – which might be described as a macrocosm – consisted of fire, air, water and earth. Aristotle suggested that each was associated with certain qualities: fire was hot and dry, air was wet and hot, water was cold and wet, and earth was dry and cold. The theory was expounded in relation to the human constitution, which was taken to be comprised of the four humours: respectively yellow bile, blood, phlegm and black bile. Humouralism proposed a correspondence between the macrocosm of the universe, and the microcosm of the individual human body; both were composed of the same materials, and subject to the same laws. Hippocrates taught that health was dependent on achieving equilibrium between the competing forces, whilst any excess or deficiency could lead to a number of physical or mental disorders.<sup>160</sup> His theory marked the beginning of a foundation of scientific medicine, and was heralded by Charles Edward Winslow – a professor of epidemiology during the 1940s – as 'the essential first step' towards modern medicine.<sup>161</sup> In praise of Hippocrates, Winslow ruminates: 'if disease is postulated as caused by gods or

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<sup>160</sup> Porter, *Madness: A Brief History*, 11.

<sup>161</sup> Charles-Edward Amory Winslow, *The Conquest of Epidemic Disease: A Chapter in the History of Ideas* (Princeton University Press, 1943), 56.

demons, scientific progress is impossible. If it is attributed to hypothetical humours, the theory can be tested and improved...'<sup>162</sup> Naturalistic explanations that attributed mental disturbances – like Cleomenes' epileptic 'madness' – to diseases of the body became increasingly popular with physicians, and were expanded by Roman Physician Claudius Galen (c. AD 129-216). As personal physician to the Gladiators, and eventually the Emperor's private doctor, Galen prided himself on his knowledge of the Hippocratic corpus, and was a co-contributor to the establishment of an innovative scientific methodology for explaining disease. The new system shunned the supernatural explanations of disease, and promoted the idea that good health depended upon humoral equilibrium. Scull notes that in the ancient world, therefore, a physician's task was to 'deduce what had become unbalanced', be it 'body and environment; the local and the systematic; *soma* (body) and *psyche* (mind)', and to use the therapies available at the time to prevent a state of 'disease'.<sup>163</sup> These remedies pre-empted modern curative approaches, and included the likes of diet, exercise, rest, and attending to any emotional upsets. Indeed, for Hippocrates and Galen (amongst others), 'there was a clear recognition at the heart of this whole intellectual edifice that upset bodies could produce upset minds, and vice versa'.<sup>164</sup>

With regards to madness, the most significant development at this time was the acknowledgement of 'upset minds' as an authentic medical complaint. Hippocrates' naturalistic outlook towards diseases of the mind is made clear in his consideration of epilepsy (the aforementioned 'sacred disease'), which he believed to be 'nowise more divine nor more sacred than other diseases, but has a natural cause from the originates like other affections. Men regard its nature and cause as divine from ignorance and wonder, because it is not at all like to other diseases'.<sup>165</sup> He regarded the seizures associated with epilepsy as a type of madness, and proposed that its cause was an excess of black bile within the brain, the organ that was the root of madness in all its forms: 'From the brain, and from the brain only arise our pleasures....as well as our sorrows....it is the same thing that makes us mad

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<sup>162</sup>Ibid.

<sup>163</sup>Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 28-29.

<sup>164</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>165</sup>Hippocrates, *On the Sacred Disease*, trans. Francis Adams, available at: <http://classics.mit.edu/Hippocrates/sacred.html> (accessed: 12.04.2015).

or delirious'.<sup>166</sup> The significance Hippocrates placed on the brain in understanding madness was acknowledged and imitated by Plato, whose division of the self into mind, body and soul lead to the emergence of the *psyche*, which came to influence the likes of Freud, and will be discussed further into this thesis. The Ancient Greeks are therefore deemed accountable for the emergence of the 'modern mental landscape', as the mainstays of the era's medical theories provided a platform from which the moves towards psychiatry could be set in motion.<sup>167</sup> Something of a scientific revolution might have ensued, but the development of Ancient Greek medical practices within Rome was undercut by the emergence of Christianity. According to Plinio Prioreschi, the new religion 'shifted emphasis from the external world to the spiritual, and thereby deprived scientific enquiry of its *raison d'être*'.<sup>168</sup>

### **The Fall and Rise of Medical Madness**

Whilst the quasi-biological understandings of mental illness within ancient Greece act on one hand as a precursor to the nineteenth-century's burgeoning scientific methodology, these early naturalistic approaches were somewhat overthrown throughout Europe during the so-called Dark Ages. With regards to scientific approaches to madness, early Christianity marked something of a backwards step, as the naturalistic approach operated alongside the belief that madness was a supernaturally inflicted phenomenon: either as punishment for sin or as a sign of witchcraft or possession. Scull suggests that 'for the medieval mind, all forms of illness – mental and physical alike – were the consequences of the Fall'.<sup>169</sup> Treatment of the mad was now the responsibility of religious leaders, whose exorcisms intended to cast out the demons that caused mental suffering. More often than not, of course, exorcisms failed, but Christian belief provided justification for the absence of a restoration to sanity: madness was punishment from God, and the sufferer was not yet forgiven.

Despite its seeming antithesis to the foundations of naturalism, the new religion unintentionally added fuel to the figurative fire through its contribution to the development of education and the printing press. The Christian church headed

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<sup>166</sup>Ibid.

<sup>167</sup>Porter, *Madness: A Brief History*, 14.

<sup>168</sup>Plinio Prioreschi, *A History of Medicine: Vol. III - Roman Medicine* (Omaha, NE: Horatius Press, 1999), 725.

<sup>169</sup>Scull, *Madness in Civilization*, 80.

the majority of educational establishments during the middle ages, meaning that scholarship largely consisted of historiographical, scholastic learning, as opposed to being based on an empirical methodology. Nonetheless, from the eleventh century onwards, there existed a renewed interest in the naturalistic approach to madness and a 'reincarnation of pre-Christian traditions'.<sup>170</sup> In the following centuries, the rise of the education system with the establishment of universities saw the translation of ancient medical texts into the contemporary vernacular, and their promotion and mass production with the invention of the printing press. Along with the re-importation of the Hippocratic corpus, printed editions of Muslim medical texts were 'symptomatic of how much the revival of Classical medicine depended upon the Arabs'.<sup>171</sup> As these lost translations began to reemerge, their newfound domination of Western medical learning – particularly with regards to madness – was defined by a 'simplicity that undoubtedly accounts for their success'.<sup>172</sup> Certainly, the ability of these texts to provide an explanation of illness that reached beyond religion allowed the establishment – once again – of a more scientific, and indeed, a more naturalistic medical paradigm.

Eventually, Medieval medicine honoured the aforementioned medical traditions of ancient Greece, as the Hippocratic corpus – amongst other significant works – gained a new validity alongside what was still considered to be the mainstay of medical explanation: religion. In the mid-sixteenth century, Denis Fontanon – a professor at Montpellier – proposed that mania (a commonly acknowledged form of madness) 'occurs sometimes solely from the warmer temper of the brain without a harmful humour...it occasionally arises from stinging and warm humours, such as yellow bile, attacking the brain and stinging it along with its membranes'.<sup>173</sup> Fontanon's consideration of mania sees a return to the Hippocratic method with acknowledgement of the humours, but more importantly, it recognizes the bodily origins of madness, and the importance of the brain in causing various types of mental disturbance. Throughout the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, the reemergence of diagnoses that would have previously been associated with sin and profanity marked the return to a naturalistic mindset. The value of the educated

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<sup>170</sup>Ibid., 81.

<sup>171</sup>Ibid., 84.

<sup>172</sup>Allen Thihe, *Revels in Madness: Insanity in Medicine and Literature* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 20.

<sup>173</sup>Denis Fontanon, quoted in Porter, *Madness: A Brief History*, 50.

mind and the importance of worldly curiosity were celebrated within a growing climate of humanitarian thought, at the forefront of which stood the likes of Da Vinci, Galileo and Shakespeare, to name but a few. This change in attitude played a doubtless role in the development of the arts and sciences, insofar as the works of the aforementioned Renaissance humanists admired the powers of human intelligence for its own sake, eventually fuelling the fire of a scientific revolution that swept across Europe during the seventeenth century. A renewed interest in the problem of madness led to a trend in which the artistic world overlapped with the scientific, as madness manifested itself in the worlds of art, drama and literature as the medieval world drew to a close. Scull summarizes that 'as we move from the medieval to the modern world...a fascination with madness is visible everywhere. In the written word; on the stage; in political pamphlets; in songs heard on the street; in architecture and sculpture; in painting and in the new mass-produced engravings; images of Unreason surface'.<sup>174</sup>

Another significant part of the Enlightenment saw a dialectical separation of madness from reason. Philosophers like Descartes suggested that knowledge was based on certainties, concluding that it is our minds, as opposed to our bodies that we know best. When the ability to know our own mind is lost, so too is our rationality. With this loss of rationality, the mad could no longer sit alongside the rational: madness now stood as reason's starkest opposition, thus creating significant critical consequences for the social and cultural mindset towards the mentally ill. In earlier times, the mad were left to roam free, but the so-called 'Classical' age of madness saw the confinement across Europe of the mad alongside others deemed socially undesirable. Foucault notes that the registers of the most famous asylums – such as Bedlam – listed inmates in 'litanies of confinement in their lengthy registers: as "debauched", "imbecile", "prodigal", "infirm", "of unsound mind", "libertine", "ungrateful son", "dissolute father", "prostitute", "insane", and so forth'.<sup>175</sup> He continues: 'No attempt was made to discriminate between them, and all were cast into the same dishonour'.<sup>176</sup> Unreason was considered a manifestation of contemporary concerns such as sexual deviance and freethinking, and evidence of the consequences of drink, lust and sin. Foucault summarizes:

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<sup>174</sup>Andrew Scull, *Madness: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2011), 20.

<sup>175</sup>Michel Foucault, *History of Madness* (London: Routledge, 2006), 81.

<sup>176</sup>*Ibid.*

The key point was that madness was suddenly invested in a social world, and was granted there its own privileged and quasi-exclusive place almost from one day to the next (across the whole of Europe in the space of fifty years), a clearly delimited terrain where it could be observed and denounced by all. Gone were the days when it sneaked through alleyways and hid in familiar places: now madness, and all those who were its incarnation, could be instantly exorcised through measures of order and precautions of police.<sup>177</sup>

Though the early madhouses were more like workhouses than care facilities, social reformers in the eighteenth century began to expose and resist the cruelty and mistreatment towards residents, thus paving the way for the new form of moral care that prevailed in the likes of the York Retreat. Roy Porter argues that the private madhouse served the so-called 'trade for lunacy', but also 'became a forcing-house for the development of psychiatry as an art and science'.<sup>178</sup> He suggests that this developed initially as a mode of management for inmates, but as the next part of this chapter will illustrate, when concern over the social control of madness led to the fall of the asylum era, philosophers began to look at madness from a more rational, even biological viewpoint. Once again, this harked back to the naturalistic mode of thinking that prevailed in the Graeco-Roman period.

Following Johann Christian Reil's coining of the term 'psychology' in 1808, the somatic approach to madness underwent a vast and significant revival during the nineteenth century. As insanity was medicalized during the Age of Reason, psychology finally gained notoriety as an independent discipline, and the modern diagnosis-treatment-cure approach ensued. The nineteenth century thus accommodated the shift from the concept of madness to that of mental illness, as early psychiatry sought to examine the causes and cures of madness against the era's cultural and intellectual backdrop. The naturalist tendency to subject humankind to scientific analysis meant that psychological considerations commonly referred to developments in the world of biology in an attempt to understand human behaviour. In an 1860 edition of *The Journal of Mental Science*, John Bucknill

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<sup>177</sup>Ibid., 102-103.

<sup>178</sup> Porter, *Madness: A Brief History*, 100.

claimed that 'Mental Hygiene is, indeed a subject vast as that of human progress'.<sup>179</sup> Human Progress was a concept that dominated nineteenth-century science, and early psychologists turned to Charles Darwin's work on evolution and natural selection in an attempt to explain madness.

### **Naturalistic Approaches to Madness in the Nineteenth Century**

Peter J. Bowler suggests that for historians of science, the 'Darwinian revolution' ranks alongside the 'Copernican revolution' some two centuries earlier as an episode in which 'a new scientific theory symbolized a wholesale change in cultural values'.<sup>180</sup> Certainly, in rejecting the aforementioned tendency to explain madness from a spiritual or supernatural perspective, nineteenth-century psychological naturalists adhere to Bowler's description of Darwinian ideas, which he further argues replaced 'fundamental aspects of the traditional Christian worldview' with 'interpretations of nature'.<sup>181</sup> Historians of psychology in the 1900s such as Gardner Murphy suggested that psychology in the western tradition had become increasingly biological under the influence of Darwinism in the previous century.<sup>182</sup> Psychologists at this time placed great emphasis upon Darwinian rationale, and above all, the investigation of mental illness sought to 'define a natural fact that underpins the concept' – the concept of madness, that is.<sup>183</sup> Early psychological naturalists often turned to evolutionary theory in an attempt to explain madness, and ideas about evolution and the survival of the fittest became a commonly used framework for thinking about human behaviour.

Many scientists, including psychologists, subscribed to the idea that, like animals and plants, humankind must compete in a process of natural selection which allows only the most biologically flawless to survive. With regards to medicine, the theory of evolution postulated that diseases – both mental and physical – were passed on from one generation to another by means of genetic inheritance. With regards to mental health, Darwin said: 'In the distant future I see

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<sup>179</sup> John Bucknill, 'President's Address' in *The Journal of Mental Science*, 35/3 (October 1860), 1-23.

<sup>180</sup> Peter J. Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 1.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> Gardiner Murphy, *An Historical Introduction to Modern Psychology* (London: Routledge, 1938), 123.

<sup>183</sup> Derek Bolton, *What is Mental Disorder?: An Essay in Philosophy, Science, and Values* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 151.

open fields for more important researches. Psychology will be based on a new foundation, that of the necessary acquirement of each mental power and capacity by gradation'.<sup>184</sup> His words here call to mind the theory of inheritance, which had significant ramifications that stretched beyond the history of medicine, such as heredity, degeneration theory and eugenics, each of which will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter Four. Another consequence of the Darwinian revolution on medical science was the fact that medical practitioners now had to consider that diseases had the potential to occur from both internal and external causes.<sup>185</sup> That is, they may be viewed as inborn anomalies, or as a product of a given environment (nature versus nurture). The same was true for mental health, and in the years to come, psychologists would discover the effects of the likes of trauma and grief on mental health, and well as detecting differences between diseases of the body that caused mental illness (such as syphilis) and those which purely affected the mind (such as schizophrenia).

In addition to its effect on science and medicine, the theory of evolution contributed to the growing relationship between science and the arts. For Kirsten Shepherd-Barr, 'the rapidly developing field of psychology, led to a deep interest in depicting the darker forces unconsciously shaping our lives, impulses often beyond our control and with intensely theatrical potential for new depths of characterization'.<sup>186</sup> Indeed, the development of psychiatry was part of an ever-growing kinship between the arts and sciences. Depictions of insanity within the arts became ever more informed by the scientific developments of the time, which in opera – as discussed in Chapter One – led to a growing fascination with representations of madness. Chapter Three will examine a number of naturalistic ideas that emerged within this climate of scientific progression, and aims to uncover the ways in which they relate to the depiction of madness within Strauss's *Salome*.

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<sup>184</sup> Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or, the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1864), 424.

<sup>185</sup> W. Aitken, 'Darwin's Doctrine of Evolution in Explanation of the Coming into Being of Some Diseases' in *Glasgow Medical Journal* 24 (1885), 98-107.

<sup>186</sup> Kirsten E. Shepherd-Barr, *Theatre and Evolution from Ibsen to Beckett* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 22-23.

### **3. Traces of Naturalism in *Salome*: Scientific and Musical Perspectives**

#### **The Evolution of Music**

Ernst Haeckel was a prominent Darwinist and an all-encompassing evolutionist. He was one of the first to popularize Darwin's theories in Strauss's Germany, and his work was well known, and even admired. His formative work, including *Die Generelle Morphologie der Organismen* (The General Morphology of Organisms), first published in 1866, disputed the previous 'dualist' methodological approaches to the study of science and the humanities, which polarized the study of human life (the humanities) and material objects (science). The slightly later *Der Monismus als Band zwischen Religion und Wissenschaft* (Monism as Connecting Religion and Science: The Confession of Faith of a Man of Science) – first published in 1892 and translated from the original in 1895 – includes the following argument, which maintains that the pre-Enlightenment dualist approach was to be overthrown in light of the great strides towards an understanding of the link between the biological and the cultural:

A broad historical and critical comparison of religious and philosophical systems, as a whole, leads as a main result to the conclusion that every great advance in the direction of profounder knowledge has led to a breaking away from the traditional dualism (or pluralism) and an approach to monism.<sup>187</sup>

Haeckel's theory of monism led to a belief that scientific methodologies can be applied to human concerns, such as music. Music was subject to examination by musical and scientific naturalists alike, and, as Ruth Solie notes, during the nineteenth century, attempts to understand its development 'became inextricably bound up with the growing acceptance of the theory of evolution'.<sup>188</sup> Certainly, monism is more consistent with the phenomenon of evolution than dualism could ever have been, and for Haeckel, the universe is made up of an 'infinite diversity of

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<sup>187</sup> Ernst Haeckel, *Monism as Connecting Religion and Science: The Confession of Faith of a Man of Science*, trans. J. Gilchrist (London: A & C Black, 1895), 15.

<sup>188</sup> Ruth Solie, 'Melody and the Historiography of Music', in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 43/2 (1982), 297.

form: all of those forms are in the process of evolutionary transformation'.<sup>189</sup> Haeckel's naturalistic worldview thus illuminates the way in which nineteenth-century naturalist concepts – inspired by Darwinian treatise – affected the world beyond science.

Like Haeckel, Herbert Spencer put forward the idea that the theory of evolution could be applied to areas other than biology.<sup>190</sup> In 1857, his *Progress: Its Laws and Causes* provided a formative account of his views on evolution, and Kim Kleinman reviews the work as an outline of 'universal law applicable to all sciences from cosmology to the social sciences'.<sup>191</sup> In conjunction with his belief that the 'law of organic progress is the law of all progress', Spencer's all-encompassing worldview was defined by a belief in 'progress from simple, undifferentiated, and homogenous forms to complex, differentiated and heterogeneous ones', and this was as true for music as it was for other areas of scientific study.<sup>192</sup> Benjamin Kidd – writing in 1894 – referred to Spencer's work as 'a stupendous attempt not only at the unification of knowledge, but at the explanation in terms of evolutionary science of the development which human society is undergoing'.<sup>193</sup> Nonetheless, Spencer's work has also attracted considerable criticism, mostly posthumously, but also from the likes of Darwin and Edmund Gurney during his lifetime.<sup>194</sup> Both Darwin and Spencer deliberated specifically on the origin and function of music, but their discourses differed from each other in several ways. According to Kleinman, 'finding an evolutionary explanation for the origins of music serves as a rich test of broader ideas on the emergence of mind and the evolution of mental processes'.<sup>195</sup> Both Darwin and Spencer's considerations of music view it as part of a larger process of human evolution, and Ana Petrov summarizes that:

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<sup>189</sup> David H. Degrood, *Haeckel's Theory of the Unity of Nature: A Monograph in the History of Philosophy* (Boston, MA: Grüner Publishing Co., 1965), 28.

<sup>190</sup> Herbert Spencer, 'Progress: Its Law and Cause' in *Westminster Review*, 67 (1857), 244–267; reprinted in Herbert Spencer, *Essays: Scientific, Political and Speculative*, vol. 1 (London: Williams and Norgate, 1868), 1–60.

<sup>191</sup> Kim Kleinman, 'Darwin and Spencer on the Origin of Music: Is Music the Food of Love?' in *Music, Neurology, and Neuroscience: Evolution, the Musical Brain, Medical Conditions, and Therapies*, ed. Charles T. Snowdon, Elke Zimmermann, and Eckart Altenmüller (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2015), 3.

<sup>192</sup> Spencer, *Essays: Scientific, Political and Speculative*, vol. 1. 3.

<sup>193</sup> Benjamin Kidd, *Social Evolution* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1894), 2.

<sup>194</sup> Edward A. Lippman, *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 281–284.

<sup>195</sup> Kim Kleinman, 'Darwin and Spencer on the Origin of Music', 3.

Darwin considered music as being one of the natural means of making a selection during the process of evolution of the humans as a biological species. Notwithstanding certain similarities to Darwin, Spencer (as well as his followers) discussed music as a component of socio-cultural evolution, which entailed an approach to music as a historical and cultural phenomenon.<sup>196</sup>

In this sense, it is revealed that both men believed in music as integral part of the universal evolutionary process and the progress of culture, whilst their fundamental approach to the origin and evolution of music, along with their perception of its function, differed somewhat.

Darwin's musical considerations derived from an interest in birdsong, and in both *The Descent of Man And Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871) and *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), he explores the differences and similarities between the mating calls of animals (specifically birdsong) and the music of humans. In the former, he focuses on the ability of music to arouse strong positive feelings within us, noting its ability to 'awaken[s] the gentler feelings of tenderness and love', with which comes the desire to mate.<sup>197</sup> He states that 'a strong case can be made out, that the vocal organs were primarily used and perfected in relation to the propagation of the species'.<sup>198</sup> Therefore, for Darwin, the place of music lies firmly in the realm of sexual selection. With regards to *Salome*, this calls to mind the effect of Jokanaan's voice on the protagonist, who, in Scene Three says: 'Sprich mehr, Jochanaan, deine Stimme ist wie Musik in meinen Ohren' ('Speak again, Jokanaan. Thy voice is like sweet music to my ears'). According to Abbate, Jokanaan's voice has a 'beauty that is sheerly sonorous...' which 'possesses, like music itself, an immense sensuality and...assumed visual embodiment as Jochanaan's mouth'.<sup>199</sup> Within the opera then, Jokanaan's voice contributes to Salome's sexual attraction, thus echoing Darwin's musical considerations. In a chapter on references to Physics in Victorian literature, Michael Whitworth suggests that 'one should not expect the whole of a physical theory to find itself incorporated into a literary work: rather, one finds

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<sup>196</sup>Ana Petrov, 'The concept of music evolution in Herbert Spencer's and Charles Darwin's theories' in *Filozofija i društvo*, 23/3 (2012), 253.

<sup>197</sup> Charles Darwin, *Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2004; f.p. 1871), 515.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Abbate, 'Opera; Or, The Envoicing of Women', 244.

fragments of imagery and vocabulary from science subjected to processes of condensation and displacement'.<sup>200</sup> Indeed, whilst the above example brings to light a subtle, even fragmented suggestion of Darwin's theory of musical evolution, it nonetheless illustrates the way in which certain discourses can be traced within the music and drama of *Salome*.

In contrast, Spencer's model for musical evolution – in his essay 'The Origin and Function of Music' – outlines the sociocultural role of music, and focuses particularly on the development of music from the so-called 'primitive' cultures that will be discussed in Chapter Four. The article certainly reflects the contestable nature of his work, but despite its downfalls, 'The Origin and Function of Music' serves as a source of insight into the ways in which scientific principles intersected with musical theory within nineteenth-century naturalist dialogues. In his consideration of the evolution of music, Spencer 'sought a first cause of music as an outgrowth of the physical expression of emotion'.<sup>201</sup> His theory maintains that music is derived from physiological responses to emotion, which in turn produce vocal sounds. He argues that 'all vocal sounds are produced by the agency of certain muscles. These muscles, in common with those of the body at large, are excited to contraction by pleasurable and painful feelings'.<sup>202</sup> His theory echoes ideas taken from the emerging field of physiognomy, which arose from nineteenth-century evolutionary dialogues following the popularization of Joseph Kaspar Lavater's 1775 work *Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe* (Physiognomic Fragments for Furthering the Knowledge and Love of Man), which was translated into English in 1789. The Victorian pseudo-science observed facial expressions and other displays of emotion for an insight into the human mind, and Lavater's work was one of the first attempts to establish a connection between human physiological traits and personality. Another pioneer of the field, Sir Charles Bell, drew upon Darwin's work on evolution, and his work in physiognomy later became one of the foundations for theories of heredity and

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<sup>200</sup> Michael Whitworth, 'The Physical Sciences' in *A Companion to Modernist Literature*, ed. David Bradshaw and Kevin J.H. Dettmar (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 46.

<sup>201</sup> Kleinman, 'Darwin and Spencer on the Origin of Music', 3.

<sup>202</sup> Herbert Spencer, 'The Origin and Function of Music' in *Fraser's Magazine*, 56 (September 1857). 396-408; reprinted in Herbert Spencer, *Essays: Scientific, Political and Speculative* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1868), vol. 1, 213.

degeneration, which, again, will be visited further into this chapter.<sup>203</sup> 'The Origin and Function of Music' sees a detailed examination of the ways in which various human emotions are reflected in the voice, as Spencer states that 'different qualities of voice accompany different mental states'.<sup>204</sup>

According to Spencer, 'the habitual sufferer utters his complaints in a voice raised considerably above the natural key; and agonizing pain vents itself in either shrieks or groans – in very high or very low notes'.<sup>205</sup> The term 'habitual sufferer' calls to mind Colas's article on the musical depiction of madness, in which he states: 'the portrayal of madness is simply one category in the portrayal of suffering, for which they [composers] possess tried and true dramaturgical skills'.<sup>206</sup> In the context of opera, Spencer's description can be understood as a vocal line written at the very top or bottom of the singer's natural register, and certainly, in *Salome*, there are several moments in which the protagonist's vocal line could be interpreted as shrieking or groaning. Her vocal range is from G-flat below middle C, to B two octaves above middle C, whilst the article on the soprano voice in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* suggests a typical range of middle C to the A two octaves above.<sup>207</sup> *Salome* has been described as 'one of the most cruelly demanding and difficult soprano roles in operatic history'<sup>208</sup> and we are also reminded of Marie Wittich, who refused the role, in part, because of the 'unsingable' quality of the music.<sup>209</sup> Throughout the opera, a virtuosic vocal line that relies on the singer's vast vocal range characterizes the moments in which *Salome* could be perceived to be 'mad'. For example, during her monologue – which Craig Ayrey refers to as the 'the apotheosis of passion consummated in necrophilia'<sup>210</sup> and can thus be considered to constitute the opera's 'mad scene' – *Salome*'s vocal line spans the entirety of her range.

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<sup>203</sup> Rosemary Jann 'Evolutionary Physiognomy and Darwin's Expression of the Emotions' in *Victorian Review* 18/2 (Winter 1992), 7.

<sup>204</sup> Spencer, 'The Origin and Function of Music', 215.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 406.

<sup>206</sup> Colas, 'Madmen and Fools: The Depiction of Madness', 180.

<sup>207</sup> Owen Jander, et al., 'Soprano' in *Grove Music Online*, available at:

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/26243> (accessed: 22/01/2016).

<sup>208</sup> Dierkes-Thrun, *Salome's Modernity*, 72.

<sup>209</sup> Ashley, *Richard Strauss*, 85.

<sup>210</sup> Craig Ayrey, 'Salome's final monologue' in Derrick Puffett, *Richard Strauss's Salome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 109.

Darwin seemed to think that Spencer's argument was somewhat logical, commenting: 'that the pitch of the voice bears some relation to certain states of feeling is tolerably clear. A person complaining of ill-treatment, or slight suffering, almost always speaks in a high-pitched voice'.<sup>211</sup> In the same text, another comment on Spencer's article also reads: 'He clearly shows that the voice alters much under different conditions, in loudness and quality, that is, in resonance and *timbre*, in pitch and intervals. No one can listen to an eloquent orator or preacher, or to a man calling angrily to another, or to one expressing astonishment without being struck with the truth of Mr Spencer's remarks'.<sup>212</sup> His reference to the fluctuation of pitch and intervals calls to mind another example in which Salome's vocal writing is affected by her mental state. At the beginning of Scene Four, Salome waits for the sound of Jokanaan's severed head dropping to the floor. As she waits, Strauss splits the double basses as an E $\flat$  pedal sounds above a B $\flat$  ostinato figure, creating a 'curious choked yet poignant effect', a description, which, in many ways, befits the final scene in its entirety.<sup>213</sup> Upon hearing the falling sword, and in conjunction with the performance direction – *äusserst bewegt* (extremely animated) – she plummets into a frenzy between rehearsal marks (hereafter reh.) [307 – 309]:

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<sup>211</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Works of Charles Darwin, Volume 23: The Expression of Emotions in Plants and Animals* (New York: New York University Press, 1989; f.p. 1872), 66.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> Lawrence Gillman, *Strauss's Salome: A Guide to the Opera with Musical Illustrations* (London: J. Lane, 1907), 83.

(drawn) (gedehnt) *ritenuto* *a tempo* 307 äusserst bewegt.

SaI. Es ist ei-ne schreck-li-che Stil-le! Ah! Es ist et-was zu  
*There is such a ter-ri-ble si-lence!* Ah! *Some-thing has*

Boden ge-fal-len. Ich hör-te et-was fal-len. Es war das Schwert des Henkers.  
*fallen to the ground. I have heard something falling.* *It was the sword of the headman.*

*sempre più vivo* 308

SaI. Er hat Angst, die-ser Skla-ve.  
*He is frigh-tened, this heads-man.*

Er hat das Schwert fal-len las-sen! Er  
*He has let fall his sword!* *He*

309

SaI. traut sich nicht, ihn zu tö-ten. Er ist ei-ne Memme,  
*is a-fraid to be-head him.* *Oh! he is a coward,*

Fig. 1: Richard Strauss, *Salome*, Op. 54, Vocal Score, ed. Otto Singer (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1943), 178-179.

G. Durà-Vilà and D. Bentley suggest that when representing madness in opera, certain composers ‘go beyond the apparently disordered content and form of the character’s speech [in the libretto] to make it understandable through the music being sung’.<sup>214</sup> Their description certainly seems to fit Salome’s vocal line here, which are so pointed that they inhabit a middle ground between song and speech. At reh. [309], Salome’s words ‘zu töten’ (behead him/kill him) span more than an octave, whilst the triplet figures in the upper woodwinds seem to echo Salome’s musical turmoil:

309

soprano  
trautsich nicht, ihn zu tö - - ten. Er ist ei-ne Memme,  
is a-fraid to be-head him. Oh! he is a coward,

*cresc.*

Fig. 2: Strauss, *Salome*, Vocal Score, 180.

Nonetheless, in contrast to his aforementioned praise, Darwin is also said to have disagreed with parts of Spencer’s hypothesis. In *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics*, Edward Lippman notes the rejection of Spencer’s theory by Darwin, who derides it as ‘a very obscure subject’, arguing the improbability that ‘any precise explanation of the cause or source of each particular sound, under different states of mind, will ever be given’.<sup>215</sup> Whilst different vocal registers, timbres, and intervals can be identified in Salome’s vocal line throughout the opera, it certainly proves difficult to identify the meaning of each variation with regards to her ever-changing mental state. In this sense, we are reminded of Whitworth’s suggestion that it is unrealistic to expect to find an entire scientific theory neatly incorporated into a work, but that fragments and suggestions of theories can often be found.

In addition to its deliberation on emotion and the voice, ‘The Origin and Function of Music’ outlines the three-stage development from the simplicity of

<sup>214</sup> G. Durà-Vilà and D. Bentley, ‘Opera and madness: Britten’s *Peter Grimes*—a case study’ in *Med Humanities* 35/2 (2009), 107.

<sup>215</sup> Edward A. Lippman, *A History of Western Musical Aesthetics* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 272.

speech to the more heightened emotion of recitative, to the complexity of song. This theory was one of many during the nineteenth century that looked to a tripartite pattern of development, an idea that was first developed by French philosopher Auguste Comte. His *Course in Positive Philosophy* was a series of volumes on the philosophy of science and the foundation of sociology written between 1830 and 1842. Here, Comte outlined that each department of knowledge – specifically each branch of science – passes through three stages: the theological stage, the metaphysical stage and the positive stage. From this grew a widespread belief that modern society had evolved from a primitive one, and that contemporary beings were developed from simpler forms of existence. Starting with the idea that ‘all music is originally vocal’, Spencer adapts the Comtian process of evolution and applies it to his theory of musical development. He claims that ‘recitative arose by degrees out of emotional speech...by a continuance of the same process song has arisen out of recitative’.<sup>216</sup> With regards to recitative, he writes:

It needs but to listen to an opera to hear the leading gradations. Between the comparatively level recitative of ordinary dialogue, the more varied recitative with wider intervals and higher tones used in exciting scenes, the still more musical recitative which preludes an air, and the air itself, the successive steps are but small; and the fact that among airs themselves gradations of like nature may be traced, further confirms the conclusion that the highest form of vocal music was arrived at by degrees.<sup>217</sup>

Strauss did not formally include recitatives in his score for *Salome* – and perhaps one would not expect him to use traditional operatic recitative in this post-Wagner stage of opera history. Nonetheless, the protagonist’s first passage takes on the musical character of the traditional operatic recitative, as she expresses her despair at the way in which Herod looks at her:

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<sup>216</sup>Spencer, ‘The Origin and Function of Music’, 226.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

## Salome

Warum sieht mich der Tetrarch  
fortwährend so an mit seinen  
Maulwurfsaugen unter den zuckenden Lidern?  
Es ist seltsam, daß der Mann  
meiner Mutter mich so ansieht.

## Salome

Why does the Tetrarch look at me  
all the while with his mole's eyes  
under his shaking eyelids?  
It is strange that the husband  
of my mother looks at me like that.

The image displays a musical score for Salome, consisting of four systems of vocal and piano parts. Each system includes a vocal line (labeled 'Sal.') and a piano accompaniment (labeled 'piano').

- System 1 (Measures 22-23):** The vocal line begins with measure 22, marked with a fermata. The lyrics are: "Wa - rum sieht mich der Tet - rarch fort - während so an". The piano accompaniment features a melodic line in the right hand and a more rhythmic line in the left hand. Dynamics include *dim.* and *pp*. A fermata is placed over the end of measure 22.
- System 2 (Measures 23-24):** The vocal line continues with measure 23, marked with a fermata. The lyrics are: "mit seinen Maul - wurfs - au - gen un - ter den zu - ckenden Li - dern? Es ist". The piano accompaniment continues with similar textures. Dynamics include *p* and *pp*. A fermata is placed over the end of measure 23.
- System 3 (Measures 24-25):** The vocal line continues with measure 24, marked with a fermata. The lyrics are: "selt - - - sam, daß der Mann mei - ner Mut - ter mich so an - sieht." The piano accompaniment continues. Dynamics include *pp* and *pp*. A fermata is placed over the end of measure 24.
- System 4 (Measures 25-26):** The vocal line continues with measure 25, marked with a fermata. The lyrics are: "cu - - - rious that the husband of my mo - ther looks at me like". The piano accompaniment continues. Dynamics include *p* and *pp*. A fermata is placed over the end of measure 25.

Additional markings include *tr.* (trills) and *tr.* (trills) in the piano part, and *tranquillo* and *ruhiger* in the piano part of the final system.

Fig. 3: Strauss, Salome, Vocal Score, 16.

The use of extended chords in the accompaniment, alongside Salome's speech-like singing creates a sound that is immediately reminiscent of recitative. In addition, the vocal line utilizes many features of recitative as outlined by Spencer, who considers it to be 'in all respects intermediate between speech and song'.<sup>218</sup> First, he proposes that recitative's 'average effects are not so loud as those of song', and indeed, in conjunction with the *piano* and *pianissimo* dynamic marking of the accompaniment, Salome's line is sung more softly than at some of her more theatrical moments. Spencer goes on to indicate that 'commonly it [recitative] diverges to a smaller extent from the middle notes – uses notes neither so high nor so low in pitch'.<sup>219</sup> Whilst Salome's vocal line throughout the opera ranges from high B's to a low G (below middle C), the given passage ranges from middle D to an E in the octave above – using a range of just over an octave that sits neither at the top nor the bottom of the performer's necessary register. Another aspect of his definition visible in this passage is the idea that 'the intervals habitual to it [recitative] are neither so wide nor so varied. Its rate of variation is not so rapid'.<sup>220</sup> Certainly, when seen in contrast to the aforementioned example at the beginning of Scene Four (fig. 1), the passage consists of more conjunct melodic motion – particularly at reh [22-23]. Finally, Spencer's rhythmic considerations of recitative can also be seen to apply, as he argues that the 'primary rhythm' of recitative is 'less decided' than that of song.<sup>221</sup> The beginning of the section is preceded by the direction *in wechselnder Taktart* (in changing time): a feature that lends itself to the musical character of the traditional operatic recitative.

As discussed, Salome's vocal line is complex and angular at points which reflect her mental instability, which largely occur later in the opera. But in this moment, which is at once both undoubtedly contemplative and revelatory, the recitative style can be seen to serve as a means of reflection in conjunction with the words of the libretto. A movement from simplicity to complexity is the defining component of Spencer's theory of musical evolution, and this was a trend that emerged within a number of evolutionary paradigms at this time. His musical discussion is certainly cast in the mould of evolutionary naturalism, but he also

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 415.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

places emphasis on emotion as a driving force of musical progression, which he sees as progressing from unemotional to expressive. His examination of recitative therefore offers us some insight into the way in which nineteenth-century approaches to music were influenced by emergent biological ideas, thus highlighting the link between music and science, and by association, psychology.

There seems to exist something of a connection between Darwin, Spencer and Haeckel, as each of them sought the application of evolutionary theory to aspects of the arts and humanities as well as science. In addition, both Haeckel and Spencer were amongst a number of nineteenth-century scientists who developed various theoretical hierarchies that applied to supposed categories within the human race. The relevance of these dialogues within *Salome* is the basis for Chapter Four of this thesis. In light of this exploration of nineteenth-century naturalism, Mark Jones's aforementioned definition of art as 'an expression of man's attempt to understand himself and his environment' seems more fitting than ever to the world of science.<sup>222</sup> However, whilst some evolutionary theories were seen to have relevance in *Salome*, the difficulty of tracing specific scientific ideas within an artistic work has also been proved. Despite their fragmented appearance within *Salome*, the evolutionary dialogues of the naturalist movement certainly seem to have held some significance outside the world of science. But in addition to cultivating a link between emergent scientific theories and the evolution of music, the naturalist movement also prompted a change in attitude within the artistic world.

### **Musical Naturalism in *Salome***

Edward Kravitt explains that from the middle of the 1800s, in light of Darwin and Spencer's promotion of the naturalist worldview, 'the trend that had prompted the European individual to turn his back on the abstract in favour of the concrete was beginning to dominate the cultural scene'.<sup>223</sup> Walter Frisch notes an 1888 article by Karl Bleibtreu, a noted supporter of naturalism in literature, who asserted:

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<sup>222</sup> Jones, 'The Psychiatry of Opera', 306.

<sup>223</sup> Edward F. Kravitt, 'The Impact of Naturalism on Music and the Other Arts during the Romantic Era' in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 30/4 (Summer, 1972), 540.

The fundamentals of our scientific outlook emphasized here must reshape all aesthetics and artistic creation from the ground up, since ideas of beauty and ugliness, justice and injustice are changed according to nature, a healthy new morality is constructed...<sup>224</sup>

In another instance, Bleibtreu urged that 'the spirit of scientific research must link itself up with the spirit of poetry'.<sup>225</sup> His words encapsulate the desire amongst writers and other artists at this time – particularly in Germany – to create works that conserved the reality of nature. Of course, creating life-like sounds in music was by no means a new idea, but in the context of nineteenth-century naturalism, Claude Schumacher suggests that in the context of nineteenth-century naturalism, this desire to construct 'the faithful and perfectly exact reproduction of social, psychological and material reality' was derived from an 'unshakable faith in scientific progress'.<sup>226</sup> Indeed, just as scientific naturalism had turned away from the uncertainty of the supernatural and towards a more concrete, scientific understanding of the world, musicians in the late 1880s favoured a 'trend which stresses the utmost fidelity to nature in all its appearances'.<sup>227</sup> *Salome* sees the inclusion of various musical and theatrical trends that represent the growing popularity of naturalism in the arts.

Norman Cazden suggests that 'by naturalism in music we mean quite simply the imitation of sounds that occur in nature. This imitation may also be thought of as representation'.<sup>228</sup> The score sees the inclusion of several moments that align with Cazden's definition of musical naturalism, as Strauss makes use of the large orchestra to mimic sounds that would normally occur within nature. In the final scene of the opera, Salome celebrates Jokanaan's death, and jeers:

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<sup>224</sup> Karl Bleibtreu, *Der Kampf ums Dasein der Literatur* (1888), reprinted in *Theorie des Naturalismus*, ed. Theo Mayer (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1973), 123, quoted in: Walter Frisch, *German Modernism: Music and the Arts* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 37.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Claude Schumacher, *Naturalism and Symbolism in European Theatre 1850-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2.

<sup>227</sup> Kravitt, 'The Impact of Naturalism on Music', 537.

<sup>228</sup> Norman Cazden, 'Towards a Theory of Realism in Music' in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 10/2 (Dec., 1951), 135.

### Salome

Ich lebe noch, aber du bist tot,  
und dein Kopf, dein Kopf gehört mir!  
Ich kann mit ihm tun, was ich will.  
Ich kann ihn den Hunden vorwerfen  
und den Vögeln der Luft.  
Was die Hunde übriglassen,  
sollen die Vögel der Luft verzehren...

### Salome

I still live, but thou art dead,  
And thy head belongs to me!  
I can do with it what I will.  
I can throw it to the dogs  
And to the birds in the air.  
That which the dogs leave,  
The birds of the air shall devour...

As Salome threatens to throw Jokanaan's head to the dogs, the muted horns give a *sforzando* bark at reh. [331].<sup>229</sup> In another instance, when the protagonist waits for the beheading of Jokanaan, she comments on the 'frightful stillness', which is mirrored in the score's *pianissimo* markings. A sudden and eagerly anticipated *sforzando* figure in the lower strings evokes the sound of what Salome perceives to be the falling sword of the headsman, which in actual fact may be the sound of Jokanaan's severed head dropping to the ground:

Fig. 4: Richard Strauss, *Salome*, Op.54, Full Score (Berlin: Adolph Fürstner, 1905), 296.

Walter Niemann refers to examples such as these as 'painterly naturalism', as Strauss showcases his ability to 'intensify' the dramatic events with sounds and

<sup>229</sup> Richard Strauss, *Salome*, Op.54, Full Score (Berlin: Adolph Fürstner, 1905), 322.

musical colours'.<sup>230</sup> Gillman agrees, describing the music as 'always and unswervingly at the service of the dramatic situation, enforcing and italicising the significance of the text and action'.<sup>231</sup> Similar uses of tone painting appear throughout the opera, contributing to the classification of the work within the trajectory of musical naturalism. Interestingly however, Strauss had written to Romain Rolland in the year of *Salome's* composition regarding *Symphonia Domestica*, and outlines the limitations of that work's programmatic elements and pictorial musical depiction:

In my opinion...a poetic programme is nothing but a pretext for the purely musical expression and development of my emotions, and not a simple *musical description* of concrete every day facts. For that would be quite contrary to the spirit of music. But so that music should not lose itself in pure abstractions and limit itself in limitless directions, it needs to be held within bounds which determine a certain form, and it is the programme which fixes these bounds. And an analytic programme of this kind should be nothing more than a starting point. Those who are interested in it can use it. Those who really know how to listen to music doubtless have no need for it.<sup>232</sup>

Nonetheless, the composer has been lauded as a tone painter, a programme musician and a musical naturalist, and he considered himself to be an *Ausdrucksmusiker* (musician of expression), placing value on the creation of feeling and expression in his music above formal concerns. In light of Strauss's seemingly ambiguous attitude towards the creation of this type of music, we turn then to Cazden's article on musical realism, in which he speaks of three different concepts, namely *naturalism*, *pictorialism* and *realism*. His redefinition of realism perhaps lies outside the bounds of this dissertation, but his consideration of the former two categories provides an insight into Strauss's view of the musical trend in which

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<sup>230</sup> Walter Niemann, *Die Musik der Gegenwart* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1913), 121, quoted in Walter Frisch, *German Modernism: Music and the Arts* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 82.

<sup>231</sup> Gillman, *Strauss's Salome*, 56.

<sup>232</sup> Quoted in *Richard Strauss and Romain Rolland: Correspondence*, ed. Rollo Myers (London: Calder and Boyars, 1968), 29.

works were 'highly realistic and descriptive of man's environment'.<sup>233</sup> Cazden deems pictorialism to serve a similar purpose to naturalism, proposing that 'the terms may be distinguished by remarking that with naturalism we have a more or less direct and immediately recognized imitations of sounds occurring in nature', whilst with pictorialism, 'we deal with a kind of representation calling for the intervention of intellectual process before recognition can take place'.<sup>234</sup> Arguably, the limitations outlined by Strauss are overcome in *Salome* by his creation of an additional level of meaning within his naturalistic passages, creating a complex web of naturalist sounds that also provide a glimpse into the psychological world of his characters.

A pertinent example – and one that arguably combines aspects of Cazden's naturalism and pictorialism – is the exchange between Herod and Herodias at the beginning of Scene 4. Herod discovers Narraboth's suicide and senses a chill in the air and the blowing of a foreboding wind, which is represented musically through rushing chromatic scales:

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<sup>233</sup> Kravitt, 'The Impact of Naturalism on Music', 537.

<sup>234</sup> Cazden, 'Towards a Theory of Realism in Music', 138.

164 (They take away the body)  
(Sie tragen den Leichnam weg)

Herodes ihm. him. Es ist is  
It is

Herodes kalt cold hier. here. accelerando Es There  
cresc.

Herodes weht ein Wind.... blows a wind....  
f

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Fig. 5: Strauss, Salome, Vocal Score, 85.

The musical representation of the wind momentarily stops as Herodias comments, 'Nein, es weht kein Wind' (No, there is no wind):

Tempo primo  
Früheres Zeitmass.  
Herodias. (dryly) (trocken) 165  
Nein, es weht kein Wind.  
No, there is no wind.

Herodes Weht nicht ein Wind? Ich  
Blows there no wind? I

Früheres Zeitmass.  
dim. fp pp

Fig. 6: Strauss, Salome, Vocal Score, 85.

Whilst evoking the sound of the wind as Herod sings, the absence of the music during Herodias's denial suggests its existence only within the King's imagination. In this sense, Herod can be interpreted as another 'mad' character, since the hearing of absent sounds seems to indicate insanity both historically and at other points during the opera. For example, in Salome's monologue, she says to the deceased Jokanaan: 'und wenn ich dich ansah hörte ich geheimnisvolle Musik...' (and when I looked on thee I could hear a music of strange sounds...).<sup>235</sup> With regards to the wind heard by Herod, the appearance of the sliding chromatic scale motif is thought by William Mann to represent the King's unrest throughout the opera, though it largely appears in more concise utterances before this moment.<sup>236</sup> Interestingly, McClary notes the historical use of chromaticism in representations of the operatic madwoman, but in this case, perhaps her definition can be extended to include mad characters who are both male and female.<sup>237</sup> The musical representation of the wind therefore bears meaning beyond simple pictorial representation. Frisch refers to Herod's reaction to the sound of the icy wind as a 'psychodramatic portrait' that is located 'in the realm of the senses and the nerves'.<sup>238</sup> Herod's music is a psychologically illuminating combination of 'lyrical and declamatory expression', which reveals his ambiguity and anxiety about Narraboth's death.<sup>239</sup> In addition, this section may also be read as a representation of his guilt for lusting over Salome, and his fear of the ramifications for his licentious desire.<sup>240</sup> Strauss paints a musical picture of Herod's psychologically exposing sensory experience, and as Frisch suggests, 'the naturalistic psychological component far transcends simple tone-painting'.<sup>241</sup> Indeed, alongside tone painting, the juxtaposition of instrumental timbres enhances aspects of theme, character and plot. In addition, Strauss exercises the full force of his monumental orchestra to aid the development of form, as dramatic progress is maintained through the use of leitmotifs.

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<sup>235</sup> Richard Strauss, *Salome*, Op. 54, Vocal Score, ed. Otto Singer (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1943), 193.

<sup>236</sup> William Mann, *Richard Strauss: A Critical Study of the Operas* (London: Cassell, 1964), 47.

<sup>237</sup> McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 82.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*

## Psychological Naturalism in *Salome*: Music and the Unconscious Mind

With regards to musical naturalism, Kravitt argues that 'in stressing the concrete, naturalism stimulates the artist to represent the particular – the individual characteristics of some person, such as his passing moods'.<sup>242</sup> Alongside the aforementioned examples of tone painting, which arguably stress the 'concrete', Strauss uses a number of psychologically illuminating modernist musical devices to evoke the 'particular'. The use of these devices creates an undercurrent of psychological exploration, thus underscoring the naturalistic character of the opera.

The late years of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of new trends in the understanding of the human mind – with specific emphasis on the role of the unconscious mind by the likes of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Freud. Based on the observation that individuals were unaware of the factors that determine their emotions and behaviour, early psychiatrists considered the 'unconscious' to be the portion of the brain responsible for mental distress and insanity. Freud placed much emphasis on the significance of a patient's past, their forgotten memories and the world of dreams, all of which were housed within the unconscious mind. The diagnosis and treatment of the infamous hysteric 'Anna O' was documented in Freud and Breuer's *Studies in Hysteria*, which is generally regarded as the starting-point of psychoanalysis – for in the process of extracting her most intimate thoughts and feelings, the doctors discovered the effectiveness of the new-fangled 'talking cure'.<sup>243</sup> Just as Freud considered each and every statement to house a specific connotation during his psychoanalytic sessions, the astute entwining of leitmotifs in *Salome* can be seen as analogous to the parapraxis, or 'Freudian slip', in that they often function as subconscious utterings of his character's emotions. Wilde himself commented that the story of *Salome* included 'refrains whose recurring *motifs* make *Salome* so like a piece of music as to bind it like a ballad'.<sup>244</sup> Despite making cuts to Wilde's play, Strauss translates the intense complexity of the original theatrical organization into a rich musical structure that articulated these said motifs.

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<sup>242</sup> Kravitt, 'The Impact of Naturalism on Music', 538.

<sup>243</sup> Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria* in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 2000; f.p. 1895), Vol. 2, 21-48.

<sup>244</sup> Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis*, in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde: De Profundis, "Epistola: in Carcere et Vinculis"*, ed. Ian Small (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 172-173.

Various interpretations of the opera see the ascription of certain leitmotifs to particular moments, characters, and emotions. In the first sketches of the opera, Strauss included titles such as *Salome*, *Das Todesurteil* (the death sentence) and *Herodes Begehrlichkeit* (Herod's covetousness) alongside short musical ideas.<sup>245</sup> Subsequent analyses of the work, such as Lawrence Gilman's, also outline leitmotifs associated with principle characters alongside those indicative of more abstract concepts, such as 'the kiss', Salome's 'ecstasy', 'yearning' and 'enticement'.<sup>246</sup> In the opening scene, as Salome contemplates her stepfather's persistent gaze – 'It is curious that the husband of my mother looks at me like that' – the motif labeled by Strauss as 'Herod's covetousness' – reveals his incestuous longing:



Fig. 7: 'Herod's Covetousness'.

A musical score snippet for Salome, Vocal Score, 16. It shows a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics: 'Wa - rum / Why, why / sieht mich der Tet - rarch fort - während so an / does the Te-trarch watch me all the while'. The piano accompaniment includes a trill in the right hand, marked 'pp' (pianissimo). A red box highlights the piano accompaniment from measure 22 to 24. The score is marked 'dim.' (diminuendo) and 'Ped.' (pedal).

Fig. 8: Strauss, *Salome*, Vocal Score, 16.

Mark-Daniel Schmid regards the use of leitmotif in the opera as aiding the creation of 'psychologically interpretive music that externalizes spiritual processes, thus bringing them to "expression"'.<sup>247</sup> *Salome's* leitmotifs seem to function as a vehicle through which Strauss encapsulates a complex web of emotional and psychological intricacies, and in this sense, Kravitt's observation on the ambition of the musical naturalist is called to mind:

<sup>245</sup> Puffett, *Richard Strauss's Salome*, 65.

<sup>246</sup> Gillman, *Strauss's Salome*, 69-73.

<sup>247</sup> Mark-Daniel Schmid, *The Richard Strauss Companion* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Inc.), 19.

...in striving to capture passing moods, the naturalist plays the gamut of human emotions in his art, from those that are calm to those that are intensely emotional. He aims consciously to arouse a strong emotional response in his auditors, to involve them actively in his creation in order to produce them in an empathetic response; in doing this, he hopes to make his work seem as though it has come to life.<sup>248</sup>

In addition to providing a mere annunciation of character, the use of leitmotifs in *Salome* contributes to a highly evocative musical landscape, rich with intimate characterization and emotional insight. In addition to the use of leitmotifs, the element of psychological exposure – which underscores the naturalistic character of the opera – is further enhanced through Strauss's selective use of keys.

### **Psychological Symbolism in the Tonalities of Salome's Monologue**

A considerable amount of *Salome* literature refers to the rich tonal characteristics of the opera, and in particular, the ways in which the use of tonality creates an enriched psychological framework. Arguably, the element of psychological intricacy brought about by the use of leitmotifs is enhanced through the use of specific keys for certain characters and themes. For example, the Jews sing primarily in D minor, whilst the tonal world of Jokanaan is built upon C major. The final scene of the opera is fitted to the exploration of these ideas. The theatrical climax – the kissing of Jokanaan's severed head – lies within this scene, and Salome's monologue is a vehicle through which Strauss creates relentless dramatic tension up until this point. Arguably, the composer enriches the naturalistic integrity of the opera in the creation of a highly evocative depiction of Salome's insanity. Indeed, the opera's final scene can be interpreted as *Salome's* 'mad scene', as it is the ultimate exploration of the obsession and passionate sensuality of the protagonist.

Craig Ayrey identifies the tonal areas of C and C# as harbourers of deep psychological symbolism throughout the opera and within the final scene in particular. C major/minor is assigned to the music of Jokanaan, but is also thought by Ayrey to represent anger, along with the 'negative aspects of power', in that it is

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<sup>248</sup> Kravitt, 'The Impact of Naturalism on Music', 538.

used in conjunction with threats of violence and references to death.<sup>249</sup> C minor is heard in conjunction with Salome's acceptance of Jokanaan's death at bar 4 of reh. [329], as she jeers: 'Ich lebe noch, aber du bist tot' (I'm living still, but thou art dead). Her gloating statement asserts her newfound power as the reason for his death, and sits above Jokanaan's C-major sonorities. C# signifies Salome's character throughout the work: it is used for the leitmotifs 'the kiss' and 'ecstasy', and features throughout the opera as a symbol of Salome's desire, culminating in the unsettling eroticism of the final kiss.<sup>250</sup>

At reh. [313], as Salome demands Jokanaan's head a final time, Strauss creates a striking opposition between the opera's two conflicting tonal centres, C and C#:

Fig. 9: Strauss, Salome, Vocal Score, 181.

The head of Jokanaan is presented, and soon after, at reh. [314] (bars 1-2) we hear a statement of the *Salome* theme in C# major above a C minor pedal in the bass. Against this, an abrasive diminished seventh chord in D creates further musical tension in anticipation for the events to come.

<sup>249</sup> Ayrey, 'Salome's final monologue' in Puffett, *Richard Strauss's Salome*, 118.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

314  
Ziemlich langsam. (Viertel)

Viol. I.

Viol. II.

Br. (geteilt)

Celli.

C. B.

Fig. 10: Strauss, *Salome*, Full Score, 302.

In addition to creating musical tension, Salome's participation in both C and C# tonal centres can be seen as a representation of her innermost turmoil. Ayrey argues that it reveals the complex ambiguity of her character, summarizing that her lineage dictates 'ties in the moralistic and repressive world of orthodoxy' (underscored by C), whilst she also submits to agonizing sensuality and seductive eroticism (C#).<sup>251</sup> This reading deems the work's conflicting tonal centres to be an implication of the inescapable opposition that defines Salome's obsession as inappropriate, and as such, is essential for a symbolic understanding of the monologue. Indeed, despite the sincerity of her longing, at the intersection of Roman, Jewish and Christian cultures, for Salome, as the princess of Judea, such a passion would have been forbidden – particularly with a prophet, and a follower of Christ. The relationship between C and C# can also be understood as a means of underscoring the opera's dramatic tensions, and may also mirror the prevalence of binary oppositions in the work, which will be discussed in Chapter Four.

In keeping with these suggested tonal connotations, the anger that Salome has displayed thus far in the monologue now dissolves at reh. [332], as she laments: 'Ah! Jokanaan, du warst schön' (Ah! Jokanaan, you were fair). Here, a diatonic V7-I cadence in C# major underscores her words, and precedes a statement of the so-called 'enticement' leitmotif, which is also referred to as 'Salome's curiosity'<sup>252</sup>:

<sup>251</sup> Ayrey, 'Salome's final monologue' in Puffett, *Richard Strauss's Salome*, 119.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.



Fig. 11: 'Enticement'/'Salome's Curiosity' Leitmotif.

Fig. 12: Strauss, Salome, Vocal Score, 190.

This section therefore cements Salome's desire and sexual yearning both motivically and tonally, and continues with snippets reminiscent of the motifs 'ecstasy' and 'Salome's charm', again, with a firm harmonic grounding in C#-major. A move to C# accompanies Salome's frustration in bar 7 of reh. [342], as the princess comments on the failure of Jokanaan to recognize and love her. Again, this cements the association between this key and connotations of violence and anger. Arguably, each change of key symbolizes another of Salome's moods, and as such, Kravitt's definition of the naturalist's objective to play 'the gamut of human emotions in his art' is reinforced.<sup>253</sup> Kravitt's definition also comes to light in this scene through Strauss's use of chromaticism to represent Salome's madness.

<sup>253</sup> Kravitt, 'The Impact of Naturalism on Music', 538.

### **Chromaticism in the Representation of Salome's Madness**

The earlier discussion of scientific naturalism in *Salome* established the significance of the borderline between sanity and insanity within the opera. Salome's crossing of this line is represented musically through the use of chromaticism. As such, whilst the opera's keys enable the creation of a rich psychological backdrop, in the moments of Salome's most conspicuous madness, her mental state is represented by highly chromatic language. Susan McClary discusses the use of chromaticism in operatic representations of madness, suggesting that 'excessive ornamentation and chromaticism...mark the madwoman's deviance'.<sup>254</sup> More specifically, she comments on the way in which, musically, 'Salome's pathology is signalled by her slippery chromatic deviations from normative diatonicism',<sup>255</sup> calling to mind Kramer's similar description of her musical language, which he believes to be characterized by 'dense texture, chromatic slithering and over-elaborate orchestration'.<sup>256</sup>

As illustrated earlier, Salome's turmoil is exposed within her vocal frenzy as she waits for the sound of Jokanaan's head (see fig. 1). Her seeming instability is further emphasized in the bitonality between the work's conflicting tonal centres at reh. [314], further emphasizing the dramatic tension of the moment. Interestingly, the discord dwindles at reh. [315] with the resolution to C# minor, which sounds as Salome resolves to kiss the head, an event upon which the entire monologue – and arguably the opera as a whole – hinges:

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<sup>254</sup> Susan McClary, 'Excess and Frame: The Musical Representation of Madwomen', in *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 82.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>256</sup> Kramer, 'Culture and Musical Hermeneutics: The Salome Complex'.

The image shows a page of a musical score for Richard Strauss's opera Salome. The page is numbered 315 at the top. It features a vocal line for Salome and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line includes the lyrics: "Jochanaan! Wohl, Well, ich werde ihn jetzt well, I shall now be küssen kiss - sen. ed." The piano accompaniment includes markings such as "cresc.", "ff", "piu lento", "ritard.", and "Etwas breit." The score is in G major and 2/4 time.

Fig. 13: Strauss, *Salome*, *Vocal Score*, 182.

Above the diatonic statement of C#, a twelve-tone figure dominates the upper woodwinds, indicative of the protagonist's frenzy, as she states 'Wohl, ich werde ihn jetzt küssen' (Well, I will kiss it now). If, like McClary, we are to understand Salome's madness as 'explicitly linked to excessive sexuality',<sup>257</sup> this statement of intention arguably marks Salome's ultimate mental undoing, as she succumbs to her obsession over Jokanaan, and submits finally to the sexual need to kiss his severed head. As she continues to describe the ensuing act – which borders on necrophilia – the chromaticism of this section continues as she declares, at [316-318], 'Ich will mit meinen Zähnen hineinbeißen, wie man in eine reife Frucht beißen mag' (I will bite it with my teeth as one bites a ripe fruit):

<sup>257</sup> McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 100.

316

Sa.  
 Ich will mit meinen Zäh - - nen hin -  
*And with my teeth I'll bite it* *acceler.* I

318

Sa.  
 ein - beis - - - sen, wie man in ei - ne rei - - fe Frucht beis -  
*will bite it as one bites in a ripe fruit.* I

Sa.  
 - sen mag.  
*said I would.* *sfx* *ritard.*

Fig. 14: Strauss, Salome, Vocal Score, 182-183.

Her words here are accompanied by largely chromatic sonorities, and discordant flashes of the *Salome* leitmotif at reh. [316] (bars 5-6) and at [318] (bar 4) are interspersed amongst rising chromatic scale passages, which are underpinned by a particularly volatile bitonal framework. Although C# is generally suggested in the bass line, enharmonic Cb sonorities are implied in the upper parts (reh. [318], bar 4). This section therefore acts as another example of Salome's participation in the opera's two conflicting tonics, as suggested by Ayrey,<sup>258</sup> but also combines the additional element of chromaticism, which arguably underscores her insanity.

McClary's consideration of Salome's chromaticism is also dependent upon the opposition of 'normative procedures representing reason', which, she argues, 'serve as a protective frame preventing "contagion."' <sup>259</sup> Within *Salome*, the so-called 'normative' sphere is represented through conventional tonality. For example, Jokanaan's musical language is characterized by a firm adherence to predictable diatonicism: his music revolves mostly around the tonal centre of C minor. In this sense, it is also the unpredictability of Salome's music that suggests her madness. A striking example lies in the chord at reh. [360] (bar 6), which precedes Salome's celebratory declaration 'Ah! Ich habe deinen Mund geküßt, Jochanaan...' (Ah! I have kissed thy mouth Jokanaan...):



Fig. 15: Strauss, *Salome*, Vocal Score, 203.

Described by Gary Schmidgall as 'the most sickening in all opera', <sup>260</sup> the chord sits within one of very few moments of tonal clarity in *Salome*, therefore accentuating her madness by framing it within the music of 'reason'. Indeed, reh. [359] sees the establishment of C# major, as Salome's words are underpinned by tense dominant

<sup>258</sup> Craig Ayrey, 'Salome's final monologue' in Puffett, *Richard Strauss's Salome*, 118.

<sup>259</sup> Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 81

<sup>260</sup> Gary Schmidgall, *Literature as Opera* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 283.

sonorities, and at bar 5 of reh. [360], the resolve onto the tonic precedes the climactic cadence, which, in a more orthodox form, would house a simple V7 chord in C#-major before resolving to the tonic. Instead, Strauss scores 'an epoch-making dissonance in which (he) takes Salome into the depth of degradation'.<sup>261</sup> Framed by the 'reason' of conventional harmony, the chord is a striking polytonal fusion of A7 and F# major (becoming D-sharp at the end of the bar).<sup>262</sup> McClary's consideration of the 'framing' of Salome's madness within conventional harmony also incorporates considerations of gender.<sup>263</sup> Simply put, her argument states that within *Salome*, the normative masculine sphere is represented through rational, conventional tonality, whilst feminine irrationality and insanity are seen in passages of chromaticism.<sup>264</sup> This idea will be explored in more detail in my final chapter.

In addition to considering Salome's participation in chromatic sonorities in moments of madness, like Kramer and Abbate, McClary also discusses the opera's ending, and what she refers to as 'the final purging of Salome's chromaticism' through Herod's diatonic C-minor death sentence.<sup>265</sup> McClary outlines the way in which, despite Salome's demise, her sexual presence has brought about the 'contamination of the entire court', and even after the protagonist's death, 'the tonal fabric festers with chromatic slippage'.<sup>266</sup> McClary's words call to mind the language of degeneration and disease that were prevalent in considerations of mental illness at this time – and will be discussed in Chapter Four – and therefore underscore the link between chromaticism, madness, and femininity.

From simple tone painting, to leitmotifs and complex harmonies, the score's alignment with various definitions of musical naturalism has been revealed, along with the relationship of these devices to the representation of madness. However, the naturalism of the work does not lie exclusively in its music. Walter Frisch's consideration of *Salome* and *Elektra* in his chapter entitled 'German Naturalism' provides some interesting examples of the way in which Strauss incorporates aspects of dramatic naturalism into the opera.<sup>267</sup> In adherence to the Aristotelian

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<sup>261</sup> Michael Kennedy, *Richard Strauss* (London: Dent, 1976), 144.

<sup>262</sup> Schmidgall, *Literature as Opera*, 283.

<sup>263</sup> McClary, *Feminine Endings*, 82-102.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>267</sup> Frisch, *German Modernism*, 82-87.

theatrical unities (space, time and action), *Salome* is staged in a single location over the course of approximately ninety 'real-time' minutes. This dramaturgical choice is deemed by Frisch to be a naturalistic one.<sup>268</sup> Certainly, the use of real-time adheres to Kravitt's description of musical naturalism, which strives to maintain 'utmost fidelity to nature in all its appearances'.<sup>269</sup> However, Frisch also notes the way in which the concrete and absolute objectivity of time is challenged during 'the dramatization of Salome's madness, [where] Strauss may also be said to stretch clock time'.<sup>270</sup> This is certainly the case during the protagonist's monologues, where the composer creates the illusion of bent time in conjunction with Salome's wavering sanity.<sup>271</sup> In the final scene, during Salome's vast self-contained monologue, the repetitive nature of her dialogue creates a haunting impression of her psychosis, in what Ulrike Kienzle – quoted by Frisch – would refer to as a 'musico-dramatic psychogram'.<sup>272</sup> For example, in contrast to the short and briefly interspersed exchanges between Herod and Herodias, Salome's incessant deliberation about the kissing of Jokanaan's mouth extends across 39 bars (reh. [314-322]), and in most recordings, the monologue lasts around twelve minutes. This perhaps reveals the true extent of her psychosexual turmoil both symbolically and literally.

### **Closing Remarks**

We now see the way in which Strauss creates an intricate and expressionistic network of words and emotions – all articulated musically and symbolically through the use of specific musical and theatrical devices – connoting emotional and dramatic developments in a manner that upholds the naturalistic character of the opera. This chapter has established the emergent naturalist trends that migrated from the scientific fields into the arts during the nineteenth century. Certain elements of these trends can be identified within *Salome*, but mostly in fragmented forms. However, in order to fully understand the presentation of certain cultural attitudes – such as those towards madness – that emerged out of the era's

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<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>269</sup> Kravitt, 'The Impact of Naturalism on Music', 537.

<sup>270</sup> Frisch, *German Modernism*, 83.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> Ulrike Kienzle, *Das Trauma hinter dem Traum: Franz Schrekers Oper "Der ferne Klang" und die Wiener Moderne* (Schliengen: Argus, 1998), quoted in: Frisch, *German Modernism*, 83.

naturalistic mind set, we must return to the likes of Haeckel and Spencer. The next chapter of this dissertation will therefore include a further examination of their work, and aims to uncover the way in which their participation in evolutionary dialogues informed contemporary considerations of race, gender, and disease. The relationship of these ideas to the era's naturalistic intellectual climate will be discussed, along with their manifestation within *Salome*.

## **4. Madness, Race, and Gender: the 'Other' in *Salome***

### **Degeneration and Otherness in the Nineteenth Century: An Introduction**

The closing years of the nineteenth century were partly characterized by an air of cultural pessimism, as concepts of atavism, transgression and relapse appeared within a time period which is so often associated with progress and evolution. The concept of degeneration emerged out of the diminishing faith in the theory of evolution, as social commentators began to doubt human progression and questioned whether Western civilization had already reached its evolutionary peak. Indeed, the doctrine of degeneration swept across Europe at this time and declared 'a downward spiral of decline and reversion'.<sup>273</sup> Daniel Pick writes that 'in medico-psychiatric investigations, alcoholism, sexual perversion, crime, insanity, declining birth rates, syphilis, prostitution, anarchism, suicide rates, economic performance, and so on, become intertwined signifiers for cultural crisis'.<sup>274</sup> For the likes of Max Nordau, the term fin-de-siècle referred not only to end of the century, but to the possible end of European advancement and superiority. He defined the fin-de-siècle as the '[d]usk of nations, in which all suns and all stars are gradually waning, and mankind with all its institutions and creations is persisting in the midst of a dying world'.<sup>275</sup> Responsibility for the supposedly 'dying world' rested, according to many commentators, with various manifestations of the so-called 'Other'. Throughout the nineteenth century, the language of degeneration was used across Europe to project Otherness onto certain groups of society, including the racially inferior, the diseased, and the feminine. For many of the era's intellectual minds, madness was an embodiment of all that was degenerate, and to return to Lara Trout, was linked to 'presumed cognitive inferiority' derived from the 'hegemonically enforced classification of groups'.<sup>276</sup> *Salome* provides a prime example of the exploration of degeneration in the dramatic arts: the opera encapsulates a web of its most central concepts, including xenophobia, dangerous sexuality, and as argued in this thesis,

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<sup>273</sup> Graham Richards, *Psychology: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 55.

<sup>274</sup> Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, C.1848-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 43.

<sup>275</sup> Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993; f.p. 1892), 3.

<sup>276</sup> Trout, *The Politics of Survival*, 113-114.

mental illness. This chapter will explore each of these ideas, and will assess whether the opera can be considered a reflection of this murky cultural underbelly of nineteenth-century society.

### **The Evolution of Degeneration: Madness and Social Decline in *Salome***

Suman Fernando suggests that during the late 1800s, there emerged a trend in which 'hereditary factors were soon quoted for nearly every individual or group variation or difference, seen against a background of evolutionary advantage and survival of the fittest'.<sup>277</sup> The nucleus of many evolutionary dialogues nodded to Lamarck's theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics. This became known as heredity during the nineteenth century, and eventually developed into the field of genetics. Though Lamarck's theory was published in 1809 – the year of Darwin's birth – it had its roots in the naturalistic philosophy of ancient Greece, and was anticipated by Hippocrates and Aristotle. According to the Hippocrates, characteristics from every part of the human body were concentrated within male semen, and would be passed into any new life within the womb. Like many other pre-scientific models of this time, Hippocrates' theory of inheritance was built upon and explained through a series of rich allusions. For example, the Olympian weight lifter would carry 'bicep parts' in his semen – causing any offspring to inherit similarly large bicep muscles. This concept is often referred to as the 'bricks and mortar' theory, and was disputed by Aristotle, who suggested that children inherit a blueprint of their parents, sometimes resulting in acquired characteristics that would occur later in life – such as greying hair and baldness. Daniel Pick refers to the field of heredity during the nineteenth century as sitting 'in the shadows of evolutionary naturalism', as it re-emerged in the wake of the Darwinian revolution and represented a darker side of the enlightenment.<sup>278</sup> Indeed, as these theories became more sophisticated at this time, in intellectual circles, the principles of heredity were closely linked to notions of race, gender and disease.

Gregor Mendel (1822 -1884), along with Charles Darwin and his half-cousin Francis Galton (1822-1911) were amongst a handful of pioneers of the field of heredity. Human inherited diseases were at also its forefront, and Darwin's work on

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<sup>277</sup>Suman Fernando, *Mental Health, Race and Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), 55.

<sup>278</sup>Pick, *Faces of Degeneration*, 2.

human genetic disorders, along with Galton's ideas about the inheritance of human characteristics laid the foundations for a new framework for studying diseases of both the body and mind. In pre-Enlightenment Europe, it was 'virtually impossible to talk of the mind as susceptible to physical degeneration and sickness',<sup>279</sup> but the development of scientific progression and biological reason allowed mental 'illness' to emerge as a new concept. Psychiatry approached mental illness as a physical disease, but the newfound links between psychology and heredity meant that 'mental illness was attributed to inborn defects that could not be corrected'.<sup>280</sup> The development of these ideas contributed to the triggering of a widespread fear of sociocultural regression and decay. These, in turn, provided a backdrop for theories of degeneration, which soon became a pan-European phenomenon.

The term Degeneration had its origins with Frenchman Bénédict Morel (1809-1873), whose thesis outlined the traditional notion of heredity as a means for the transmission of mental illness. Studies on the cause of mental illness lay at the heart of Morel's theory, and remained a crucial point of interest in subsequent works on degeneration (such as those by Lombroso, Maudsley and Nordau). In one sense, madness was explained by degenerationist philosophy as a consequence of the *suspension* of natural selection, as questions were raised about how criminality, mental illness and disease had overcome the evolutionary process. On the other hand, many degenerationist works grew from the Darwinian notion of heredity, and diseases – including mental illnesses – were used as evidence of human regression. Morel's theory might explain Salome's insanity to be a genetically acquired abnormality, for his *Treatise on Physical and Moral Degeneration* revealed his understanding of degeneration as 'deviations from the normal type, which are transmittable by heredity and which deteriorate progressively towards extinction'.<sup>281</sup> Paul Turnbull summarizes Morel's description of the gradual worsening of a tainted family tree as follows: 'the first generation of a degenerate family might be merely nervous, the second would tend to be neurotic, the third psychotic, while the fourth consisted of idiots and died out'.<sup>282</sup> With this in mind, the

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<sup>279</sup> Peter Elmer, *The Healing Arts: Health, Disease and Society in Europe 1500-1800* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 230.

<sup>280</sup> Fernando, *Mental Health, Race and Culture*, 55.

<sup>281</sup> Quoted in: Paul Turnbull, *Psychiatry and Hereditary Degeneration, 1860-1914*, available at: <http://paulturnbull.org/?q=node/31> (accessed: 31.3.15).

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*

familial aspect of *Salome* is also suited to explanation from a degenerationist viewpoint, as both Herod and Salome – though not related by blood – seem to be in the throes of mental illness. Salome’s obsession for Jokanaan borders on pathological, and her desire to kiss his severed head is arguably necrophilous, whilst Herod might be described as paranoid, which the OED defines as a ‘mental condition characterized by delusions of persecution, unwarranted jealousy, or exaggerated self-importance’.<sup>283</sup> In addition, Strauss’s interpretation of the myth also incorporates undertones of incest and sexual perversion, which were renowned properties of corrupt society, and will undergo exploration later in this chapter.

Towards the end of the century, Max Nordau (1849-1923) adapted Morel’s theory in his *Entartung* (Degeneracy), which saw the development of degenerationist ideas into artistic critique. The artistic decadence movement had contributed to an increased interest in orientalism and the associated fascination with the exotic nature of the East. Arguably, this enthrallment – along with the associated ideas of degeneration – can be viewed as a ‘singular intellectual current within a far-wider language of nineteenth-century racist imperialism’.<sup>284</sup> In this sense, we see the way in which degenerationism functions alongside the larger cultural backdrop of Western supremacy over a savage, Eastern ‘other’ – a notion that will soon see further examination. Nordau suggested that many contemporary artistic endeavors exposed the properties of degenerate society, and were created as a result of corruption and decline. Referring to the French Symbolist movement as a product of mental pathology, Nordau derided Wilde as an embodiment of all that the fin-de-siècle stood for – a period associated with ‘contempt for traditional views of custom and morality’.<sup>285</sup> MacKenzie’s description of the opera evokes a similarly degenerate feel, recounting the ‘imaginative flair’, ‘barbaric frenzy’ and ‘cruel voluptuousness’ of the score.<sup>286</sup> In this sense, *Salome* appears once again to encapsulate elements of the period’s intellectual backdrop, which also saw the emergence of certain fascist cultural ideals. Indeed, ideas about heredity and degeneration were typically allied with the supposed inequality of the human races,

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<sup>283</sup> ‘Paranoia (*n*)’ in *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, 2015), available at: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/paranoia> (accessed: 29.01.2016).

<sup>284</sup> Pick, *Faces of Degeneration*, 37.

<sup>285</sup> Quoted in: Melanie A. Murphy, *Max Nordau's Fin-De-Siècle Romance of Race* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2007), 7.

<sup>286</sup> John MacKenzie, *Orientalism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 161-162.

as scientists had turned to social Darwinism and sought the application of an evolutionary hierarchy to humanity.

### **Evolution and Race: Scientific and Musical Perspectives**

The previous chapter outlined a link between Darwin, Spencer and Haeckel in their cross-disciplinary approach to evolutionary naturalism. In addition to expounding an all-encompassing evolutionary model, Spencer and Haeckel are also linked through the production of works that looked to notions of heredity and race as a means of expounding their theories of evolutionary development. They were at the forefront of a trend in which the advocates of naturalism began to apply evolutionary hierarchies to the human race. These hierarchies invariably promoted the glorification of the Western, the healthy, and the masculine, as opposed to the Eastern, the diseased, and the feminine – all of which were deemed to be under-evolved, even savage. Spencer's work in particular became bound up with ideas about racial hierarchy, a trend that began to overwhelm evolutionary thought during the middle of the nineteenth century, and eventually seeped into various artistic channels.

The work of the renowned anthropologist E. B. Tylor (1832-1917) typified the use of a Darwinian model of evolution as an explanation for racial difference. The titles of his two major works, *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization* (1865) and *Primitive Culture* (1871), illustrate the use of certain terminology that belonged to the emergent climate of racial prejudice. Curtis M. Hinsley Jr. simplifies this as the use of the term 'culture' for 'civilization', and 'primitive' for 'early',<sup>287</sup> which Tylor himself outlines at the beginning of *Primitive Culture*:

Culture or Civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. The condition of culture among the various societies of mankind, in so far as it is capable of being investigated on general principles, is a subject apt for the

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<sup>287</sup> Curtis M. Hinsley Jr., *Savages and Scientists: The Smithsonian Institution and the Development of American Anthropology 1846-1910* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), 13.

study of laws of human thought and action. On the one hand, the uniformity which so largely pervades civilization may be ascribed, in great measure, to the uniform action of uniform causes: while on the other hand its various grades may be regarded as stages of development or evolution, each the outcome of previous history, and about to do its proper part in shaping the history of the future.<sup>288</sup>

Annemarie De Waal Malefijt, in her work *Images of man: A History of Anthropological Thought*, points out the significance of the word 'acquired' at the start of this passage and suggests 'that culture was the product of social learning rather than of biological heredity, and that the differences in cultural development were not the result of degeneration, but of progress in cultural knowledge'.<sup>289</sup> In this sense, Tylor is not necessarily part of the group of thinkers who allowed theories of evolution influence their belief in certain races as 'lesser' or perhaps 'under-evolved' due to emergent theories of degeneration and decline. Nonetheless, Tylor's inherent belief in a hierarchy between Western civilization and the so-called 'barbarous races' is revealed as he continues:

It may be admitted that some rude tribes lead a life to be envied by some barbarous races, and even by the outcasts of higher nations. But that any known savage tribe would not be improved by judicious civilization, is a proposition which no moralist would dare to make; while the general tenour [sic] of the evidence goes far to justify the view that on the whole the civilized man is not only wise and more capable than the savage, but also better and happier, and that the barbarian stands between.<sup>290</sup>

His deliberation on the nature of 'savage' as opposed to 'civilized' man is a pertinent example of the growing climate of xenophobia that developed with the use of terminology that justified racist attitudes within academic texts. To return to Spencer, a similar outlook is also seen in his ideas about recitative as a product of

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<sup>288</sup> Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom* (London: John Murray, 1871), 1.

<sup>289</sup> Annemarie de Waal Malefijt, *Images of Man: A History of Anthropological Thought* (New York: Knopf, 1974), 1.

<sup>290</sup> Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 31.

musical evolution. In conjunction with contemporary naturalistic ideas about human emotion and insanity, recitative – as a product of musical evolution – can be seen not only as the missing link between speech and song. Spencer suggests a further connection between recitative and the ‘orations and legends of savages’, thus calling to mind several nineteenth-century doctrines on notions of evolution and race, and their link to reflections on the development of music.<sup>291</sup> Zon suggests that ‘Spencer’s conception of evolution, perhaps more than any other, highlights the extent to which evolutionary theories were perhaps compromised by ideologically contorted notions of race’.<sup>292</sup> Spencer’s work on recitative certainly provides several examples of this nascent xenophobic attitude, as he notes: ‘Thus, then, we may not only infer, from the evidence furnished by existing barbarous tribes, that the vocal music of prehistoric times was emotional speech very slightly exalted’, and continues to remark that: ‘the Chinese and Hindoos seem never to have advanced [beyond recitative]...’.<sup>293</sup> Alongside his tripartite evolutionary model for the development from speech, to recitative, to song, recitative might therefore also be deemed as ‘under-evolved’ within his trajectory of musical evolution. With this in mind, it would seem that from Spencer’s perspective, recitative stands firstly, and at a most basic level, between speech and song, but given the connotations of savagery and race in Spencer’s work, recitative can be seen as inhabiting the middle ground between musical ‘savagery’ and sophistication.

In addition to bridging the gap between science and music, Haeckel was another amongst the European thinkers who began to apply evolutionary principles to considerations of race. Haeckel utilized the science of physical anthropology as a vehicle through which to categorize certain races as being less evolved, and in some cases, even sub-human. In what might be perceived as a dangerous extension of Darwinism, Haeckel adapted Darwinian concepts into the belief that, in accordance with the specification of plants and animals, humans should be divided into twelve distinct species according to race. For example, illustrations taken from *Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte* (The History of Creation), published in 1868, and translated

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<sup>291</sup> Spencer, ‘The Origin and Function of Music’, 226.

<sup>292</sup> Bennett Zon, *Representing Non-Western Music in Nineteenth-century Britain* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2007), 73.

<sup>293</sup> Spencer, ‘The Origin and Function of Music’, 225.

and republished as *The Evolution of Man* in (1892), display what he perceived to be as the link between 'inferior races' and apes:

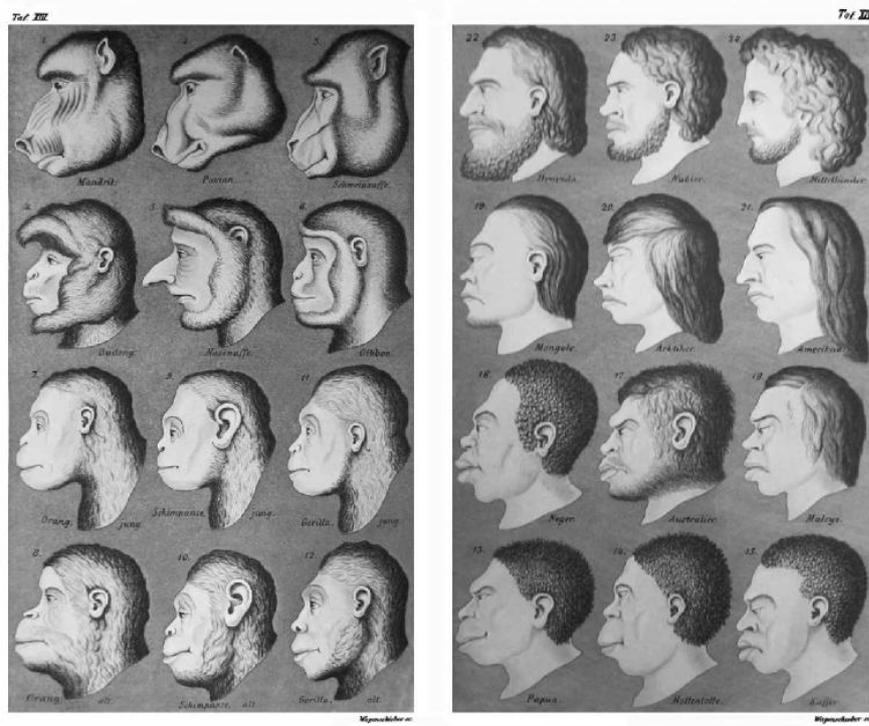


Fig. 16: Ernst Haeckel, *The Evolution of Man*, trans. Joseph McCabe (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1892), 160.

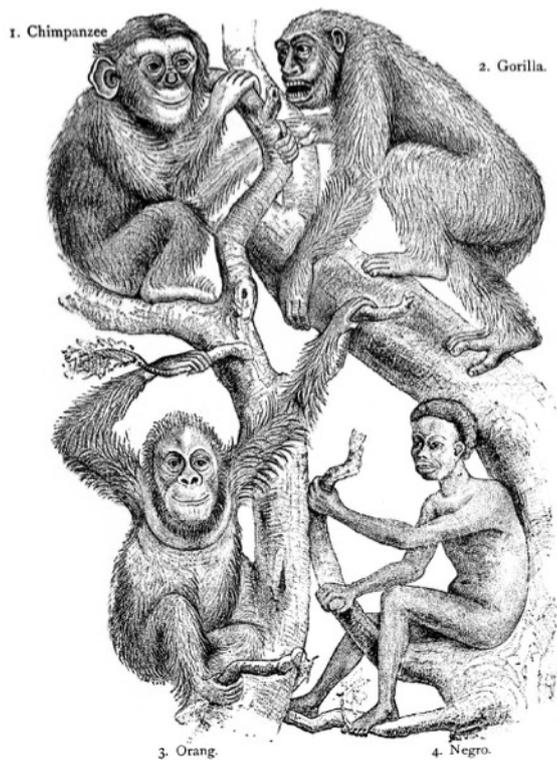


Fig. 17: Ernst Haeckel, *Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte (Natural History of Creation)* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1870), 576.

An essay entitled *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (An Essay on the Inequality of Human Races) was another work to cement biological explanations for supposed racial inequality into the European intellectual climate. Written by Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau and first published in 1852, the work divides the human race into three subsections – white, yellow and black – and claims the ‘superiority of the white race over all the others’.<sup>294</sup> Gobineau infers a connection between the supposed lower races and the degeneration of certain societal structures throughout history:

I have now given a meaning to the word degeneration; and so have been able to attack the problem of a nation's vitality. I must next proceed to prove what for the sake of clearness I have had to put forward as a mere hypothesis; namely, that there are real differences in the relative value of human races.<sup>295</sup>

His hypothesis provides one of the most comprehensive arguments for the process of degeneration and its inextricable association with the racial ‘Other’. Arguably, Haeckel and Gobineau were the first intellectual minds to infer the difference between ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ races using a scientific model, and soon enough, academics across Western Europe began to speak of ‘savages’ and the ‘lower races’ more freely.

Central to the burgeoning supremacist attitude within the nineteenth century was a dichotomy between cultural progress and regression, that is, evolution and degeneration. As discussed, many academics at this time sought to categorize the human race into an evolutionary hierarchy, and more often than not, Western man represented the cultural ideals of progression and civilization, whilst those from the East were considered savage and degenerate. Another anthropologist to apply a tripartite evolutionary model to the development of music was John Frederick Rowbotham, whose work is also infused with comments about racial hierarchies. He refers to:

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<sup>294</sup> Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, trans. Adrian Collins (London: William Heinemann, 1915), 151.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

...the order of three stages in the development of Prehistoric Music, the Drum Stage, the Pipe Stage, and the Lyre Stage, which, it seems to me, are to the Musician what the Theological, Metaphysical and Positive Stages are to the Comptist, or the Stone, Bronze, and Iron Stages are to the archeologist.<sup>296</sup>

Zon suggests that 'Rowbotham is unusual among British musicologists in framing his work consciously within a clearly articulated Comtian philosophical template'.<sup>297</sup> Sure enough, he appears to be alone in the fact that he articulates his use of Comte's law, but as we have seen, this was a model that also seems to apply to Spencer's work on musical evolution. Drawing upon The Law of Three Stages then, Rowbotham's theory summarizes three steps of organological development: from drum, to pipe, to lyre, or from percussion, to wind, to strings.<sup>298</sup> He conflates this idea with anthropology, attributing each of the musical stages to 'various nations and peoples'.<sup>299</sup> In this sense, we also see the way in which Rowbotham's theory of musical evolution is also concerned with the matter of race. In his three-volume work, *A History of Music*, he suggests that at 'the bottom of the ladder', are 'the Veddahs of Ceylon, the Mincopies of the Andamans, and the inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego, who have no musical instruments at all', whilst drum music is largely ascribed to – in his opinion – the slightly more advanced of the primitive nations:

We find the Drum to be the only musical instrument known among the Australians, the Esquimaux, and the Behring's Nations generally, the Samoyedes and the other Siberian tribes, and, until a comparatively recent date, the Laplanders.<sup>300</sup>

Attempts to differentiate the East and the West were articulated in music through exotic, sensual depictions of the Orient, and the popularization of themes such as eroticism and savagery. *Salome* is a prime example of the emergent orientalist trend,

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<sup>296</sup> John Rowbotham, *A History of Music, Vol. 1* (London: Trübner & Co. 1885), xii-xx.

<sup>297</sup> Bennett Zon, 'From "Incomprehensibility" to "Meaning": Transcription and Representation of Non-Western Music in Nineteenth-Century British Musicology and Ethnomusicology' in *Europe, Empire, and Spectacle in Nineteenth-century British Music*, ed. Rachel Cowgill and Julian Rushton (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2007), 190.

<sup>298</sup> Rowbotham, *A History of Music*, xii-xx.

<sup>299</sup> Zon, 'From "Incomprehensibility" to "Meaning"', 105.

<sup>300</sup> Rowbotham, *A History of Music*, xiii.

drawing upon the ‘sensuality, terror, promise, sublimity, idyllic pleasure [and] intense energy’, which Edward Said highlights as the foremost concepts of the nineteenth-century orientalist movement, and are particularly evident within Salome’s dance.<sup>301</sup>

### **Orientalism in The Dance of the Seven Veils**

The opening bars of the dance’s introduction feature a prevalence of timpani and snare drum, and interestingly, throughout the opera, a tambourine sounds upon each reference to Salome’s dance. These elements call to mind Rowbotham’s treatise on musical evolution, which deemed percussion to be representative of savagery, and by association, degeneration. The dance also sees the use of various orientalist devices, which function alongside connotations of perverse corruption, allowing Salome’s performance to encapsulate the essence of nineteenth-century xenophobia. In his 1942 work *Reminiscences of the First Performances of my Operas*, Strauss wrote, ‘I had long been criticizing the fact that operas based on oriental and Jewish subjects lacked true oriental colour and blazing sun’.<sup>302</sup> John Mackenzie refers to *Salome* as the ‘apotheosis of worldly decadence’,<sup>303</sup> and the dance certainly evokes this feel, as the composer portrays what he thinks of as ‘true oriental colour and blazing sun’ during Salome’s salacious unveiling.<sup>304</sup> For example, the oboe counter-melody emphasizes the Eastern character of the music: elongated notes preceded by rapid, elaborate ornamentation denote the stereotypical music of the exotic snake charmer:



Fig. 18: Strauss, *Salome*, Vocal Score, 138.

The music is also littered with augmented seconds – evocative of Middle-Eastern music and its associated allure. Holloway comments on the combination of these

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<sup>301</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Vintage, 2001; f.p.1979), 118.

<sup>302</sup> Quoted in Charles Osborne, *The Complete Operas of Richard Strauss: A Critical Guide* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.: 1992), 41.

<sup>303</sup> MacKenzie, *Orientalism*, 162.

<sup>304</sup> Osborne, *The Complete Operas of Richard Strauss*, 41.

somewhat clichéd orientalist techniques with striking modernist aspects.<sup>305</sup> For example, in addition to housing a number of orientalist features, the opening music eventually gives way to a seemingly misplaced waltz, giving some authority to Herbert Lindenberger's observation that 'the avant-gardism of the opera cannot be separated from its orientalism'.<sup>306</sup> This is just one example of Strauss's complex approach to the orientalist tradition, an artistic choice that can also be seen in his inclusion of ideas surrounding anti-Semitism, of which the next portion of this chapter addresses.

### **Anti-Semitism in *Salome***

The place of the Jews within Orientalist dialogues is vastly contested, due in part to the fact that throughout history, Jewish people have been seen as both oriental and occidental. However, in considering the opposition between the East and West within nineteenth-century imperialist discourse, it is necessary to understand the nature of each geographical sphere as a conceptual realm that exists within the mind. The treatment of East and West as notional, rather than physical entities seems to be shared by Said, who refers to anti-Semitism as 'a secret sharer' of Western orientalism despite the Jewish position as both insider and outsider.<sup>307</sup> Strauss's depiction of Jews in *Salome* seems to substantiate this argument, as he highlights the Otherness of his Jewish characters within the opera through various musical, linguistic and theatrical devices. In many ways, rather than subscribing to a vague, generalized allusion to Middle-Eastern culture, Strauss's take on orientalism conforms to Said's description of Romantic orientalism as an effort to 'revert to the stark drama...of the Christian doctrines'.<sup>308</sup> Certainly, *Salome* represents the 'violent conflicts and abrupt reversals' of the Old Testament,<sup>309</sup> but the work also sees the exposure of attitudes to nineteenth-century European Judaism. Indeed, a reading of the opera from a late nineteenth-century perspective reveals various traces of the

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<sup>305</sup> Robin Holloway, 'Salome: art or kitsch?', in Derrick Puffett, *Richard Strauss's Salome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 157.

<sup>306</sup> Herbert S. Lindenberger, *Opera in History: from Monteverdi to Cage* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 186.

<sup>307</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 27.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>309</sup> Matthew Boyden, *Richard Strauss* (Boston, MA: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 165.

toxic anti-Semitic attitudes that were emerging across contemporary Germany at this time.

The historical development of racism against Jews began with the early 'ethnic' anti-Semitism of Ancient Graeco-Roman society, and the religiously informed Christian views of antiquity and the Middle Ages.<sup>310</sup> These religiously motivated attitudes endured until the emergence of a new idea in the nineteenth century, when – in the wake of the Enlightenment – they were pushed aside in favour of more 'scientific' reasoning for the hatred of Jews. Now, the justification for this hatred was based upon the notion of a Jewish race, and in contrast to the earlier religious forms of antagonism, the new secular doctrine arose against a broader cultural backdrop of degeneration theory, social Darwinism, biological racism and Aryan supremacy. Robert Byrnes claims that 'with anti-Semitism reaching its own hysterical delirium in Europe after 1871, especially in German-speaking countries, with Nietzsche chanting the advent of the *Übermensch*...it is no wonder that the discourse of anti-Semitism absorbed the medical model of degeneration and demoted the Jew to its most abject echelons'.<sup>311</sup> Indeed, towards the end of the nineteenth century, anti-Semitism became bound up with the theories of heredity and degeneration, as ideas about social regression and racial supremacy abounded in social commentaries across Europe. In this sense, there appears to exist a central dichotomy between evolution and degeneration surrounding notions of racial difference at this time. Indeed, as Derrida's *Différance* suggests, one part of a binary opposition cannot exist without its counterpart, and as such, the existence of the inferior races was dependant upon a superior example of humanity.

In 1903, Otto Weininger's *Geschlecht und Charakter* (Sex and Character) condemned Jews as presenting 'the gravest and most formidable difficulties' of the human race, and analyzed the 'psychical peculiarity' that deemed them distinctive from Aryan man.<sup>312</sup> Throughout the work, Weininger measures the pitfalls of both Judaism and womanhood against the Aryan male prototype, thus calling to mind Nietzsche's deliberation on the *Übermensch*, and revealing that the doctrine of supremacy was innately invested in what was perceived to be the normative human

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<sup>310</sup>Jerome A. Chanes, *Antisemitism* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO Inc., 2004), 5.

<sup>311</sup> Robert Byrnes, 'Bloom's Sexual Tropes: Stigmata of the "Degenerate" Jew' in *James Joyce Quarterly* 27/2 (Winter, 1990), 308.

<sup>312</sup> Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character, authorized translation from the sixth German edition* (London: William Heinemann, 1906), 303.

type. Many operatic works at this time – particularly Wagner’s – sought to depict the ideological quest for supremacy, which typically meant the subjection of a white, male hero – the desirable and orthodox human type – to a Darwinian struggle against various ‘Others’ such as the debased lower races. Throughout *Salome*, racial stereotypes and subtle characterizations can be recognized, and contribute to what may be perceived as an elusive supremacist subtext. In Strauss’s Germany, Jews were seen as a paradigm of the lower races, and for Aryan supremacists, the Jew was the ‘historical element against which they could define themselves’.<sup>313</sup> Weininger proposed that ‘the Jewish race offers a problem of the deepest significance for the study of all races, and in itself is intimately bound up with many of the most troublesome problems of the day’.<sup>314</sup> Jews were perceived by many to be the embodiment of degenerate society, and Sander Gilman summarizes that ‘the category of *Jewish diseases* was used to create an image of the Jew as contaminated and therefore likely a contagious member of the people among whom he lives’.<sup>315</sup> Indeed, Jews gained a reputation throughout the nineteenth century for having lower birth rates, proneness to alcoholism, and higher suicide rates, amongst a number of other hereditary pathologies. Joseph Jacobs’ 1885 article *Racial Characteristics of Jews* maintained the prevalence of diabetes and haemorrhoids within Jewish communities, along with the fact that they contained ‘proportionately more insane, deaf-mutes, blind and colour-blind’ members of their population.<sup>316</sup> He also outlined their ‘insanitary mode of life, weak constitution’ and a prevalence amongst the Jewish race of ‘men unfit for military service’.<sup>317</sup> In essence, Jews were associated with dirt and disease, and were considered by many to be a distinct subset of the human race.

The anthropological attention afforded to the Jewish race by the likes of Otto Weininger and Bernard Blechmann attempted to define the distinct characteristics

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<sup>313</sup> Sander L. Gilman, ‘Salome, Syphilis, Sarah Bernhardt and the “Modern Jewess”’ in *Love + Marriage = Death: And Other Essays on Representing Difference* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 1998), 67. [For the article upon which this chapter was based, see Sander L. Gilman, ‘Salome, Syphilis, Sarah Bernhardt and the “Modern Jewess”’ in *The German Quarterly*, 6/2 (Spring, 1993), 195-211. All subsequent references to ‘Salome, Syphilis, Sarah Bernhardt and the “Modern Jewess”’ refer to the chapter cited above].

<sup>314</sup> Weininger, *Sex and Character*, 303.

<sup>315</sup> Sander L. Gilman, *The Case of Sigmund Freud: Medicine and Identity at the Fin de Siècle* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 4.

<sup>316</sup> Joseph Jacobs, ‘Racial Characteristics of Jews’ in *Science*, 6/140 (Oct. 9, 1885), 322.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, 323.

of their Otherness, all of which were ‘proven’ through a series of observations that highlighted the markers of Jewish difference through physical anthropology. Many of those who focused on these supposedly alien characteristics wrote extensively on the nature of the Jewish voice, specifically the vocal traits associated with the *Mauscheln*, which was believed to set the Jew apart from the language of European high culture, thus exposing their Otherness. In 1882, Bernard Blechmann suggested that the reason for the difference in Jewish speech was that the ‘muscles, which are used for speaking and laughing, are used inherently differently from Christians, and this can be traced....to the great difference in their nose and chin’.<sup>318</sup> His explanation of *Mauscheln* calls to mind the aforementioned use of physiognomy in the work of Haeckel and Spencer, and showcases the way in which it led to dangerously racist connotations and an epidemic of anti-Semitism throughout Strauss’s lifetime and into the era of German Nazism. Weininger’s *Sex and Character* combined these physical elements with supposed mental traits in an attempt to reveal the true meaning of the difference of Jewish speech:

Just as the acuteness of Jews has nothing to do with true power of differentiating, so his shyness about singing or even about speaking in clear positive tones has nothing to do with real reserve. It is a kind of inverted pride; having no true sense of his own worth, he fears being made ridiculous by his singing or by his speech.<sup>319</sup>

Along with nose-shape, scent, and gait, the Jewish voice was thought to be one of the most discernible signifiers of racial difference. The depiction of Jewish characters in opera often saw representations of the *Mauscheln*, and for Jean-Jacques Rousseau, it was the presence of *Mauscheln* ‘in music that most represented racial difference’.<sup>320</sup> In a similar vein, Wagner’s 1850 article *Das Judenthum in der Musik* (Judaism in Music) includes a lengthy discussion on the matter of the Jewish voice, and his

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<sup>318</sup> Bernhard Blechmann, *Ein Beitrag zur Anthropologie der Juden* (Dorpat: Wilhelm Just, 1882), 11, quoted in Sander L. Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 13.

<sup>319</sup> Weininger, *Sex and Character*, 324.

<sup>320</sup> Ronald Rodano and Philip Bohlman, *Music and the Racial Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 14.

extended deliberation on the nature of Jewish song is reminiscent of Spencer's paradigm of musical evolution:

Now, if the aforesaid qualities of his dialect make the Jew almost incapable of giving artistic enunciation to his feelings and beholdings through *talk*, for such an enunciation through *song* his aptitude must needs be infinitely smaller. Song is just Talk aroused to highest passion: Music is the speech of Passion. All that worked repellently upon us in his outward appearance and his speech, makes us take to our heels at last in his Song, providing we are not held prisoners by the very ridicule of this phenomenon.<sup>321</sup>

In *Salome*, the contested conversation amongst the five Jews in Scene Four is described by Gilman as Strauss's attempt to 'represent the *Mauscheln* of excited Jews in artistic form'.<sup>322</sup> Gilman highlights the almost exclusive use of the oboe for its 'thin, whining sound' and its historical association with Jewishness in music.<sup>323</sup> The Christian soldiers voice their distaste for the behaviour of the Jews: the first soldier refers to them as 'howling' like 'wild animals', his vocabulary calling to mind the parallel drawn between the 'lower races' and animals. In response, the second soldier explains, 'They're Jews there. They are always so. They quarrel about their religion.' The stereotype of the argumentative Jew has long been used as a stock character in literature and theater, and has endured from Roman times, to Shakespeare, and into the nineteenth century. In *Salome*, the Jews' leitmotif is one of chaos and discord, which creates the impression of a caricatured depiction of the particularity of the Jewish voice, whilst calling to mind the stereotype of the argumentative Jew:



Fig. 19: Strauss, *Salome*, Vocal Score, 179.

<sup>321</sup> Richard Wagner, *Judaism in Music and Other Essays*, trans. William Ashton Ellis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999; f.p. 1894), 86.

<sup>322</sup> Gilman, 'Salome, Syphilis, Sarah Bernhardt and the "Modern Jewess"', 133.

<sup>323</sup> Sander L. Gilman, *Disease and Representation: The Construction of Images of Illness from Madness to AIDS*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 170.

The discordance of the leitmotif reflects Strauss's own belief that Jews 'sang the purest atonality'.<sup>324</sup> In addition, in comparison to 'the firm diatonicism of Jokanaan',<sup>325</sup> it highlights Wagner's consideration of the alien nature of Jewish song. In this sense, the Jews' music is also reminiscent of the opposition of the degenerate Other and the *Übermensch* – who in this instance, is arguably represented by Jokanaan, the 'proper' Christian male.

In Scene Four, the Jews' argumentative quintet, in which they dispute the validity of Jokanaan's claims to have seen the Messiah, evokes a familiar sense of commotion and dissonance, as Strauss incorporates a number of musically contradictory themes. According to Karen Painter, Strauss 'appropriates polyphony...through free dissonance and unusual scoring' thus rendering the music 'alien'.<sup>326</sup> The voices enter one by one, each spouting a different, conflicting musical idea, once again calling to mind the stereotype of the argumentative Jew, and also highlighting the 'otherness' of the Jews' music. Wagner draws a comparison between the alien elements of Jewish speech and the peculiarity of their music, stating:

Just as words and constructions are hurled together in this jargon with wondrous inexpressiveness, so does the Jew musician hurl together the diverse forms and styles of every age and every master. Packed side by side, we find the formal idiosyncrasies of all the schools, in motleyest chaos.<sup>327</sup>

In this sense, the music of the Jews' quarrel certainly reflects elements of public discourse on Jewishness around the time of *Salome's* composition. Interestingly, Herod's participation in the quintet has attracted much consideration in *Salome* literature. His voice is the highest in register, thus calling to mind the stereotype of the 'squeaking' Jewish voice, as suggested by Wagner.<sup>328</sup> Adolph Jellinek writes something along similar lines in his suggestion that 'bass voices are much rarer than

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<sup>324</sup> Richard Strauss, quoted in Puffett, *Richard Strauss: Salome*, 143.

<sup>325</sup> Sander L. Gilman, 'Strauss, the Pervert, and Avant Garde Opera of the Fin de Siècle' in *New German Critique*, 43 (Winter, 1988), 57. [Though I worked specifically from the article, see also 'Strauss and the Pervert' in *Reading Opera*, ed. Arthur Gross and Roger Parker (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 306-27].

<sup>326</sup> Karen Painter, 'Contested Counterpoint: "Jewish" Appropriation and Polyphonic Liberation' in *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 58/3 (2001), 215.

<sup>327</sup> Wagner, *Judaism in Music and Other Essays*, 92.

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

baritone voices among the Jews'.<sup>329</sup> Following the disagreement, Herod's musical role apparently continues to represent the 'jarring dissonance' of the Jews' musical character, thus contrasting with the 'diatonicism that announces Jesus' power to raise the dead'.<sup>330</sup> Gilman's suggestion that musically, Herod is portrayed to be 'no more than another Jew' certainly rings true, but the King's conformity to Jewish stereotypes stretches beyond his music.<sup>331</sup>

As discussed, Herod can also be seen as one of the opera's 'mad' characters: perhaps a telling choice on Strauss's part, for Jews were viewed as an example of the effects of hereditary degeneration, and as discussed, were believed by many to be more susceptible to disease and mental illness. Theodor Gomperz wrote to his sister in 1886 stating: 'looking around our family circle, there are not too many bright points...everywhere...irritable and excited nerves – the inheritance of a very old and civilized race'.<sup>332</sup> The ideas of the inheritance of mental and physical weakness within Jewish families meant that the Jews were one of the most visible Others of the time, but they were also associated with certain sexual stigmas. This was the case for many so-called 'Eastern' Others, and in 1875, Théodule-Armand Ribot claimed that 'In the East, the harem, with its life of absolute ignorance and complete indolence, has, through moral and physical heredity led to a rapid decay of various nations'.<sup>333</sup> In many ways, his comment encapsulates the widespread belief that the sexual behaviour of the racial Other resulted in their degeneracy, and vice versa. With regards to anti-Semitic ideas, many thought the Jews' vulnerability to mental illness to be the consequence of incest and abnormal sexual tendencies. The idea of dangerous Jewish sexuality 'haunted the pseudo-scientific literature written against the Jews during the nineteenth century' – a genre which also came to include arguments about the susceptibility of Jews to mental illness.<sup>334</sup> Incest was a prevalent theme within the arts, and more often than not, portrayals of incest were reserved for Jewish characters – for example, in Thomas Mann's *Wälsungenblut*

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<sup>329</sup> Adolph Jellineck, *Der Jüdische Stamm: Ethnographische Studien* (Vienna: Herzfeld und Bauer, 1869), quoted in Jonathan M. Metz and Suzanne Poirie, *Difference and Identity: A Special Edition of Literature and Medicine* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 57.

<sup>330</sup> Gilman, 'Strauss, the Pervert', 57.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

<sup>332</sup> Theodor Gomperz, quoted in: Sander L. Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 93.

<sup>333</sup> Théodule-Armand Ribot, *Heredity: A Psychological Study of its Phenomena, Laws, Causes, and Consequences* (London: H.S. King and Company, 1875), 304.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid.

(1905), which explores the idea of sibling incest within a Jewish family. Jewish incestuous relations as an explanation for hereditary degeneration and proneness to disease is a notion that certainly seems to fit the representation of madness in *Salome*, as the opera crawls with incest and sexual perversion from the very outset. And Herod's incestuous desire for *Salome* seems not only to be the cause of her own insanity, but results also in his own paranoia. But most importantly, in recognizing the supposed link between Jewish insanity and incest, we see the way in which – for late nineteenth-century anti-Semites – sexuality was placed at the heart of discussions about Jewish degeneration.

To return to the Jews' quarrel in scene four, it is interesting to note the use of the word *beschnitten* (circumcised), which Strauss significantly includes on the highest note of the Jew's quarrel. At the time of *Salome's* composition, Jewish circumcision was a taboo subject, and it carried connotations of castration and feminization. Weininger argues that 'it would not be difficult to make a case for the view that the Jew is more saturated with femininity than the Aryan, to such an extent that the most manly Jew is more feminine than the least manly Aryan'.<sup>335</sup> His words echo the sentiment of many anti-Semitic thinkers of the time, who viewed Jewish men to be weak and effeminate, but also prone to over-zealous sexuality, and by association, a number of hereditary illnesses. As Gilman suggests, 'the charge made against Jews is that their degeneration is manifested in their perverted sexuality (and the resultant diseases signify this)'.<sup>336</sup> As such, we see the way in which Strauss's presentation of Jews within *Salome* reflects long-standing European notions of Jewishness and the associated excess of sexuality. This perceived association was not, however, limited to Men. Weininger defined the sexuality of both Jews and the female sex using three characteristics: femininity, lack of individuality and preoccupation with sex.<sup>337</sup> In this sense, *Salome* herself can also be seen as an archetype of Jewish sexuality, for in addition to the femme fatale, which functions within a misogynist cultural context, she also represents the Belle Juive (the beautiful Jewess).<sup>338</sup>

The nineteenth century saw the emergence of several stock characters which

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<sup>335</sup> Weininger, *Sex and Character*, 306.

<sup>336</sup> Gilman, 'Strauss and Racial Science', 130.

<sup>337</sup> Weininger, *Sex and Character*, 306.

<sup>338</sup> Gilman, 'Salome, Syphilis, Sarah Bernhardt and the "Modern Jewess"', 72.

embodied all the traits of dangerous femininity, including the femme fatale, the Belle Juive, and the New Woman. These characters encapsulate the noteworthy position of women within naturalist discourse on evolution, as well as within the doctrine of degeneration, and will be discussed in the next section of this chapter. The Belle Juive was a figure that embodied the perceived negative aspects of both Jews and the female sex. Like the femme fatale, this was a figure cast as a dangerous sexual predator who was prone to hysterical tendencies. As such, Salome's madness is not only linked to her stepfather's incestuous desire, but also reflects her predisposition to mental illness as part and parcel of her Jewishness. In addition, a similar mode of thinking applied stigmas to the diseases associated with femininity. As both a female and a Jew, nineteenth-century naturalist and degenerationist modes of thinking would have deemed Salome's madness to be a naturally occurring 'anomaly' and a by-product of natural selection. As such, she would most likely have been considered a lesser, or 'under-evolved' being. The next section will introduce the attitudes towards women and madness that arose out of the era's evolutionary dialogues, their contribution to the era's associated degenerationist ideas, and the way in which these attitudes are represented within the opera.

### **Sexual Selection and the Modern Woman in the Nineteenth Century**

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles Rosenberg argue that 'during the nineteenth century, economic and social forces at work within Western Europe and the United States began to compromise traditional social roles. Some women at least began to question – and a few to challenge overtly – their constricted place in society'.<sup>339</sup> Struggling against a culture hardwired towards gender inequality, modern women were deemed a hazardous and disruptive threat to the masculine hegemonic order. As discussed, from the mid-1800s, various manifestations of dangerous women began to materialize within popular culture, and were used as stock characters in a number of artistic endeavours. Often portrayed as casting aside typical feminine qualities in favour of the more masculine, these figures posed a stark contrast to the spiritually sound and physically healthy male ideal of the time. In England, the modern woman was a source of comedic entertainment throughout the 1800s. She

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<sup>339</sup> Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles Rosenberg, 'The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Woman and Her Role in Nineteenth-Century America' in *The Journal of American History* 60/2 (Sep., 1973), 332.

featured frequently in the popular journal *Punch*, whose satirical caricatures depicted the unconventional woman engaging in traditionally male activities, from hunting and sports, to politics and academia.<sup>340</sup> Physically, she was depicted either as a 'bespectacled, physically degenerate weakling, or as a strapping Amazon who could outwalk, outcycle and outshoot any man'.<sup>341</sup> The modern woman was not considered to be dangerous until the closing years of the nineteenth century, when she became known as the 'New Woman', and was perceived to be a serious threat to, and a degenerative force upon the contemporary social structures, which favoured, above all, the truly masculine. Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg maintain that 'would-be scientific arguments were used in the rationalization and legitimization of almost every aspect of Victorian life, and with particular vehemence in those areas in which social change implied stress in existing social arrangements'.<sup>342</sup> Throughout Western Europe, of all her qualities, womankind's most dangerous was undoubtedly thought to be her sexuality. The burgeoning fear of feminine sexuality can therefore be traced back to the naturalistic scientific developments of the time, and arguably has its roots in Darwin's formative work on sexual selection.

Whilst informing ideas about race and disease, and providing a framework for theories about the evolution of music, the principles of evolutionary naturalism were also vastly significant in the materialization of new ideas about women and sex during the nineteenth century. As a component of evolutionary naturalism and an offshoot of natural selection, the theory of sexual selection outlines the 'Natural selection arising through preference by one sex for certain characteristics in individuals of the other sex'.<sup>343</sup> The process, introduced in *Descent of Man And Selection in Relation to Sex*, placed emphasis not on differential survival, but on differential reproduction, and in contrast to the widely supported theory of natural selection, Darwin's theory of sexual selection has long been a source of debate. According to Malin Ah-King, 'Sexual selection was aimed at explaining the occurrence of elaborate male traits that were obviously costly in terms of survival

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<sup>340</sup> Christine Anderson, *(Per)forming Female Politics: The Making of the 'modern Woman' in London 1890-1914* (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 2008), 82.

<sup>341</sup> Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis, *The New Woman in Fiction and Fact: Fin de Siècle Feminisms* (London: Palgrave, 2002), 13.

<sup>342</sup> Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg, 'The Female Animal', 332.

<sup>343</sup> 'Sexual Selection (n.)' in OED Online, available at: [http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/natural-selection#natural-selection\\_2](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/natural-selection#natural-selection_2) (accessed 24.08.15).

and therefore impossible to explain by natural selection'.<sup>344</sup> Indeed, the occurrence of 'anomalies' or 'abnormalities' such as homosexuality and mental illness undermined the theory of natural selection, and by association, discredited the scientific (and masculine) foundation of contemporary nineteenth-century society. Ah-King notes that although Darwin himself recognized the importance of female choice in the process of sexual selection, many contemporary scientists dismissed its significance, 'because females were assumed to be passive in the mating process'.<sup>345</sup> On the one hand, the theory did indeed encourage the dismissal of the significance of women in the reproduction process, but the concept of sexual selection also contributed to the growing belief in the danger of women. With the ability to make a choice – to either accept or deny a sexual partner – women gained power, and this empowerment posed a threat to the male-dominated hierarchical society.

The earlier description of Aryan Man's Nietzschean striving towards the highest plane of humanity – into the dominance of the *Übermensch* – was most commonly perceived to be a battle against the racially degenerate, but was also a struggle against the female sex. For nineteenth-century degenerationists, women represented the un-evolved, even primitive portion of humanity, and as such, were analogous to the lower races. The mission to rise above degenerate 'Others' was adapted into the 'repudiation of [the] female half' by the likes of Weininger.<sup>346</sup> In his chapter 'Woman and Her Significance' Weininger describes women as follows:

Woman is neither high-minded nor low-minded, strong-minded nor weak-minded. She is the opposite of all these. Mind cannot be predicated of her at all; she is mindless. That, however, does not imply weak-mindedness in the ordinary sense of the term, the absence of the capacity to "get her bearings" in ordinary everyday life. Cunning, calculation, "cleverness," are much more usual and constant in the woman than in the man, if there be a personal selfish end in view. A woman is never so stupid as a man can be.<sup>347</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> Malin Ah-King, 'Sexual Selection Revisited – Towards a Gender-Neutral Theory and Practice: A Response to Vandermassen's "Sexual Selection: A Tale of Male Bias and Feminist Denial"' in *European Journal of Women's Studies* 14/4 (November 2007), 343.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

<sup>346</sup> Kramer, 'Fin-de-siècle fantasies', 141.

<sup>347</sup> Weininger, *Sex and Character*, 253.

In addition to emphasizing the 'mindlessness' of women – which reflects the belief in a lack of progress which ultimately separated the Other from the Aryan male – Weininger comments on the cunning and cleverness of the female sex, which, he argues, they manipulate for one sole purpose: to encourage sexual encounters. For Weininger, 'woman is engrossed exclusively by sexuality, not intermittently, but throughout her life; that her whole being, bodily and mental, is nothing but sexuality itself'.<sup>348</sup> In a similar vein, Cesare Lombroso, along with many other subscribers to social Darwinism, saw women – like the racial Other – as underdeveloped, and therefore susceptible to disease and corruption. In his 1895 evaluation of the 'female offender', Lombroso argues that 'women have many traits in common with children; [...] their moral sense is deficient; [...] they are revengeful, jealous, inclined to vengeance of a refined cruelty'.<sup>349</sup> He goes on to assert that these so-called childlike tendencies are provoked by sexual desires, claiming:

In ordinary cases these defects are neutralized by piety, maternity, want of passion, sexual coldness, by weakness and an undeveloped intelligence. But when a morbid activity of the psychical centres intensifies the bad qualities of women, and induces them to seek relief in evil deeds; when piety and maternal sentiments are wanting, and in their place are strong passions and intensely erotic tendencies, much muscular strength and a superior intelligence for the conception and execution of evil, it is clear that the innocuous semi-criminal present in the normal woman must be transformed into a born criminal more terrible than any man.<sup>350</sup>

Lombroso's belief that the evil tendencies associated with women 'produce results proportionately greater' when a woman is sexually 'awakened or excited'<sup>351</sup> highlights the fact that sexuality was seen as a notoriously hazardous phenomenon during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This danger was underscored

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<sup>348</sup> Ibid., 260.

<sup>349</sup> Cesare Lombroso, *Female Offender* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1958; f.p. 1895), 151.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

when sex was associated with the worrisome 'Other'. Women at this time became increasingly synonymous with the notion of the degenerate female Other, and like Jews, they were believed to be perilous harbourers of perverse sexual energy. The empowerment they sought through harnessing their sexuality threatened the very foundations of the rational and masculine mindset of the time.

### **The Protagonist as Villain and Victim: Dangerous Sexuality in *Salome***

Kramer refers to *Salome* as 'the extreme personification of the era's fears of female sexuality, fears so disruptive that they played themselves out in scenarios of fetishism and castration'.<sup>352</sup> In the play, Wilde certainly casts his Salomé seamlessly into the role of the dangerous seductress, and her character is described by Heather Braun as encapsulating at once the 'Hebrew Artemis, and exotic dancer, and a seductive assassin'.<sup>353</sup> Each of these personae culminates in the character of the femme fatale, who, as a temptress and an agent of destruction, provided a stereotype of female sexuality at its most dangerous, and in this sense, is an embodiment of nineteenth-century attitudes towards women. Strauss's opera also offers a dramatization of the misogynistic considerations of femininity, as Salomé's insanity manifests itself in animalistic licentiousness. Salomé's character alludes to the type of femininity disparaged by Weininger and Lombroso, and whether or not this was an intentional implication on the composer's part, the protagonist's sexuality can also be seen to serve a paradoxical function: rather than rebutting her womanhood, it acts as a tool for female empowerment, as discussed in my summary of Abbate's 'Opera; Or, The Envoicing of Women' in Chapter One. Toni Bentley argues that Salomé's became a body so frequently scrutinized, and a source of such enthrallment, that there soon emerged the so-called 'Salome craze', which exploded across Europe at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>354</sup> She goes on to describe the way in which - in the wake of this trend - women turned to wielding their sexuality - 'as both shield and sword' - to gain power, as 'the antidote for being so long suppressed in so many ways'.<sup>355</sup> In seducing Herod, Salomé's nakedness allowed her

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<sup>352</sup> Kramer, *Opera and Modern Culture*, 130.

<sup>353</sup> Heather Braun, *The Rise and Fall of the Femme Fatale in British Literature, 1790-1910* (Lanham, Maryland: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2012), 117.

<sup>354</sup> Bentley, *Sisters of Salome*, 33-34.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

to become more visible, more conspicuous than 'any woman before her'.<sup>356</sup> An archetypal femme fatale, she uses the power and influence bought by her sexuality to obtain everything she wanted, and in turn, was considered a most dangerous bi-product of the degenerative aspects of contemporary society.

In contrast, however, Braun also recounts the innocent Salome, who, at the beginning of the dramatic action, has 'yet to comprehend the potency of her sexual power; she learns quickly how to use this power to secure the unlikely object of her fetishistic sexual desires'.<sup>357</sup> But whilst leading men to their deaths – assuming or unassuming, regardless of age or class – she embodies the re-imagining of the femme fatale alongside her antithesis, the femme fragile. This contrasting role is brought to light through further consideration of Kramer's view of the early narratives by Flaubert and Huysmans, which – as discussed in Chapter One – he believes were significant in inspiring the plots of Wilde and Strauss in the creation of a 'fundamental two-part pattern'.<sup>358</sup> The first part centres around Salome's dance, whilst the second concerns her relationship to Jokanaan's severed head, and both, according to Kramer, are defined by reversals. He argues that 'each reversal also yields an affirmation of indestructible masculine power. Thus Salome comes to appear, not as the personification of castrating feminine sexuality, but as the reverse, a figure for precisely those threatening aspects of the feminine that the masculine can subjugate'.<sup>359</sup> In this sense, she is also able to assume the roles of both villain and victim. But whether viewed as the virginal victim or the salacious seductress, Salome seems to be doomed by her burgeoning sexuality, and more importantly, by the men who fear it; she thus becomes 'an unassuming virgin turned seductive tyrant'.<sup>360</sup>

Bentley is amongst the many writers who refer to the growing fear of female sexuality across Europe and America in the 1800s, alongside the "medical" preoccupation with the virus of female insatiability'.<sup>361</sup> Her comment reminds us of the significance of contemporary science in the development of the perceived danger of women. She laments that however women were viewed at this time, they

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<sup>356</sup> Ibid.

<sup>357</sup> Braun, *The Rise and Fall of the Femme Fatale*, 117.

<sup>358</sup> Kramer, *Opera and Modern Culture*, 129-130.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>360</sup> Braun, *The Rise and Fall of the Femme Fatale*, 117.

<sup>361</sup> Bentley, *Sisters of Salome*, 23.

were seen to be at risk of seeking independence and therefore transgressing the boundaries of traditional femininity. She concludes that 'this dilemma was synthesized in Salome: the oversexed virgin'.<sup>362</sup> In this sense, Salome can be viewed as both villain and victim, and is a character defined by binary oppositions. Mary Simonson articulates this idea in her consideration of various American representations of Salome around the turn of the twentieth century. She suggests that these characters 'entangle the working class with the elite, conceptions of black femininity with those of whiteness, entertainment with uplift, naughtiness with promises of purity, comedy with liberation, and power and emancipation with misogyny'.<sup>363</sup> Strauss's protagonist offers a similar medley of binary conflicts: weakness and strength, love and death, self-preservation and self-destruction, sanity and insanity. It is also interesting to recall the existence of musical oppositions in *Salome*, which were discussed in the previous chapter, such as the conflict between C and C# tonal centres, and the use of chromaticism in representations of the protagonist's madness.

Many nineteenth-century psychologists sought to define the differences between the male and female psyche, and in a sense, this ties in with yet another example of binary opposition in the opera. Whilst women were situated on the supposedly feminine side of irrationality, which incorporated silence, nature and the body, the masculine temperament was thought to centre around reason, discourse and culture.<sup>364</sup> Within the opera, this opposition is portrayed musically by the contrast between the 'normative' sphere of diatonicism – which arguably represents masculinity – and the chromaticism of Salome, which represents the feminine. As discussed in Chapter Three, it is possible that Salome's chromatic musical language is symbolic of her madness, which is linked to her sexuality, and therefore sets her apart from the opera's masculine forces. Her musical separation from the masculine world of reason – which is best showcased through consideration of the 'Salome Chord' in Chapter Three – highlights her insanity as a means through which she assumes the role of the femme fragile. As an unassuming virgin and victim of incestuous desire, she is doomed to succumb to psychosexual turmoil, insanity, and

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<sup>362</sup> Ibid.

<sup>363</sup> Mary Simonson, *Body Knowledge: Performance, Intermediality, and American Entertainment at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 28.

<sup>364</sup> Showalter, *The Female Malady*, 3.

eventual death. In this sense, madness is revealed to be a perilous symptom of womanhood, not only for Strauss's Salome, but for a vast majority of the era's female population.

### **Madness: Femininity's Most Dangerous Symptom**

Alongside the development of ideas surrounding female sexuality, there emerged a way of thinking that blurred the boundaries between overzealous sexual desire and mental illness. Just as sexuality was a symptom of degenerate society, so too was madness, and both were accredited in the main to the female population. This was the era in which 'madness became synonymous with womanhood'.<sup>365</sup> Jane Ussher's consideration of the scientific field during the medicalization of madness reminds us that it was first and foremost a male-dominated community, which 'brought with it the power to define reality'.<sup>366</sup> Secondly, she recounts the inability of women to penetrate the world of science, and their associated exclusion from the power it provided.<sup>367</sup> As such, women were subjected to scientific scrutiny, and we are thus reminded of Rosenberg-Smith and Rosenberg's suggestion that scientific reasoning at this time often took place in light of the upheaval of traditional social structures. Kramer suggests that the fascination with science and medicine sought to 'legitimize new forms of control by men over the bodies and behaviours of women', and his words certainly hold true for many of the foremost psychological texts of the time.<sup>368</sup> In 1895, Freud and Breuer's *Studies in Hysteria*, in addition to introducing the psychoanalytical technique, corroborated the supposed connection between madness and the female sex, and instigated a growing interest in sexual pathologies and neuroses during subsequent years.

The concept of hysteria had its roots in the Hippocratic medicine of Ancient Greece, and like many of the naturalistic themes within this dissertation, came to newfound recognition set against the backdrop of nineteenth-century science. For the era's modern scientists, hysteria, along with many other nervous diseases – presumably including that which plagued Strauss's mother, Josephine – were

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<sup>365</sup> Jane Ussher, *Women's Madness: Misogyny or Mental Illness?* (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 64.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>368</sup> Kramer, 'Culture and Musical Hermeneutics: The Salome Complex', 269.

thought to be inherently feminine afflictions, with direct roots within the female body itself. Neurological scientists such as Charles Bell, Marshal Hall and Johannes Müller revived the notion that hysteria was linked with the womb and the female reproductive organs, bringing it up-to-date with the theory that there was a link between the nervous system and the female reproductive system. Elaine Showalter summarizes the era's scientific reasoning for women's madness in her renowned work, *The Female Malady*:

Women were more vulnerable to insanity than men...[T]he instability of their reproductive systems interfered with their sexual, emotional, and rational control. In contrast to the rather vague and uncertain concepts of insanity in general which Victorian Psychiatry produced, theories of female insanity were superficially and confidently linked to the biological crises of the female life-cycle – puberty, pregnancy, childbirth, and menopause – during which the mind would be weakened and the symptoms of insanity might emerge. This connection between the female reproductive and nervous systems led to the condition nineteenth-century physicians called 'reflex insanity in women.' The 'special law' that made women 'the victims of periodicity' led to a distinct set of mental illnesses that has 'neither homologue nor analogue in man.' Doctors argued that the menstrual discharge in itself predisposed women to insanity.<sup>369</sup>

As 'the product and prisoner of her reproductive system', the nineteenth-century woman was deemed *naturally* inferior: irrational and emotional, it was in her very nature to become plagued by the female malady.<sup>370</sup> Foucault, like Showalter, also examined the process by which women's madness was linked to their physicality during the nineteenth century, and describes the 'hysterization of women's bodies' in the first volume of his *The History of Sexuality*.<sup>371</sup> He defines this as 'a process whereby the feminine body – qualified and disqualified – as being thoroughly saturated with sexuality; whereby it was integrated into the sphere of medical

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<sup>369</sup> Showalter, *The Female Malady*, 55-56.

<sup>370</sup> Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg, 'The Female Animal', 335.

<sup>371</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1991), 104.

practices, by reason of a pathology intrinsic to it...'.<sup>372</sup> Women's mental illness, therefore, was inextricably linked to their sexuality, which in turn, was an intrinsic product of their nervous system. Madness was part and parcel of the female body. As Lombroso's evaluation of the female offender has shown, women at this time were deemed to be unstable, overly emotional beings, trapped inside of an equally pathological, even subhuman body. Indeed, the perceived absence of rationality and self-control rendered womankind as something not quite human: the process of evolution from animals was not yet complete, and as such, women were believed to 'possess the intellectual qualities that distinguish Man from brute in only the most limited and imperfect sense'.<sup>373</sup>

Scull explains the widely accepted conception that 'women were different, inferior specimens of humanity, a weaker sex whose inferiority was rooted firmly in their reproductive biology'.<sup>374</sup> Without the detrimental effects of the female reproductive system, nineteenth-century man possessed the ability to surpass his biological determinism. Unlike his female counterpart – whose body was deemed to be pathological and natural – he was 'governed by rationality and capable of transcending the fact of his embodiment'.<sup>375</sup> Therefore, the New Woman, the *femme fatale* and the *Belle Juive*, whilst deviating from the conventional stereotypes of their gender, also demonstrated the inborn anomaly of female instability and the predisposition for hysteria that was rooted in the very fact of their female body.

The representation of Salome's madness certainly adheres to contemporary naturalistic understandings of hysteria, particularly with regards to the female body. As discussed, this period saw increasing captivation with the concept of dangerous femininity, and more often than not, the women who embodied it were hysterical. Peter Brooks notes that 'the hysterical body is...from Hippocrates through Freud, a woman's body'.<sup>376</sup> Salome's body is significant throughout the opera in encapsulating the notion of the female form as a vessel for insanity, and in addition, Strauss encapsulates several distinctly nineteenth-century fears about the

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<sup>372</sup>Ibid.

<sup>373</sup>Kelly Hurley, *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the Fin De Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 119.

<sup>374</sup> Scull, *Hysteria: The Disturbing History*, 271-72.

<sup>375</sup> Hurley, *The Gothic Body*, 119.

<sup>376</sup>Peter Brooks, *Body and Voice in Melodrama and Opera in Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera*, ed. Mary Ann Smart (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 120.

production of dangerous sexual urges. Salome's libido-driven frenzy suggests the concept of the 'wandering womb', which originated from the Hippocratic medicine of Ancient Greece, but endured into nineteenth-century understandings of women's mental illness. The term refers to mental and physical distress brought about by a deprivation from intercourse, whereby the uterus would rise in a quest for the 'nourishment' provided by sexual stimulation.<sup>377</sup> Although this theory was eventually discredited, the female constitution was still considered to be weaker and more vulnerable to hysteria into the 1900s.

Unmistakably, depictions of insanity at this time were linked to the scientific observation of the female anatomy, and so, the nineteenth century also saw a growing fascination with the female body in art. The Dance of the Seven Veils is arguably the most significant example of exposing and scrutinizing the female body within Strauss's opera. Linda and Michael Hutcheon consider the historical importance of dance within operatic works, and its dualistic purpose in representing, on the one hand, order and discipline (as in baroque and classical ballet, where the emphasis is on physical control), and on the other, 'madness and possession, excess and transgression'.<sup>378</sup> Salome's iconic dance is a pinnacle of the staged body showcasing 'concepts of social transgression, medical neurosis and gender empowerment'.<sup>379</sup> The protagonist's dance certainly adheres to each of these factors, which come to light through her progression from impulsive virgin to insatiable narcissist: both her body and her true character are unveiled. The music of the dance acts as a microcosm of the entire opera, as each of the principal themes are utilized in the creation of orchestral frenzy, mirroring Salome's increasingly ambiguous mental state. Herod's incestuous lust and Salome's fatal attraction result in her ultimate undoing, and the dance seems to symbolize descent into madness. In this sense, we see the way in which Strauss's *Salome* encapsulates nineteenth-century ideas about women and madness in way that reflects the era's naturalistic context – firstly through the implication that her insanity is part and parcel of the female body, and secondly through the use of such a body to represent her distinctly feminine psychosis.

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<sup>377</sup>Sander L. Gilman, *Hysteria Beyond Freud* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 118.

<sup>378</sup>Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon, 'Staging the Female Body: Richard Strauss's *Salome*' in Smart, *Siren Songs*, 204.

<sup>379</sup>Ibid.

### **Closing Remarks**

The evolutionary dialogues discussed in the previous chapter provided an intellectual setting from which a darker side of the enlightenment emerged. From nascent ideas about heredity and degeneration, these ideas developed into a dark underbelly of nineteenth-century scientific enquiry that blamed various manifestations of the Other for the decay of civilized society. This chapter has outlined the dialogues of xenophobia and misogyny that emerged from the belief in the 'primitive' and 'unevolved' members of the human race, and the ways in which these Others were deemed to be more susceptible to mental illness. In addition, this chapter sought to demonstrate the exhibition of these ideas within *Salome*, and the ways in which the opera's representation of madness calls to mind the discourse of degeneration. The work's orientalist aspect alludes to the growing anti-Semitic attitude that was becoming rife throughout nineteenth-century Europe, and by association, also calls to mind the view that 'within the Jew's sexuality is hidden the wellspring of their own degeneration'.<sup>380</sup> As such, *Salome's* degenerationist subtext also circles back to ideas about female sexuality and madness, and thus, we begin to see the way in which the psychological concepts of Strauss's era were penetratingly multi-faceted. As ever, Strauss's intentions can only be speculated upon, but a reading of *Salome* from a naturalistic perspective reveals an abundance of allusions to the contemporary intellectual landscape. The opera's naturalistic subtext perhaps suggests the composer's interest in the era's scientific developments, along with his possible engagement with an increasingly pervasive cultural mentality that had its roots in the naturalist movement. But whether intentional or not, the incorporation of naturalistic ideas within *Salome* is both complex and illuminating, and enables an understanding of the work as a reflection of the tempestuous cultural climate of Strauss's Germany at the turn of the twentieth century.

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<sup>380</sup> Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), 159

## Conclusions

Broadly speaking, this thesis aimed to explore ideas about madness that are rooted in scientific theory, and how these ideas are reflected in representations of madness in opera. More specifically, it questioned: to what extent do dialogues of nineteenth-century scientific naturalism manifest themselves in the depiction of madness in Richard Strauss's *Salome*? In combining existing *Salome* literature with a number of scientific, psychological, and historiographical sources, I ultimately sought to dissect the opera from a distinctively multi-disciplinary perspective; to uncover the significance of the nineteenth century's rich intellectual environment; and to reach new conclusions about the representation of madness in the work.

In Chapters One and Two, the examination of the historical role of madness in both science and the arts revealed the foundations of a relationship between these seemingly disparate fields. This union arguably reached something of a high point within the nineteenth century, as operatic depictions of madness drew from the era's emergent psychological trends, therefore mirroring the world of science in a new and innovative way. Written at the turn of the century, *Salome* seems to represent the pinnacle of this relationship, as the opera contains a distinctive subtext of the nineteenth century's most prominent scientific ideas.

The era's evolutionary theories provided a new method for investigating human emotion and the etiology of madness, and eventually allowed 'mental illness' to emerge as a new concept. In Chapter Three, this naturalistic discourse was revealed to be a vastly wide-reaching phenomenon, and the application of evolutionary dialogues to the field of music facilitated some interesting discoveries of naturalistic themes within *Salome*. Indeed, the representation of emotion and character in the work certainly calls to mind certain developments in the field of physiognomy, whilst the use of recitative resonates with Spencer's model of musical development from speech to song. Nonetheless, these examples were by no means proved to be the composer's intention. Rather, this section of my thesis offered a way of reading and receiving *Salome* that highlighted traces of ideas that emerged from within scientific discourse. Michael Whitworth's suggestion that 'one should not expect the whole of a physical theory to find itself incorporated into a literary work' proved extremely useful here, and allowed me to understand the existence of

certain scientific imagery, or allusions to naturalistic thought as fragments that have been 'subjected to processes of condensation and displacement'.<sup>381</sup> The exploration of scientific naturalism in Chapter Three also illuminated its translation into the artistic sphere, which was expounded with an analysis of the opera's application of naturalistic trends in music and theatre. At this stage, it seemed clear that Strauss's opera – whether intentionally or not – alludes to several of the era's most influential scientific theories. Nonetheless, in order to arrive at a more rounded understanding of the role of madness within *Salome*, I needed to dig deeper into the naturalist mind-set that prevailed during the nineteenth century, and uncover further knowledge about the way in which madness was explained and understood at the time.

Chapter Four therefore included an additional examination of the era's evolutionary discourse, the attitudes that emerged out of it, and the extent to which its key concepts informed attitudes towards madness at the time of *Salome's* composition. This chapter explored the antithesis of evolutionary thought, and explained madness from the perspective of degenerationist dialogues. I examined the place of these ideas within the aforementioned musical evolutionary paradigms, revealing that the language of xenophobia emerged within several explanations of musical development. More importantly, this chapter illustrated the importance that was placed upon society's various Others, and the responsibility they supposedly held for the collapse of healthy society. In Chapter One, my attempt to define the concept of madness revealed the significance of the so-called 'norm', along with its interdependence upon the 'abnormal', therefore laying the groundwork for my considerations in Chapter Four. The role of Nietzsche's *Übermensch* – in providing a paradigm of the ideal human type – allowed me to gauge an understanding of the contemporaneous norm, and was therefore essential to constructing an image of its various antitheses: the racial Other, the diseased, and the feminine. The representation of these figures within *Salome* enabled me to reach an enhanced understanding of the opera on the basis of both anti-Semitic and misogynist viewpoints.

Overall, this dissertation has illuminated the fact that that no artistic endeavour exists apart from the society in which it was written. My research, in

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<sup>381</sup> Whitworth, 'The Physical Sciences', 46.

constructing a specific cultural narrative, has uncovered the ways in which the concept of madness was formed and reconfigured within the climate of nineteenth-century naturalism, and how these ideas filtered into the representation of madness in *Salome*. This narrative is decidedly selective in its focus, and it does not seek to establish intentionality on the part of the composer, but nonetheless, exploring the opera from the perspectives of both science and music has enabled me to derive a more insightful understanding of the work within its rich cultural context. In future operatic studies, the exploration of ideas emerging within the word of science could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of a work's cultural context, and by association, lead to a deeper appreciation for the opera as a whole.

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