Mara IVAN-MOHOR, B.A. Hons. in Illustration,
Anglia Ruskin University, United Kingdom &
Ioana MOHOR-IVAN,"Dunărea de Jos" University of Galati, Romania

ICONOGRAPHY, AESTHETICS AND GENDER: CONSTRUCTING AND DECONSTRUCTING THE 'SALOME' MYTH

The origin of the Salome story resides with two New Testament accounts on John the Baptist's beheading offered in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark [Dimova, 2016: 20].Fragmentary as they are, the two build the portrait of a young Galilean princess, who, instructed by her mother, Herodias, dances to please her stepfather, Herod Antipa, in order to trick him grant Herodias's wish of having the prophet executed:

> "At that time Herod, the tetrarch, heard about the fame of Jesus; and he said to his servants, "This is John, the Baptist, he has been raised from the dead; that is why these powers are at work in him." For Herod had seized John and bound him and put him in prison, for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; because John said to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." And though he wanted to put him to death, he feared the people, because they held him to be a prophet. But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company, and pleased Herod, so that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter." And the king was sorry; but because of his oaths and his guests he commanded it to be given; he sent and had John beheaded in the prison, and his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother". [Matthew, 14:1-12, q. in Neginsky, 2013: 8]

As Knapp asserts, the biblical story reworks the "Great Mother" archetype split in its "mother/daughter" manifestations, where

> "Herodias is viewed as a destructive, heartless mother figure, while Salome […][is a] mirror image of her mother as a young girl [who] functions as a shadow force: a performer, dancer the instrument of her mother's will." [1996: 179]

In addition, the daughter's name is eluded by the textual record being simply remembered as "the daughter of Herodias", and it is "[h]er namelessness and subsequent lack of identity [which] establish her as a kind of blankness

in the text" [Bucknell, 1993: 505]. But, with the young woman's demand of John the Baptist's severed head offered to her on a silver plate the story starts to evolve into myth: the mother's conniving and lethal part recedes into the background, while the dancing daughter advances centre stage, and is subsequently identified by the exotic name of Salome(since the first-century *Jewish Antiquities* compiled by Flavius Josephus) [Lowe, 2019:2] and transformed into a representation of the female Other.

If man-made images of women are generally dual, on the one hand projecting them as idealized versions of male desired femininity, be it the Muse, the pure Madonna, the caring wife or archetypal mother, at the opposing end one finds the negative pattern, born out of male fears or resentment of women's subverting (sexual) power, as source of death and evil, malign enchantress, seductress, or *femme fatale,* epitomised by Eve's biblical parable or Pandora's and Circe's classical myths[Tyson, 2006: 85-9]. And Salome's tale certainly complied with the second paradigm, because

> "[i]n keeping with the androcentric view of the Evangelists, […] [m]other and daughter became the prototypes of the archetypal all-consuming sensual female which the ascetic John reviled as the irremediable foe of a budding Christianity."[Knapp, 1996: 180]

Given the prolonged span of Salome's depictions in various artistic media (from literature to visual and performative arts) which arches from medieval to present-day renditions, it is safe to assume that this figure has retained its potency as an enticing cultural icon which lends itself to being constructed, deconstructed or reconstructed in keeping with the particular contexts which shape artistic vision(s).

For example, in the anonymous *The Beheading of John the Baptist* from the so-called Sinope Gospels dating from the 6th century A.D., an early visual engagement with the Salome myth presents the severed head joining the mother and the daughter in the murderous act, while Herod himself is displaced to the second plane, a passive background figure "cleaned" as such from the consequences of the Baptist's death. In subsequent religious iconography, as the cult of Saint John rose to prominence in the early Middle Ages, the "daughter" and her "dance" became conveniently identified with lustful and pagan (Jewish) femininity, Salome's sensuality merging with the destructive power of a tempting but evil dance to be contrasted with the Baptist's spirituality. Kate Bolton's study [2014] on the changing period's attitudes to dance as reflected through Salome's visual representations

charts as a recurrent theme the portrayal of this figure with a reptile-like quality, as she is dancing on her hands, engaged in acrobatic, contorted snake-like movements, or imagined like a hybrid creature, "part serpent part human, …suggesting malevolent, pagan origins and conjuring up primitive fears" [54], in short "the embodiment of Satanic temptation" [52], such as the carvings adorning the Venetian Basilica of San Zeno, the French cathedral of Rouen or the German one of Cologne illustrate.

Figure 1. The beheading of John the Baptist [detail of a folio from the *Sinope Gospels*]. Wikimedia Commons [online]. Available at: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:SinopeGospelsUnknFolioBeheadingOfJohnBaptist.jpg> [Accessed 12 September 2022].

Figure 2. Giotto di Bondoni, *Feast of Herod* [fresco painting], c. 1320. Web Gallery of Art [online]. Available at: <https://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/g/giotto/s_croce/1peruzzi/index.html> [Accessed 10 April 2020].

At the dawn of the Renaissance, Salome and her dance received new inflections once an Italian innovator like Giotto di Bondoni plays down the erotic aspect of the misogynist myth and returns to the traditional narrative of the young girl who dances in exchange for the prophet's head, to then bequeath it to the mother. The famous fresco entitled *Feast of Herod* (c. 1320), which decorates the Peruzzi Chapel of Santa Croce in Florence presents a panelled narrative by means of two sequenced images: foregrounded by its central position, enlarged volume size within the compositional structure and focused light (suggested by Giotto's use of warm hues of red, ochre, yellow), we are offered a dissection of the festive banquet chamber, with its left side open to disclose a tower that juts in the background. Among a group of three figures sitting at the dining table, Herod is distinguished by wearing the crown (a visible sign of royal power) and is given weight by his forthright

and massive pose. His head is slightly tilted to the left, and his eyes seem transfixed into the severed head (placed at the centre of the figural ensemble) which a back-standing soldier (signalled as such by helmet and tunic)offers on a charger as if serving dish. To the right, first in a cluster of three standing figures facing left, towards the severed head, Salome is clapping her hands at the soldier, an index of both power and eagerness to get her prize. The second image, on the right, completes the narrative: a smaller chamber (cast in shadow by Giotto's employment of cold hues of green) frames two women figures exchanging the head on the platter; the kneeling one is visually identified as Salome, while the larger figure, whose adorned red dress and pose resemble Herod's, is her mother. Separated by sequential narrative and time frames, the two images are, nevertheless, connected through the central placement of the severed head (symbol of faith and martyrdom) which appears in both, by the dark sky arching the two scenes and by the flowing robe of Salome (singled out through the hue that mixes the cold and warm tones of the composition) which links her figural representations across the two scenes. Though her dance is absent (but alluded to through the fiddler figure on the left), Giotto's Salome remains instrumental in the brutal act, functioning as index of death and spiritual darkness as well as warning against the evils of women empowerment.

Figure 3. Benozzo Gozzoli, *The Dance of Salome* [tempera on panel], c. 1462. Web Gallery of Art [online]. Available at:<https://www.wga.hu/html_m/g/gozzoli/5various/3salome.html> [Accessed 10 April 2020].

Figure 4. Guido Reni, *Salome with the Head of Saint John the Baptist* [oil on canvas], 1639-42. Art Institute Chicago [online]. Available at: <https://www.artic.edu/artworks/11434/salome-with-the-head-of-saint-john-the-baptist > [Accessed 15 April 2019].

In subsequent representations, like Filippo Lippi's *The Feast of Herod: Salome's Dance* (c. 1460), Benozzo Gozzoli's *The Dance of Salome* (c. 1462), or Giorgio Vasari's *The Salome's dancing* (1545 – 1546), both Salome and her dance achieve centrality, being "literally moved into the middle of paintings where up to now the head of the prophet on the platter was placed" [Šinclová, 2016: 451]. At the same time, Salome is a far cry from the figuration of the evil temptress of the Medieval period:

> "Inspired by the revival of Classicism, Renaissance artists portrayed Salome as a beautiful dancing nymph, the symbol of feminine beauty." [Neginsky, 2013: 29]

Yet, the Later Renaissance artists shift once more the focus of the myth, as they concomitantly foreground the severed head and downplay Salome's dance, such as exemplified by Guido Reni's *Salome with the Head of Saint John the Baptist* (1639-1642). In addition, such images also become

> "fragrant with Oriental perfumes and aromatic spices, mysterious in their hinting at distant rituals and pagan rites"[Bolton, 2014: 58],

a trend which will culminate in the nineteenth century, when the dancing princess achieves its iconic contours as the "goddess of decadence." [Elaine Showalter q. in Šinclová, 2016: 460] across the arts.

Illustrative in this respect is one of the most famous paintings of Gustave Moreau, *Salome Dancing before Herod,* first exhibited in 1876 in Paris. The composition is highly complex, with the scene of Salome's Dance set against a luxuriant, exotic background representing the sumptuous interior of Herod's palace. In the farthest plane, light filters through three vaulted windows revealing the heavily ornamented arches and vertical columns that seem to multiply by three in perspective. In the mid plane, a sculptural group formed by three human figures towers over the massive, vaulted throne on which the king is seated, while three statuettes (shaped in the form of eagles) adorn it. The same threesome pattern guides the arrangement of the servant female figures in the second plane, while in the forefront, slightly to the left, a second source of light focalises the figure of the dancer, which is aligned with the vertical lines that structure the composition. In the right corner, a black hound seems to be surveying the scene. The mood is that of a dream, amplified by the artistic interplay of weird light and line through which the viewer fluctuates between precise contours and nebulous forms. Moreover, the same fluidity is achieved by having the natural forms and human figures

echo the scene's architectural structures, while the predominantly cold colour palette (greens, blues, reds, ochres) decomposes in infinite shades, tonalities, patterns. Against this fluid and phantasmal setting, Moreau's Salome, sumptuously bejewelled yet half naked in her aethereal robes, seems stopped in her dance motion: on her points, one hand extends out in a forceful gesture, while the other touches a lotus flower to her forehead. Associated with the Egyptian goddess Isis, the lotus flower is both decoration and emblem: a phallic symbol, an allegory of sensual beauty, a metonym of mystic power or an index of death (since it was widely used in Egyptian embalming practices). Salome becomes thus an ambiguous icon: seductive and repulsing at the same time, embodiment of light and darkness, she incarnates the "archetypal temptress," "the courtesan" and "the priestess" [Crooke, 2016: 120-1] of occult but destructive love – in short, "the femme fatale".

Figure 5. Gustave Moreau, *Salome Dancing before Herod* [oil on canvas], 1876. Artsy Net [online]. Available at: <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/gustave-moreau-salome-dancing-before-herod> [Accessed 10 April 2020].

Figure 6. Armand Point, *Dance of Salome* [oil on canvas], 1898. Wikipedia [online]. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armand_Point#/media/File:PointArmandDanceOftheSevenVeils.jpg> [Accessed 15 April 2020].

Salome as the fierce 'femme fatale' reverberates through many other paintings of the time, such as Georges Roche Grosse's *Salome Dancing Before King Herod* (1887), Armand Point's *Dance of Salome* (1898), Georges Des

Vallière's *Salome* (c.1905), Franz von Stuck's *Salome Dancing* (c. 1906), or Julio Borrell Pla's *Salomé* (c.1910), but it would be an illustrator, Aubrey Beardsley, who will reinvent Salome once more in his black and white works which construct "an empowered woman, coldly aware and in control of her sexuality"[Sarah Bielsky q. in Primorac, 2009].

Using line-block printing, Beardsley produced in 1894 a series of illustrations to accompany the English publication of Oscar Wilde's play, *Salome,* which, for the first time, offered a three-dimensional representation of the biblical princess for long held captive in the written and visual frames of tradition. As Bentley remarks, Wilde liberated Salome on the stage, giving "this woman a voice and a dance" [2002: 20], at the same time at which he "gave Salome what she had heretofore lacked: a personality, a psychology all her own" [2002: 28], providing the definitive contours to "a cultural icon in fin-de-siècle society" [Rowden, 2016: 1]. While tampering with the biblical myth, by presenting Salome not as the docile daughter manipulated by Herodias, but as "an existentially lonely, misunderstood lover of ideal beauty"[Dierkes-Thrun, 2011: 16] who fatally yearns for the prophet, as embodying the otherworldly ideal of purity she craves to possess:

> "I am at hirst for thy beauty; I am hungry for thy body; and neither wine nor fruits can appease my desire." [Wilde, 1986: 347]

Lost in her passion, and consumed by desire Salome can only fulfil her fixation on kissing Jokanaan's mouth, that "band of scarlet on a tower of ivory" or "pomegranate cut with a knife of ivory"[Wilde, 1986: 328], by possessing his bodiless head, the trophy she claims for performing the dance that Herod stages, only to discover that "love hath a bitter taste" [Wilde, 1986: 348] before being crushed by the guards' shields. It is this ending that allows Wilde to provide Salome with

> "an awesome, triumphant moment in the spotlight before she is killed, investing her with perverse sublimity and empathy" [Dierkes-Thrun, 2011: 25],

outweighing the tragedy of the prophet's death by that of princess herself.

As such, another key moment in Wilde's symbolist drama was represented by Salome's *Dance of the Seven Veils*, which, in performance, became an uninhibited demonstration of female self-expression, so that it soon turned into "a cult symbol"[Glenn, 2000] for early twentieth-century women, who appropriated both the "deadly archetypical female" [Bentley,

2002:34] and her dance as a source of empowerment and liberation. Ironically, the play itself, while transforming Salome into an autonomous, wilful woman, gives no description for the dance, except for a brief indication: "[SALOME dances the dance of the seven veils]" [Wilde, 1986: 341]. Nevertheless, on an inscribed copy of this play which Wilde offered to Beardsley, the playwright wrote the following:

> "For Aubrey: for the only artist who, besides myself, knows what the dance of the seven veils is, and can see that invisible dance."[in Bentley, 2002: 31]

Nonetheless, Beardsley's graphic equivalent for Salome's dance (with the deflationary title of *The Stomach Dance*) seems disconcerting to the viewer: with white feet anchored in a black ink space which occupies more than one third of the composition and splits the vertical perspective, Salome's figure rises on the left side to the top of the image, drawn with an alternation of thin lines and compact black areas against the white background. In the opposite bottom corner, completely sunk in the dark area, a grotesque dwarfish figure representing Herod plays a fiddle, being delineated by the reverse technique of alternating compact white areas with thin lines (like the negative of a photographic print). Despite her slightly-arched body and pointed feet (reminiscent of Moreau's *Salome*), the princess's pose seems static. What draws our attention are the voluptuous forms of her body revealed through the thin folded pants she wears, the round curves of her belly with the naked navel and the slightly asymmetrical sensual breasts which are exposed to the viewer. Contrary to this overt display of feminine sexuality, her small angular face with arched eyebrows, tilted eyes and a stern mouth has masculine features; this is surrounded by a massively drawn hallo of black hair from which four strands raise like tentacles to open in floral patterns (maybe an echo of Moreau's lotus flower.)Also tentacle-like, one fold of her veils wrapped through the split of her pants juts out(like a phallus) above her waist to eject a stream of small round flowers (either grenadines or roses) which makes a large loop to the left. A similar pattern made up of petals and small flowers appear on her black corset and springs out of her legs. Imposing through stature and starring right in the eyes of the viewers, Salome is thus a composite sign, in which female sexuality blends with male power and control, while the symbolism of her representation fuses classical and opposing feminine archetypes like Medea (tentacles), Isis(lotus flower) or the Virgin Mary

(roses) with the contemporary "New Woman" trope - perceived at the time as "mannish" [Buzwell, 2014] aggressor of the male-imposed norms. Hence Salome literally buries Herod in the black area of the image, displacing him to the outer frame of the narrative of her story (redolent of Giotto's tactics of casting the fiddler out of the space of the banquet chamber).

Figure 7. Aubrey Beardsley, *The Stomach Dance* [print], 1894. The Victorian Web [online]. Available at: <http://www.victorianweb.org/art/illustration/beardsley/8.html> [Accessed 10 April 2020].

Figure 8. Luba Lukova, *Salome* [print], 1999. Graphic Art News [online]. Available at: <http://www.graphicart-news.com/women-of-the-bible-stunning-portfolio-by-luba-lukova/salome/#.XMH_gmgzY2w> [Accessed 10 April 202

Thus 'rising', Salome's story is far from being completed. The mythic heroine still dances in the contemporary context, when artists attempt to reconstruct her icon in keeping with present-day revaluations of canons. This is the case of Luba Lukova, a well-recognised woman illustrator of today, who reimagines Salome's dance in her *Women of the Bible* portfolio, which includes 24 prints originally created to provide visual anchoring for Frank Henderson's *Remembering the Women: Women's Stories from Scripture for Sundays and Festivals* (1999), aimed at re-centring the feminine presence in Western traditional biblical narratives [Papa Efstathiou, 2012].

The same as Beardsley, Lukova creates a black-and-white print, but her entire image appears like a negative. Contrary to Beardsley's profusion of precise and thin Art Nouveau-styled lines, Lukova uses thick and rough lines to build shapes (not ornaments, like Beardsley) which lose many anatomical details (reminiscent of Picasso's style.) On her points, the body facing the viewer and the head seen from the profile (like in Egyptian paintings), a gigantic smiling Salome seems to be performing a ritual, grotesque dance (legs parted in a squatting position) with the Prophet's head on the platter. Her veil is folded across the legs to fall like a curtain above the small figures (a kneeled Herod crying over John the Baptist's decapitated body which is held by Herodias) captured beneath. Thus posited, legs and veil (symbolic of her erotism and elusiveness) look like a theatrical stage on which the puppet-like characters perform their roles – a powerful conceptual metaphor implying that Salome has not only become the master-puppeteer of her story, but that both herself and her dance form a central 'performance' space from which alternative images of womanhood can be mediated.

As such, the "bold and contemporary" [Papa Efstathiou, 2012] Salome imagined by Lukova, ambivalent in its complex interplay of meanings, destabilises traditional (man-made) depictions of her myth and demonstrates how women artists can utilise, deconstruct and reconstruct problematic icons of femininity as both an expression of and a model for female empowerment.

The same refiguration of Salome occurs in Carol Ann Duffy's poem of the same title, published as part of *The World's Wife* (1999), a collection of dramatic monologues that the poet assigns to "thirty heroines, taken from history, myth, and popular film or music, [which] are transposed into contemporary Everywoman types" [Dowson, 2016: 136], who retell and revise the familiar stories from a feminine standpoint. Along with other

historically marginalised voices like those of Delilah, Mrs Lazarous, Queen Herod, Circe, Eurydice, Mrs Tiresias, Mrs Icarus or Pygmalion's Bride, Salome is allowed to speak and actively reshape both the biblical accounts of the nameless daughter through whom the mother takes her revenge upon a holy man, as well as the subsequent cultural narratives transforming her into "a potent and powerful feminine embodiment of male phobia and misogyny"[Karayanni, 2004: 107], or the "femme fatale" of the Western imaginary. Duffy's contemporary and demotic Salome wakes up after "a night on the banter" [Duffy, 1999: 58, line 23]to discover a stranger's head lying next to hers on the pillow:

> "I'd done it before/(and doubtless I'll do it again,/sooner or later)/woke up with a head on the pillow beside me/– whose? – what did it matter?" [lines 1-5]

Like Wilde's heroine, she gazes at the figure but it is not lust but curiosity that prompts her inventory-like assessment of the stranger's features:

> "Good-looking, of course, dark hair, rather matted;/ the reddish beard several shades lighter;/ with very deep lines round the eyes,/ from pain, I'd guess, maybe laughter;/ and a beautiful crimson mouth that obviously knew/ how to flatter …/ which I kissed …/ Colder than pewter." [lines 6-13]

Appropriating and ironically deflating the Wildean Salome's creation of Jokanaan as "ideal beauty", Duffy's Salome further belittles the power of male-authorised narratives by comically interrogating and confusing the names of Christian apostles turned into casual sex partners sharing her bed:

> "Strange. What was his name? Peter?/ Simon? Andrew? John? I knew I'd feel better/ for tea, dry toast, no butter,/ so rang for the maid." [lines 14-17]

Trying to recollect the night's fuzzy memories and prompted with life-changing decisions:

> "Never again!/ I needed to clean up my act,/ get fitter,/ cut out the booze and the fags and the sex"[lines 24-27],

Salome decides to "turf out the blighter" [line 29] and discover the identity of the man "who'd come like a lamb to the slaughter/ to Salome's bed" [lines 31-32].The biblical imagery reconnects the poem to its pre-texts, recasting now the woman as violent and predatory, the bed and her intimacy harmful to the man, its innocent (and pure) victim, prefiguring the decapitation that concludes Salome's traditional as well as modern stories:

"I flung back the sticky red sheets,/ and there, like I said – and ain't life a bitch –/ was his head on a platter." [lines 29-31]

Though the poem does not reference Salome's infamous dance, it still bows to the power of myth, but replaces the heroine's biblical sins with the suppression of emotions that characterises modern-day existence. In addition, Duffy's poem deconstructs the sexual binaries of the male-dominated narrative by reimagining Salome's femininity clothed in masculine assertiveness, callousness and violence, while masculinity is recast in traditionally feminine tropes associated with victimhood, passivity and dumbness.

This is a

"post-modern feminist stance with a vengeance … [which] subverts His/story into Herstory" [Lanone, 2008: 3-4]

and, similarly to Lukova's *Salome,* offers a progressive reading of a cultural icon that, for almost two thousand years, has been constantly created and recreated within a fundamentally misogynist subtext that has obscured

"the cultural, social, and political implications" [Dierkes-Thrun, 2011: 202] entailed by the "myth" of Salome.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Bentley, T., (2002). *Sisters of Salome*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London.

Bolton, K., (2014). « Salome unveiled: changing attitudes to dance in the Middle Ages and Renaissance through the figure of Salome», *Renaissance then and now: danza, musica e teatro per un nuovo Rinascimento. Atti del convegnointernazionale di studi ISI Florence, Palazzo Rucellai, 7-9 maggio 2013*, Edizioni ETS, Pisa, p. 49-64.

Bucknell, B., « On "Seeing" Salome», *ELH* , Vol. 60, No. 2, 1993, p. 503-526 [online]. Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2873388> [Accessed 2 December 2022].

Buzwell, G., «Daughters of decadence: the New Woman in the Victorian fin de siècle» [online article], 2014. Available at: <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/daughters-of-decadence-the-new-woman-in-the-victorian-fin-de-siecle> [Accessed 16 April 2019].

Crooke, P., (2016). «The Ideal and Matter: Gustave Moreau's Ambiguous Dualities», in Neginsky, R., Cibelli, D. eds., *Light and Obscurity in Symbolism*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, p. 117-131.

Dierkes-Thrun, P., (2011). *Salome's modernity: Oscar Wilde and the aesthetics of transgression*, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor.

Dimova, P., (2016). « Decadent Senses: The Dissemination of Oscar Wilde's *Salome* across the Arts», in Rowden, C. ed., *Performing Salome, Revealing Stories*, Routledge, London and New York, p. 15-48.

Dowson, J., (2016). *Carol Ann Duffy: Poet for Our Times*, Palgrave Macmillan, London and New York.

Duffy, C. A., (1999). *The World's Wife* [e-book], Picador, London.

Glenn, S. A., (2000). *Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA.

Henderson, J. F., (1999). *Remembering the Women: Women's Stories from Scripture for Sundays and Festivals,* with art by Luba Lukova, Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago.

Karayanni, S. S., (2004). *Dancing Fear & Desire: Race, Sexuality, and Imperial Politics in Middle Eastern Dance*, Wilfried Laurier University Press, Waterloo, Ont.

Knapp, B. L., «Herodias/Salome: Mother/Daughter Identification», *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, vol. 25, no. 1/2, 1996, pp. 179–202 [online]. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23536994> [Accessed 2 December 2022].

Lanone, K., «Baring Skills, Not soul: Carol Ann Duffy's Intertextual Games», *Contemporary British Women Poets*. 6.1/2008. DOAJ [online]. Available at: <https://journals.openedition.org/erea/94?gathStatIcon=true&lang=en> [Accessed 20 October 2022].

Lowe, D., «The Dance Unveiled. Considering the myth of Salome in early modernity» [online article]. Available at: <https://www.academia.edu/24324598/The_Dance_Unveiled_Considering_the_myth_of_Salome_in_early_modernity> [Accessed 12 April 2019].

Neginsky, R., (2013). *Salome: The Image of a Woman Who Never Was*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Papaefstathiou, M., «Women of the Bible, Stunning Portfolio by Luba Lukova» [online article], 2012. Available at: < http://www.graphicart-news.com/women-of-the-bible-stunning-portfolio-by-luba-lukova/salome/#.XMH_gmgzY2w > [Accessed 10 April 2019].

Primorac, Y., «Illustrating Wilde: An examination of Aubrey Beardsley's interpretation of *Salome*». *The Victorian Webb* [online], 2009. Available at: <http://www.victorianweb.org/art/illustration/beardsley/primorac.html> [Accessed 16 April 2019].

Šinclová, S., «Shifting Scenes and Characters: Representations of Salome and the Story of Beheading of John the Baptist in Visual Art». *Visual Past,* 2016, pp.

449-468 [online]. Available at: < http://www.visualpast.de/archive/pdf/vp2016_0449.pdf > [Accessed 12 April 2019].
Tyson, L., (2006). *Critical Theory Today. A user-friendly guide.* 2nd ed., Routledge, London and New York.
Wilde, O., (1986). « Salome». In *The Importance of Being Earnest and Other Plays*, Penguin Books, London, p. 315-348.

ICONOGRAPHIE, ESTHÉTIQUE ET GENRE : CONSTRUCTION ET DÉCONSTRUCTION LE MYTHE DE « SALOMÉ »

Résumé: Étant donné la longue durée des représentations de Salomé dans divers médias artistiques (de la littérature aux arts visuels et performatifs), du Moyen-Âge à nos jours, on peut supposer que cette figure a conservé son pouvoir en tant qu'icône culturelle séduisante qui se prête à être construite, déconstruite ou reconstruite en fonction des contextes particuliers qui façonnent les visions artistiques. Le présent article analyse les représentations visuelles de la princesse galiléenne, de « La fête d'Hérode » de Giotto di Bondoni à « Salomé » de Luba Lukova, par rapport aux documents textuels verbaux fournis par les Évangiles de Matthieu et de Marc, « Salomé » de Wilde et le poème du même titre de Carol Ann Duffy, en les plaçant à l'intersection des interprétations iconographiques, esthétiques et sexospécifiques de la princesse galiléenne et de ses proches, Il s'agit de les placer à l'intersection des interprétations iconographiques, esthétiques et sexuées du mythe afin de prouver que leurs significations superposées et souvent différentes ou opposées sont à la fois inhérentes à la nature du texte visuel et fonctionnent comme un moyen d'imposer, de déstabiliser ou de renforcer les rôles culturels associés à la féminité.

Mots-clés: *mythe de Salomé, représentation visuelle, iconographie, genre, féminité.*

Abstract: Given the prolonged span of Salome's depictions in various artistic media (from literature to visual and performative arts) which arches from medieval to present-day renditions, it is safe to assume that this figure has retained its potency as an enticing cultural icon which lends itself to being constructed, deconstructed or reconstructed in keeping with the particular contexts which shape artistic vision(s). The present paper analyses visual renditions of the Galilean princess from Giotto di Bondoni's "The Feast of Herod" to Luba Lukova's "Salome" against verbal textual records provided by the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, Wilde's "Salome" and Carol Ann Duffy's poem of the same title by placing them at the intersection of

iconographic, aesthetic and gendered interpretations of the myth in order to prove that their layered and every so often differing or opposing meanings are both inherent to the nature of the visual text and work as a means to impose, destabilise or empower cultural roles ascribed to femininity.

Keywords*: Salome myth, visual representation, iconography, gender, femininity.*

Acknowledgements

Portions of text from this paper were developed by Mara Ivan-Mohor under the supervision of Alan Drummond, Senior Lecturer in Illustration, Cambridge School of Art (to whom deep gratitude is expressed) and submitted in assessment for the 'Understanding Images' course module under the title "Women depicted – women depicting: the 'dancing' Salome from Giotto di Bondoni's *The Feast of Herod* to Luba Lukova's *Salome*". A first draft of this paper was presented by the authors at the 8th Edition of SCDS-UDJG, 18th and 19th of June 2020, under the title "The Dancing Temptress: visual representations of the Salome myth".