

The Seduction of Femininity: A Critical Scrutiny of Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*

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ABSTRACT

The present inquiry deals with social, cultural and literary construction of femme fatale image. This portrait has not been simply the subject of literature, but rather, other artistic genres such as architecture, drawing, painting and moving pictures have also utilized the concept of femme fatale over the past 200 years. This seductive image of woman arouses readers' curiosity to penetrate the notion of woman's body and gender issues in modern world. Besides, modernity brought with it male consternation, uneasiness and susceptibility as to the subject of female individuality. The orthodox theoretical discourses which affiliate female body with something cryptic, vicious and deplorable are being falsified by virtue of the interminable disputes as for tempting image of women that legitimize assigning them an inferior status. That being said, the patriarchal system considers femme fatale as "other" with an unpleasant impression. This study will scrutinize the dialogues in the play to depict the aforementioned arguments by having an eye on Victorian perception of woman. What is more, it will explore diverse social, cultural, political as well as historical circumstances under which Oscar Wilde authored *Salomé*. Having employed feminist theory, the current analysis mirrors another dimension of women's serious vicissitudes they had to put up with back then which imperceptibly laid the foundation for reawakening women all around the world of their natural and basic rights they had been deprived for centuries under patriarchy.

Keywords: Female seduction, Feminism, Oscar Wilde, Other, *Salomé*, Sexual dissident, Victorian era

INTRODUCTION

England was heavily impacted by traditions during the 19th century, but there were also significant changes in the structures of public life, especially as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Following the revolution, feminism made its presence known. Feminism as a divisive idea was developed toward the end of the 19th century and is made up of a network of interconnected and crossing ideas, challenging problems, and long-standing demands. Feminism, which was full of unanticipated growth stages, deadlocks, and effect dynamics, captured the ways in which thoughts, people, and texts boundaries to create various

intersections. As a result, one of feminism's most complex and wide-ranging influences has been on literature and literary criticism.

Researchers ultimately began to focus on the fundamental concerns when feminist concepts like separation, absence, morality, trauma, the position of the body, the nature of desire, and other crucial challenges in modern science and philosophical questions were taken into account. Women's writing began as a socio-cultural phenomenon as a result of their discovery of public spaces, manifesting itself in the formation of literary writings that describe the environment and cultural activities through the eyes of women. This is to mention that feminist movements are reflected in literature. Women writers defend women's rights to have free choice and free fate in their works, presenting society with new styles of behavior along with fresh ideas.

One of the last phases in the destruction of the classical canons was the emergence of modern feminist literature in the late 1980s and early 1990s as a literary response to social, political, and historical upheavals in a globalizing world (if the feminist word "masculinocentric" and "hegemonic literatures" are used). The reconstruction of the feminine in literature has emerged as one of the most important avenues for the establishment of a democratic society and the justification of artistic plurality, not only in the political but in the cultural realm as well.

Around the turn of the 21st century, feminist literary criticism had a significant impact on literary theory and society. Numerous works by women authors have been discovered and studied, not only in the context of the best literature in the world but in the literary traditions of many different nations. Feminist analysis has also been applied to a substantial number of male and female classical writers from antiquity to the present, leading to new readings of the classical literary tradition. In light of postmodern notions of the distributed subject, particularly performative gender identity in literature, late 20th-century feminist theory proposes nonessentialist artistic initiatives of female subjectivation. Oscar Wilde, on the other hand, is one of the most significant authors of the 19th century.

In contrast to many other writers who in the 1890s dealt with traditional characters and themes, Oscar Wilde authored challenging plays in the traditional culture of England; nonetheless, he was fiercely ridiculed, blamed, and even imprisoned for his conflicting thoughts, sexual orientation and morals. Even contemporary works on Wilde, despite the playwright becoming a popular topic of academic study in the last couple of decades, simply serve to deepen the mystery rather than to shed light on it.

Because the majority of critical essays on Wilde's life rather than his writing were devoted to it for a considerable amount of time, his literary talents were mostly disregarded. When literary culture took a new turn in the 1970s, this situation drastically changed. Strong, authoritative, and discourse-related links emerged as major themes in literary history, culminating in wildly divergent readings of Wilde. Although some academics view Oscar Wilde as a proto-feminist, other analytical studies describe him as a misogynist. Reactions to Oscar Wilde's play in relation to feminism are incredibly fractured.

Discussion

The Historical Development of Feminism

The issue of how women are portrayed in Wilde's plays will be widely examined in the subsections that follow this study. Women have struggled for social, political, and economic equality throughout history because of patriarchal society's tremendous disparity. Even while modern feminism differs from the First Wave, which was active in the 19th century and concentrated on issues like property, marriage, education, and parenting, it continues to fight for equal rights for women in opposition to male viewpoints. From the 19th century to the present day, there have been four waves in the development of the feminist movement. Women were still battling for the right to vote and the ability to own property as autonomous individuals when Second-Wave feminism first began in the middle of the 20th century, but as this movement developed, it became exclusively for white women in western civilization. Third-Wave feminism started including women of various races when it was first formed. With the aid of the Me Too and other campaigns, Fourth-Wave feminism is now primarily a resistance to violence against women and sexual harassment.

Feminist critics have examined a pervasive binary opposition based on gender that reduces women to objects that uphold the authority and significance of something that is distinctly masculine. With her assertion that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman,"¹ famous 20th-century feminist author, Simon de Beauvoir, maintains that while sex is a biological issue, gender is culturally learned. Women were always subordinate to males in family life, the workplace, and even in social interactions outside the house, according to the typical patriarchal perspective of this socially manufactured image of female sex. Because the man earns his income and the woman lacks the means to support herself, she is left with little alternative but to submit to the male. A single woman was not accepted, and she had no right to cohabitate and procreate with a man without getting married.

To have children, the woman needed to be married. If she did not, she would face severe punishment. Men may, however, make their own decisions and would not be penalized for doing so. Additionally, the male was entitled to use the entirety of the woman's heritage. Even the father had some control over the kids. On the other side, because this door was closed to them, the woman was unable to have a profession. They were only permitted to work in menial positions. Women were not accepted to universities and could only get a lower level of education than men. Having been subjected to this immense degree of injustice, women began to question their own identities, values, and positions in the last quarter of the century, after typically adhering to these same traditional ideas and behaviors until the end of the 19th century. Even the British Parliament has acknowledged the discrimination and inequality that women face in many spheres of society, and at the same time, literary works featuring female protagonists have begun to explore these issues from many angles.

Femme Fatale and Its Cultural Formation

Historical events, gender norms, body image discourses, and political initiatives to create sexual difference all have an impact on how societies perceive evil. The femme fatale image is without a doubt one of the most prevalent representations of the historical, cultural, and political relationship built between gender, evil, and body. "Femme fatale" is originally a French term.

¹ De Beauvoir. S, (1949, p. 295)

This phrase was initially used, as is well known, in the 19th century. When the term is examined etymologically, the words *femme* and *fatal(e)* are translated as "producing death, mortal, deadly, lethal" in the Latin language, respectively. The phrase "*femme fatale*" refers to a dangerously seductive woman who entices men into promiscuity and perilous or intimate circumstances.

The second definition of the term is a woman who charms and mystifies men with her aura. A product of the patriarchal structure's worries, fears, and reflexes against the subjectivity of women, which is more prevalent in the public sphere with modernization, the *femme fatale* has been the subject of works produced in many different literary and visual fields, including painting, literature, mythology, history, cinema, and television from the 19th century to the present. Traditional ideological tools that associate the female form with mysticism, evil, and catastrophe have been recreated through discourses surrounding this image. In addition, gender-based policies that target women have tried to acquire a discursive validity using these strategies. With that being said, the *femme fatale* has been portrayed as a feminine-other who is associated unfavorably with the patriarchal society's gender view. The triangle of sexuality, catastrophe, and death has been used by cultural representations to comprehend the new women of modern life. These depictions show the *femme fatale* as a figure with seductive sexual allure and wicked intentions who destroys the social standing, financial security, and moral principles of the men she seduces.

Femme fatale, on the other hand, is not a "perfect" wife or an "excellent" mother. The *femme fatale* is portrayed as a figure that threatens the family, marriage, motherhood, and social norms and values based on these concepts, which leads to the conclusion that she is both a lethal trap and a danger in and of herself. In essence, the *femme fatale* feeds two ideologies that instruct women in what not to do and men on which women to avoid. *Femme fatale* is a disobedient, alluring, enigmatic, cunning, and sometimes even lethal figure that preys on men via placing them at the center. With the emphasis on the man being buried in tragedy, the *femme fatale* picture alludes to the disintegration of social ideals and moral conventions, particularly the concepts of family and marriage that the man is at the heart of and embodies. Analyzing the conceptual and cultural creation of the *femme fatale* throughout history is another important topic. It is a phenomenon that we witness throughout history that women are fictionalized around an image of evil and a typology that brings about social catastrophe. This picture's most well-known representation is probably the witch or witchcraft phenomena.

Besides, there are depictions of bats, vampires, and cats. Tens of thousands of women were judged and executed on the basis of the accusation of witchcraft during the Middle Ages, particularly in the 16th and 17th centuries, which reveals all the ideological underpinnings of a gender-shaped evil cult. This phenomenon dates back to ancient times and reached its height during that time. The lady who is demonized as a witch is typically characterized as a person who mistreats children, endangers people's livelihoods, and brings about disease and death in the community. The *femme fatale* is how this witchcraft phenomena has been modernized. Although the *femme fatale* is universally perceived as a witch archetype, a closer look may reveal a hidden meaning which is making the *femme fatale* a representation of the evilness of women. The *femme fatale* represents the historical embodiment of women, in which they are perceived as a threatening potential opponent to men and as a sexual and reproductive tool. The *femme fatale* demonstrates the Victorian ideology regarding genders and sexuality and it

mirrors the stereotypical representation of women since the dawn of history until the current day. Moreover, the femme fatale reveals the fear of visible women during the modernist period who have managed to have a cultural and political voice. Modernization enables women to have more power and rights, and it also empowers them to have a better financial life and encourages them to fight for what they deserve.

In brief, the femme fatale only came into existence as a result of the fears of women's power in a masculine society. For this reason, the femme fatale is always shown as an immoral character who is willing to commit crime, and attached to concepts with negative connotations, such as death, darkness, and chaos. Literary works contribute to implanting the femme fatale phenomenon in the minds of people in a society. One of these works is *Salomé* by Oscar Wilde which is a one-act play. It can be considered as the most striking among other works for the following reasons; firstly, it is a pioneering work that has the main religious and ideological motifs of the femme fatale image. Second, *Salomé* was conceived in the womb of the gender culture of the Victorian era. Third, the character of *Salomé* is an active one rather than passive.

The Depiction of "Femme Fatale" in *Salomé*

Wilde wrote *Salomé* during the last months of 1891 as a French musical and it was published in France two years later. It was also translated into English in 1894 and was posthumously performed in England in 1905. Wilde could not even watch the performance of his play in France during his life as he was in prison when it was premiered. The story of Judaea princesses in the Bible was what inspired Wilde to write the play. Despite being inspired by a biblical story, *Salomé* turned to be a passionate and obsessive love story. *Salomé* received a huge amount of criticism as it was considered a radical play at the time it was written. The audience, who was majorly Victorian, did not approve of the female character that gave the play its name as it has characteristics that were considered a volition of the gender norm of the Victorian era. The disapproval led to banning the play and censoring the play by the British theaters.

Salomé, a play Wilde composed in the soul of art for art's sake, brought about strong disagreements and was censored since the heroine uses her sexual identity to attain her own yearnings and targets rather than serving her sexuality to the male sovereignty as is required of a conservative woman. *Salomé* could be understood in this manner as a feminist who sets an example for the revolutionary female character in contrast to the tradition - bound woman of English culture until the late nineteenth century, and also as a female who makes the most her sexual attractiveness as a tool for her intent. By adjusting this religious story to the play, Wilde makes a few changes. He depicts *Salomé* as a lady who acts by herself and pursues her own wishes, instead of a woman who takes orders from her mother. She performs dancing for the King Herod even though her mother opposes it. She does not waver to use the charm of her femininity to achieve her aim. For that reason, many theater critics have stressed that *Salomé* has a femme fatale aspect. In the Christian tradition, *Salomé* is portrayed as an image of the seductive side of women.

This play consists of the events that take place at a banquet in King Herod's palace to which the city's notables are invited. King Herod weds Herodias. He chains John the Baptist and throws him into the jail, who said that this marriage was not ecclesiastically true and legal. Herod holds a resentment against John the Baptist, who opposes this marriage, but he cannot kill John the Baptist because he is regarded as a holy figure and afraid of him. As a sacred figure, John the

Baptist is someone Herod both reveres and hates. *Salomé*, who gives the name to the theater play, is the daughter of Herodias. Herod, the ruler of Judea and Herodias's husband, admires Salomé and the Young Syrian is in love with this beautiful woman. At the beginning of the play, Salomé comes to the banquet hall and the Young Syrian constantly tells his friend, who is the page of Herodias, how beautiful she is! At the same time, Herod cannot take his eyes off Salomé.

It has already been mentioned that many characters in the play cannot take their eyes off Salomé. Therefore, the Young Syrian appears first. He spends a lot of time staring at Salomé and is charmed by her beauty that the Page of Herodias has to repetitively warn him by saying that "You are always looking at her. You look at her too much. It is dangerous to look at people in such fashion. Something terrible may happen " (Wilde, 1971, p. 319). One of these dialogues takes place with the words: The page of Herodias: " Do not look at her. I pray you not to look at her. The Young Syrian: She is like a dove that has strayed ... She is like a narcissus trembling in the wind ... She is like a silver flower " (Wilde, 1971, p.322). Oscar Wilde is inspired by Herodias's daughter while Wilde's *Salomé* character is an active and powerful subject. The conning, ambition, demonic plans, and being active condition attributed to the character of the femme fatale have influenced cultural representations both in Wilde's character and in many subsequent fields. Salomé 's first words in the play contain significant points about the fictionalization of the femme fatale:

Salomé: I will not stay. I cannot stay. Why does the Tetrach 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. I know what it means. In truth, yes, I know it. (Wilde, 1971, p.322)

While the Young Syrian attempts to talk and get closer to Salomé, the voice of John the Baptist in the cistern is heard. Salomé says that her mother has said horrible things about John the Baptist, but she insists on seeing him. All the soldiers, especially the Young Syrian, oppose Salomé's request to see John the Baptist. Salomé says the following words to persuade the Young Syrian:

Salomé: " You will do this thing for me, Narraboth, and tomorrow when I pass in my litter beneath the gateway of the idol - sellers I will let fall for you a little flower, a green flower " (Wilde, 1971, p. 324). The Young Syrian: Princess, I cannot, I cannot " (Wilde, 1971, p. 325).

Salomé [smiling]: You will do this thing for me, Narraboth. You know that you will do this thing for me. And tomorrow when I pass in my litter by the bridge of the idol - buyers, I will look at you through the Muslim veils, I will look at you, Narraboth, it may be I will smile at you. Look at me, Narraboth, look at me. Ah! you know that you will do what I ask of you. You know it well ... I know that you will do this thing. (Wilde, 1971, p. 325)

The Young Syrian orders the soldiers "let the prophet come forth...The princess Salomé desires to see him" (Wilde, 1971, p. 325) Upon Salomé's use of the expressions "I will smile at you" and "I will look at you" we witness the condition of the Young Syrian could not resist Salomé . Salomé succeeds in making the Young Syrian think that she is in love with him by using expressive words. In this context, the attention is drawn to how the femme fatale character- by extension, women can manipulate men in a way that they can get what they want. In the scene where the soldiers bring John the Baptist, Salomé admires him and says she wants to know him more. Salomé introduces herself to John the Baptist by saying, Salomé: "I am Salomé, daughter

of Herodias, Princess of Judaea" (Wilde, 1971, p. 326). John the Baptist replies to Salomé with the words, Jokanaan: "Back! Daughter of Babylon!² Come not near the chosen of the Lord. Thy mother hath filled the earth with the wine of her iniquities, and the cry of her sins hath come up to the ears of God" (Wilde, 1971, p. 326). Jokanaan: "Cursed be thou! Daughter of an incestuous mother, be thou accursed!" (Wilde, 1971, p. 329) Another important point in the play is that Salomé's mother, Herodias, is also depicted as a femme fatale. As can be seen in these words, John the Baptist hates Salomé's mother Herodias. The reason for the hatred is that Herodias married Herod, who is her husband's brother.

John the Baptist frequently targets Salomé's mother Herodias for her sin. What John the Baptist sees as forbidden is Herod's marriage to Herodias. However, John the Baptist's anger is mainly directed towards Herodias and Salomé because she is her daughter and not Herodias. Here we can see an example of using woman as the "sexual scapegoat" rather than the man. The femme fatale is presented as a being; seductive, attractive, and instinctively inclined to make her body sinful. Hence, we witness the collective reaction to sexual temptation being organized around women. This reaction is built around the stereotype of innocence attributed to the man and the sinful body image attributed to the woman. This body image, coded as a source of evil, also relies on and driven from the female representations in religious mythology. On the other hand, from John the Baptist's point of view, Salomé is as evil as her mother. The notion of the transference of evil between mother and daughter and that sin is carried by the blood, appears in John the Baptist's reaction to Salomé. This situation is understandable if we put in the consideration the way of thinking at that period. Immorality is culturally transmitted from family to child.

The body is biologically a means of character transmission. The continuity of religious, cultural and literary works keeps alive the myth of identifying women as evil. The following dialogue between Salomé and John the Baptist reveals the points where misogynistic elements in culture originate the construction of the femme fatale: Salomé: Jokanaan, I am amorous of thy body! Thy body is white like the lilies of a field that the mower hath never mowed. Thy body is white like the snows that lie on the mountains, like the snows that lie on the mountains of Judaea and come down into the valleys. The roses in the garden of the Queen of Arabia are not so white as thy body. Neither the roses in the garden of the Queen of Arabia, the perfumed garden of spices of the Queen of Arabia, nor the feet of the dawn when they light on the leaves, nor the breast of the moon when she lies on the breast of the sea ... There is nothing in the world so white as thy body. Let me touch thy body (Wilde, 1971, p. 327).

Jokanaan: "Back! Daughter of Babylon! By woman came evil into the world. Speak not to me. I will not listen to thee. I listen but to the voice of the Lord God" (Wilde, 1971, p. 327). Although Salomé tries to touch John the Baptist's hair after she was rejected, John the Baptist responds her with the words, Jokanaan: "Back, daughter of Sodom!³ Touch me not! Profane not the temple of the Lord God" (Wilde, 1971, p. 328). Here we see that femme fatale is not only linked with evil but also with impureness and disgustingness. However, there are ideational lines

² Babylon: The capital of the ancient Chaldaea Empire on the Euphrates, is mentioned in the Bible as the city of sinners. (See also Revelation, 17:5)

³ Sodom: An ancient city destroyed by God, also with Gomorrah due to its people who made homosexuality a common habit. (See also Isaiah, 3:9 and Jeremiah, 23:14)

which are the source of the "expulsion from heaven" in religious mythology. John the Baptist represents the sacred place. He identifies himself with "the temple of Lord God". On the contrary, Salomé, as a female represents the sexual sin; she defiles the temple and must be expelled from there. Later on, the Young Syrian, who witnessed these conversations between Salomé and John the Baptist, committed suicide there.

The page of Herodias expresses that he has already said that misfortune will happen to them. The femme fatale, as a lust figure, still begs John the Baptist to let her kiss him. But John the Baptist responds her with the words, Jokanaan: "Daughter of adultery [...] Cursed be thou! Daughter of incestuous mother, be thou accursed!" (Wilde, 1971, p. 329). John the Baptist declares "I do not wish look at thee. I will not look at thee, thou art accursed, Salomé, thou art accursed" (Wilde, 1971, p. 329) and tells her that she is cursed by God. John the Baptist's voice is heard in the banquet hall, while conversations on religious matters revolve around King Herod. Yahya targets Herodias: The Voice of Jokanaan: Ah! The wanton! The harlot! Ah! The daughter of Babylon with her golden eyes and her gilged eyelids! Thus, saith the Lord God, let there come up against her a multitude of men. Let the people take stones and stone⁴ her... (Wilde, 1971, p. 335) John the Baptist thinks that Herodias can escape this sin only by facing death. However, Herod's death is not an option because he is both a king and a man. John the Baptist continues to speak: Let the war captains pierce her with their swords, let them crush her beneath their shields [...] It is thus that I will wipe out all wickedness from the earth, and that all women shall learn not to imitate her abominations (Wilde, 1971, pp. 335-336).

The concepts of abomination, sin and death come to the max in John the Baptist's words about Salomé and her mother. These are all steps that transform Salomé into a body and character that is killed but not mourned. However, John the Baptist's sense of disgust is clear and related to the gender as he does not feel the same when king Herod Committed the same sin. He is even disgusted by Salomé is supposed to be innocent according to his own standards of sins compared to Herod, who is one of the direct subjects of sin. Woman playing the role of the sin while man is the one to clean that sin is an example of gender inequality. In another scene of the play, King Herod asks Salomé to dance for him. However, both Salomé and her mother refuse. Herod begs Salomé to dance and promises whatever she wills, including half of his kingdom. Herod: Salomé, Salomé, dance for me. I pray thee dance for me [...] Dance for me, Salomé, I beseech you. If you dance for me you may ask of me what you will , and I will give it to you , even unto the half of my kingdom [...] Thou wilt be passing fair as a queen , Salomé , if it please thee to ask for the half of my kingdom . Will she not be fair as a queen? (Wilde, 1971, pp. 338-339). From the very beginning of the play, Salomé has been aware of the endless glances of King Herod's. It can be argued that these glances light in this scene. King Herod, without taking Herodias' opinion, tells Salomé that she might be a queen.

Herod repeatedly promises Salomé of half of his kingdom and whatever she wants, which means Salomé's becomes a queen and indicate marriage between them. In this context, the femme fatale is represented again as a subject of desire. Following Herod's words, Salomé agrees to dance. Salomé, conversely, agrees to accept Herod's wish by dancing for him in an effort to avoid her object status and become a queen. This may seem confusing at first, but she can use the male desire to stand against the patriarchal framework by gaining more authority.

⁴ Lapidation: It is one of the methods of punishment in the Old Testament. (See also Leviticus, 20:27)

Her role as a target of desire is, in practice, the only source of power she has. In this way, she takes advantage of the same social norms that were created to keep her in a subservient role. *Salomé* underlines stereotypes about women in this way, as previously mentioned above, since the common Victorian image of women was stigmatised as sexless demons. At the end of the dance, Herod asks what her wish is. *Salomé* asks for John the Baptist's head on a silver platter.

Her mother Herodias, who hates John the Baptist, supports this request, but King Herod rejects by saying he cannot do this. Herod: This is terrible thing, an awful thing to ask of me. Surely, I think thou art jesting. The head of a man that is cut from his body is ill to look upon, is it not? It is not meet that the eyes of a virgin should look upon such a thing. What pleasure could you have in it? None. No, no, it is not what you desire (Wilde, 1971, p. 342). Herod declares *Salomé* as a "virgin." women being a "virgin" is a very important for men, it has a historical root. While the "virginity" of men was not important throughout history, the "virginity" of women was always a matter of discussion. Moreover, while men can have a relationship with as many women as they want, they wish women to have a relationship only with them. It is because woman considered dirty when she loses her virginity, but when a man loses his virginity, it means he is now a mature. While a man's losing his virginity can be a matter of pride, in this context women are considered "wicked." This again causes the woman to be referred to as sinner, dirty, cursed, and devil. We see in these scenes of the play that the character of *femme fatale* meets all these adjectives.

Herod gives up in another section of the play and orders his men, saying: "[sinking back in his seat: Let her be given what she asks! Of a truth she is her mother's child!]" (Wilde, 1971, p. 345). Herod and John the Baptist share the same message, according to the mother-symbolic girl's connection. This shifts the play's cruelty lines toward female characters more and more. The *femme fatale* is portrayed as a symbol of women's cruelty in contrast to men who stand for morality, goodness, and humanity. Due to the nature of the situation, every female in question should be viewed as a potential *femme fatale*. Furthermore, King Herod covers his face when the Naaman (the executioner) brings John the Baptist's head on the salver. This hiding is a result of both sadness and shame. John the Baptist can be sacrificed, admired, and lamented, in contrast to *Salomé*. Herodias has a laughing and shaking fan attitude in response to the passing of John the Baptist. The play's sexual allusions are made clear by Herod's guilt and sadness as well as Herodias' ice-cold cruelty. Herod is portrayed as a moral figure who repents his action, but Herodias was portrayed as a character who embraces and delights in death.

At this moment, *Salomé* and Herodias are both shown as *femme fatale* figures. *Salomé* succeeded in her mission and gave John the Baptist a head kiss. The *Salomé* Voice: Ah! I kissed your mouth, Jokanaan, I kissed your mouth. Thy lips had an unpleasant flavor. Did it taste like blood? However, perhaps it is the flavor of love. It is said that love has a bitter taste. But what about that? What is the deal with that? Jokanaan, I kissed you on the mouth. (Wilde, 1971, p. 347)

The success of *Salomé*'s desire leads to John the Baptist's disclosure, which is the topic of the prize. King Herod turns around as he exits the dinner hall and commands his men, "Kill that woman! [The soldiers rush forward and crush beneath their shields *SALOMÉ*, the daughter of *HERODIAS*, Princess of Judaea]" (Wilde, 1971, p. 347)

The conflict between desire and rage is resolved with the demise of the femme fatale. As the link between these chain rings, Salomé's death brings an end to the young Syrian's yearning for her, Salomé's desire for John the Baptist, and King Herod's desire for Salomé. Because John the Baptist's rage toward Herodias and Salomé was transferred to Herod, Salomé was the focus of everyone's rage. When we consider *Salomé's* cultural representations, it may be claimed that she conveyed significant components to cultural representations that came after her. Playing a crucial role in terms of acting as both the criminal and the victim, representing both innocence and sin at the same time, changing into the transitive object of desire and rage in the middle of a masculine majority, and ultimately presenting her death as an "auspicious case" that by her death all crises are resolved. By making the passive female character in the play's creativeness, Oscar Wilde's *Salomé* allows for a feminist interpretation into a progressive and influential subject that is drama.

What is more, it repeats the femme fatale, a feminine-other figure that can be compared to the typical female image of the late Victorian era. The outcome has significantly changed from the initial plan because of her death. Only in Wilde's telling of the story does *Salomé* pass away. *Salomé* actually shares certain similarities with *Dorian Gray*. By allowing both of his characters to fulfill their sexual fantasies, Wilde shows how he feels about sexual nervousness. By killing them, Wilde represents this oppression: Finney also makes similar claim, saying that: "Through her death, symbolically forecast from the beginning of the play, he expresses his awareness that neither unbridled female sexuality nor homosexuality could go unpunished in Victorian society." (Finney, 1998, p. 185)

CONCLUSION

Femme fatale is used to objectify women's lives, bodies, and sexualities in the cultural environment by making them viewable objects and creating normative information about them. When discussing standards, what is normal and what is abnormal about women, relationships, love, intimacy, and sexuality, the femme fatale frequently comes up. The female body is fictitiously portrayed in cultural representations as anonymous and threat, and this context arouses curiosity. By creating knowledge and exposing the mysterious, men can continue to dominate women. Femme fatale makes an effort to support the psychoanalytic view that asserts women are massive and that this anonymity is the root of anxiety, as well as the masculine says women are unknowable. The femme fatale symbolizes social risk and unexplained deaths.

Given that death is constantly prepared to appear in the pictures of the femme fatale, it is moralistic in this regard but typical on the other. Death is portrayed in these depictions as the event that ends the problem while also preventing the spectator from empathizing with it. She is referred as a "deadly woman" not just because of she is poisonous and attractive, but because it results in death for either herself or the men she seduces. Death, which is portrayed in the cultural construction of the femme fatale as an unavoidable misfortune, is actually the node that connects gender and evil in this regard. At the start of the play, Salomé is nothing more than a desirable object. Additionally, by copying the actions of the men in the play, she develops into her own individuality. As a result of Wilde's demonstration that women have similar aspirations to men, they reject conventional notions of what it means to be a woman. The play's controversial portrayal of Salomé's sexuality was certainly another factor in its suspension. Another significant alteration to the Salomé tale is the heroine's death, which highlights the

cruel nature of patriarchy. By dismissing conventional ideas of femininity and exposing rebellious feminine sexual hunger, Wilde liberates the well-known character *Salomé*. Wilde's *Salomé* does not seem to fit the stereotype of the femme fatale motif as having a sexist bent. Compared to his colleagues, Wilde's characterization of his femme fatale is more complex. While he portrays a murdering woman, he also makes it clear that she is not entirely evil. In contrast to more conventional representations of the femme fatale, which shows women naturally wicked, Wilde challenges the Victorian view of women.

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