8. "Where there is dance, there is the devil"[1]. Femininity and Violence: Salome as a Maenad

Feminist Appropriations of Greek Antiquity

Using the prominent modern example of Salome's "Dance of the Seven Veils," chapters six and seven discussed the aesthetic and political role of the "new" or "free dance" in the profoundly feminine avant-garde (cf. Brandstetter 2015; Ochaim & Wallner 2021). Chapter eight now focuses again on the multifaceted birth of "modern dance" in female Hellenism/exoticism, in which early 20th century dancers exploited the gestural repertoire of ancient or exotic ritual for their own aesthetic and emancipatory efforts. The chapter connects this artistic avant-garde dance to a critical theory in the study of religion that reflected and accompanied the art form in a unique way. It begins by briefly introducing the classical scholar and archaeologist Jane E. Harrison (1850-1928), who revolutionized the study of ancient Greek religion in ways that stressed the role of images and dance as the most important bridge between ancient female rituals, modern aesthetics and the symbolic performances of the suffragettes. In more than one publication (see especially in my monograph and articles on Harrison, Brunotte 2013, 2017 and 2021), I have shown that Harrison's gender-conscious approach to ancient Greek religion helped her to recognize the importance of the contemporary "new dance" as a key modern medium of all the arts and a conveyor of new "patterns of femininity" (Brandstetter 2015: 25).

Harrison's feminist approach to ancient Greek religion, focused on rituals, emotional patterns, and body images, was also part of the then current "female Hellenism" (Fiske 2008, Brunotte 2013, Prins 2017). This is the term

1 "The devil [also] helped her to arouse complacence through her dance and thus to ensnare Herod. Where there is dance, there is also the devil" (quoted in: Rohde 2000: 70).

used by Shanyn Fiske in her book *Heretical Feminism. Women, Writers, Ancient Greece, and the Victorian Popular Imagination* to describe the cultural enthusiasm widespread among authors and performers for the dancing, intoxicated, followers of the god Dionysus, the maenads. Modern female Hellenism had of course a forerunner in what is called the "statue posing" of the Goethe era, as performed, for example, by the notorious Lady Hamilton (née Emma Hart) in Naples (see Schmölders 2014). In "free dance" at the beginning of the 20th century, the performative appropriation of the gestural reservoir of ancient cult dances and exotic or "oriental" dances served as a means for many early avant-garde artists to free themselves from the corset of frozen gender codes and to make new forms of subjectivity their own.

Harrison's appearance in the academic world of Cambridge and in London society was connected not only to the broader development of the first women's colleges at Cambridge, but also to the early women's movement, which asserted both the right to vote and to a share in classical education: "...women were drawn to the cultural prestige of Greek studies as one way to justify their claim to higher education" (Prins 2017: xi). Many middle-class women, some without profound knowledge in Greek language, wanted to appropriate ancient culture through their imagination, their emotions and their bodies, and "tried to make Greek letters dance, figuratively and literally" (Prins 2017: 202). Virginia Woolf was a fan of Harrison's, and Isadora Duncan, the most famous of modern dancer, was also an enthusiastic adherent of this movement. Principally through the study of vase paintings and Greek statues, Duncan endeavored to assimilate Greek antiquity through mimetic acts. She proceeded in accordance with a theory of art rooted in *Lebensphilosophie* and "gave emphasis to the dynamism of expressive potential in the re-enacting and representation of sculpture and painting" (Brandstetter 1995: 28). It was therefore no accident that Harrison not only inspired the ancient Greek costumes of some suffragettes but also helped with the Duncan's choreography (for more details see Brunotte 2013) and shared the female fascination with the incorporation of "rhythm into a moving body, both individual and collective" (Prins 2017: 202) in the Dionysian chorus of Euripides' *The Bacchae*. For Harrison in general, the study of ancient Greek archaeological findings, vase paintings and rituals was directly connected with modern life, dance and every-day experience. In her bestselling book *Ancient Art and Ritual* (1913) she wrote:

> If there is to be any true living art, it must arise, not from the contemplation of Greek statues, not from the revival of folk-songs, not even the re-enactment of Greek plays, but from a keen emotion felt towards things and people living to-day, in modern conditions, including, among other and deeper forms of life, the haste and hurry of the modern street, the whirr of motor cars and aeroplanes. (Harrison, 1913 [1951]: 236)

At the same time, Harrison's work on moving body images from ancient Dionysian cults exerted a certain influence on the image researcher Aby Warburg, who was almost twenty years her junior (for more details about this influence, see Brunotte 2013: 119-124). The "art historian, religious studies scholar, and founding father of iconology [also] thought about a body-to-body and image-to-image-in-motion transmission of cultural memory and a gestural archive of embodied emotions. For his *energetic* concept of body, image, and affect-based figures and emotional forms, he coined the term *pathos formula*" (Brunotte 2017: 165; quotation in quotation: Warburg 2009 [1920-24]). In Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*, he assembled an archive of images and scenes, showing an emotional "afterlife of Antiquity" (ibid): the embodied knowledge of emotions of joy, terror, passion or ecstasy. "Undertaken between 1926 and 1929, the atlas of images entitled *Mnemosyne* is Aby Warburg's nearly wordless account of how and why symbolic images of great pathos persist in Western cultural memory from antiquity to the early twentieth century." (Johnson 2012: 4) Of interest in the present context is that Warburg first conceptualized these pathos formulas in relation to the figure of *woman-in-movement*, his "Nympha" or "Ninfa Fiorentina" (Warburg [1900] 2010), and later in relation to the Dionysian frenzy of the intoxicated female followers of the god, the maenads. In her study of modern free dance, *Poetics of Dance: Body, Image, and Space in the Historical Avant-Gardes* (2015), Gabriele Brandstetter therefore makes use of Warburg's theory to analyze the body-images and emotional self-expressions in avant-garde-dance. She maintains that "In turn-of the century dance, theatre, fine arts, and literature, body-images can be isolated and analyzed as characteristic manifestations and transformations of pathos formulas." (Brandstetter 2015: 25)

Harrison, as previously mentioned, was especially inspired by the performative repertoire of the modern dance movement. All her life she acted as an intermediary between the scholarly world of Cambridge and the artistic circles of London. Ritual dance represented for her the decisive link between scholarship and art and art and ritual: "We shall find in these dances," Harri-

son wrote in 1913, "the meeting-point between art and ritual" (Brunotte 2017a: 174).

Harrison, however, saw the Dionysian maenads, the intoxicated and sometimes frenzied female followers of the god Dionysus, not only as mythical figures from Greek antiquity but also as representations of a "state of mind" (Harrison 1991 [1908]: 390) of normal – ancient *and* contemporary – women. For her, the wild followers of the god of wine, theater and orgies, represented female transgressions of the public order and public gender division. In an essay entitled "Homo Sum," which bore the subtitle "Being a Letter to an Anti-Suffragist from an Anthropologist" (Harrison 1915), Harrison wrote that, while she was not really a political person, her studies of primitive and ancient rituals had aroused her interest in the modern political theater of the suffragettes. Especially the symbolic actions and often ancient-style masquerades of women demonstrating for the right to vote had brought her, coming from the study of ritual, to the conviction that she must become a "suffragist" (ibid.: 114). For her, suffrage was primarily about "a ritualized effort to rewrite the terms of cultural power. She confirms that militant activity is based on the same unity of knowing, feeling, and acting that marked ancient ritual" (Commentale 2001: 483). The aspirations of the suffragettes, according to Harrison, are based on "an awakening the desire to know," that is, "the awakening of the intention to act, to act more efficiently and to shape the world completely to our will" (Harrison, 1915, p. 26).

Salome, Maenads and Female Violence

On 7 December 1909, the newly founded *Cambridge Society of Heretics* invited Harrison to be one of their two keynote speakers. The self-proclaimed "heretics" rejected traditional Christianity and "all appeal to authority in the discussion of religious questions" (Florence 1968: 228), including the exclusively male humanistic tradition and education. A radical anti-clerical scholar like Harrison was therefore a natural first choice as a speaker. "The first woman ever to give university lectures at Cambridge (in 1898), Harrison had become, by 1909, one of the most controversial figures on campus." (Fiske 2008: 2) Her reputation was soon to condense into a veritable heresy scandal when she dared to compare the biblical figure of the Jewish princess Salome to the wild, pagan maenads. The following section is a translation of the corresponding chapter in my 2013 monograph *Dämonen des Wissens. Gender,*

Performativität und materielle Kultur im Werk von Jane Ellen Harrison (Demons of knowledge. Gender, performance and material culture in the work of Jane Ellen Harrison).

In the winter of 1916-17, in the midst of the First World War, an article by Harrison entitled "The Head of John Baptist" in the prestigious journal *The Classical Review* sparked heated scholarly, theological, and political debate in Cambridge. In her text she promised a completely new and radically untheological approach to the dance of Salome, which led to the decapitation of John the Baptist. In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, in which these events are reported, the Jewish princess does not yet have her later famous name and is referred to only as the daughter of Herodias or simply "the girl." As Chapter six argued in detail, the "girl" in the Greek text is a mere instrument in the hands of her hating and power-hungry mother. It is Herodias who planned her daughter's dance and who later urged Salome to demand the head of John the Baptist "on a platter" as her reward. "The girl dances. Only two words are devoted to the event. John's head is in fact the payment. [Nevertheless] this passage in Mark shows the rising tension and the trophy – death itself – to which dance can lead." (Baert 2014: 13) In the long pictorial tradition of the motif her dance is normally depicted separately from the beheading. However, as Barbara Baert demonstrates using pictorial examples from 13th and 14th century Europe, there exists a "second branch of images in which the dancing Salome holds the platter with the head above her head." (Baert 2014: 18) In those depictions it is, however, still not certain whether Salome bears the head on the platter to hand it over to Herod. Yet even in Wilde's tragedy (and all other modern adaptions of the Salome story) the severed head is not present on stage while during the dance. Salome never dances *with* or *around* the head. In her article Harrison questions this sequence of events. Right at the beginning of her essay, she announces that she will take a fresh look at the story of Salome and John the Baptist:

> No one, I suppose, reads the story of the daughter of Herodias and the head of John Baptist without a sense of sudden jar. In the Old Testament it might stand; in the New its licentious savagery seems an outrage. But for the familiarity of Holy Writ we should probably long ago have asked what lies behind. (Harrison 1916/1917: 216)

In her subsequent interpretation of the story Harrison claims not only to read the New Testament historically and critically, but also claims that Salome danced with or around the head of John the Baptist. Thus she positions

the legend of the death-bringing dance of the Hellenistic Jewish princess in the context of pagan fertility rituals and ancient Greek female expressions of ecstatic transgression and violence. The dance of the girl is located in the Bacchic context. Harrison establishes a motivic parallel between the frenzy of the maenads, who first kill and dismember Pentheus in a cruel animalistic manner and then display his severed head, and the dance of Salome for or *with* the head of John the Baptist. In her anthropological interpretation of the *cult*, however, Pentheus and John the Baptist become nothing more than embodiments of demonic life forces which, de-individualized and recurrently sacrificed, represent *zoë* (universal life). Behind this, there appears more and more the concept of a cyclical becoming and passing away, in which all male gods and heroes ultimately merge into a single figure of the "Eniautos daimon". As before, now too Harrison advocates in her article the thesis of the existence of a "year daimon", an embodiment of slain and resurrected life, which

> should include […] the whole world-process of decay, death, and renewal. I prefer "Eniautos" to "year" because to us year means something definitely chronological, precise segment as it were of spatialized time; whereas *Eniautos*, as contrasted with *etos*, means a *period*, in the etymological sense, a cycle of waxing and waning. (Harrison 1912: xvii)

Harrison transforms the dance of Salome and the beheading of John the Baptist, which she or her mother Herodias demands as a reward for the performance, into a cyclically recurring vegetation ritual. Through this naturalization of the dance *and* the decapitation, which in the Bible are part of the prehistory of Jesus's work, the narrative is stripped of its Christian uniqueness and holiness. It now appears as a variant of myths wandering vastly between Orient and Occident, which also follow a pattern of action that, according to the author, refers to a "primitive ritual":

> John the Forerunner has kept some savage elements expurgated from the sacred legend of his Prototype, and these elements rightly understood are not so repulsive as they seem. The loathsome story of the Head and the dance is redeemed at once from its squalour of amorous licence and dressed in a new ritual dignity. (Harrison 1916/1917: 216)

Harrison's heretical desecration of the biblical text takes place in two specific ways. On the one hand, she compares the dance of Salome around the head of John the Baptist with the maenadic death dance of Queen Agave, as passed

down in Euripides' *Bacchae*. After she and other women tear her son Pentheus limb from limb in Dionysian ecstasy, Agave dances triumphantly with his severed head as with that of a slain animal, like a trophy. For Harrison one thing is certain: "*The dance of Herodias' daughter* ***with*** *the Head of John Baptist is, mutatis mutandis, the ritual dance of Agave with the head of Pentheus*. It is the dance of the daimon of the New Year with the head of the Old Year, past and slain." (ibid.) On the other hand, though the scholar of religions may seek to remove the drama from the murderous events – the mutilation of Pentheus, the beheading of John the Baptist – by seeing them as part of a recurrent vegetation cult of growth and decay, her conception of the "maenads" speaks a different language and links the scenes of murderous aggression to contemporary gender struggles.

Harrison understands the maenads both as mythical inventions of the poets and at the same time as very real women: "These Maenads are as real, as actual as Satyrs; in fact more so, for no poet or painter ever attempted to give them horses' ears and tails." (Harrison 1903: 388) She describes the frenzied followers of Dionysus, who have abandoned their homes, as "simply 'mad women'" – women of all origins and ethnic groups, possessed and intoxicated by their god: "The Maenads are the women-worshipers of Dionysos of whatever race, possessed, maddened or, as the ancients would say, inspired by his spirit." (ibid) Even if scholars sometimes describe the maenads, who went to the mountains every other year to celebrate their rapturous nocturnal festivities in honor of the god Dionysus, as pure fiction and a product of art, the ancient sources speak more of their actual existence: "There must have been a time," writes Dodds, "when for a few hours or days the maenads […] really became what their names suggest – frenzied women whose human personality was temporarily supplanted by another." Dodds 1970 [1951]: 132) Every woman, Harrison emphasizes, can become a maenad and so break through the structure of the social and gender order for a short time. That she does not thereby lose sight of the upheavals in the gender code of her own time, and that the ancient Greek maenads may have served as a projection surface for her own liberation fantasies, is made evident from comparative remarks such as the following. Referring to the maenad chorus in the *Bacchae*, she writes: "The chorus in the *Bacchae* call themselves 'swift hounds of raging madness', but the title was not one that would appeal to respectable matrons." (Harrison 1903: 389) As Linda Shires's analyzes (1992) have shown, maenadism already became a metaphor for the emancipatory aspirations of women at the time of the French Revolution. The term "maenad" could of course appeal to such

"odd women" as Harrison, whose friends sometimes called her "the last maenad found running" (in Versnel 1993: 24), because "the odd woman" was not the only sign of burgeoning "[s]exual anarchy", as Elaine Showalter (1990: 19) has written. The increased public appearance of unmarried and working women also shook traditional notions of femininity. In Harrison's eyes, the maenad is above all "an actively terrifying and transgressive figure during Dionysic worship" (Prins 1999: 47). We can only speculate how far the positive emphasis on maenadic fury and transgression reflects Victorian and modern debates and events and whether it can even be read as an allusion to the sometimes violent actions of the suffragettes.

In this context it is worth considering that the formative power of transgressive female violence, as it was expressed in the ancient scene of Orpheus' death, seems to feed a dynamic visual memory. It was not by accident that Warburg, in his lecture "Dürer and Ancient Italy" ("Dürer und die italienische Antike") given in Hamburg on October 5th 1905 (Warburg 1905 [2010]), placed Dürer's drawing *The Death of Orpheus* at the center of a small accompanying exhibition on the survival (afterlife) of a Dionysian antiquity. Especially in this Dürer lecture he emphasized the threat of Dionysian pathos when it is expressed in extreme emotions and formulas – not of joy and liberation – but of murderous violence. "The concept of the *pathos formula*, used first by Warburg in this lecture and now widespread, seeks to give linguistic expression to this knowledge." (Stolzenburg/Ketelsen 2012: 9) Based on groundbreaking archival research the German art historian Charlotte Schoell-Glass reconstructed and examined the influence that antisemitism has had on Warburg's cultural theory and his *Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibibliothek* (Schoell-Glass 1998; 2008). For her the change of emphasis on the afterlife of Dionysian formulas in his lecture on "The Death of Orpheus" from liberation to threat, is closely connected to Warburg's perception and assessment of anti-Semitism." (Schoell-Glass 2008: 43) His term "afterlife [Nachleben] of antiquity" was firstly focused on the reuse and revival of ancient pictorial formulas in new historical circumstances, storing and expressing emotions and affects. However, Schoell-Glass (ibid.: 6) argues:

> If the European tradition of antiquity is sometimes latent, sometimes active, yet always an effective force in preestablished imaginary, then this is parallel in an equally ancient and similar accessible tradition of Christian anti-Semitism, a yardstick of that barbarism within civilization that can be

activated at any historical moment and can equally be transferred to other minorities.

Fig. 17: Albrecht Dürer: "The Death of Orpheus" (1494), Hamburger Kunsthalle, Kupferstichkabinett.

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Her interpretation of Warburg's concern with the Renaissance recovery of images and scenes of violent murder from classical mythology – especially the *pathos formula* of "The Death of Orpheus" draws a parallel between Sigmund Freud's notion that civilization is only a thin veneer "that simply obscures our

view of the wildness lying hidden beneath" (ibid: 53). Warburg's art historical thoughts about the Renaissance revival of "animal frenzy" in man confronted him as shockingly contemporary. (see also Levine 2018). For her hypotheses Schoell-Glass ties in with Anne Marie Meyer's questions and reflections from 1988. The latter noted: "Exactly what was the relation between Warburg's research on paganism in the Renaissance and his mediations and fears about Judaism (and Jews) remains of course the problem." (Meyer: 452, quoted in Schoell-Glass: 4). Following Emily J. Levine it was his influential biographer and successor, Sir Ernst Gombrich, who served from 1959 until 1976 as the director of the London Warburg Institute, who towered over the image of Warburg. "Gombrich whitewashed not only Warburg's scholarship and depression but also his Judaism." (Levine 2018: 118). In contrast to this sanitized Warburg image, Schoell-Glass asserts that antisemitism was the primary explanatory background of his work. In her book first published as a German habilitation in 1998 she showed how accurately he collected reports and accounts of antisemitic pogroms in Eastern Europe (cit. p. 21, 81) always looking to find "modern parallels" of ancient or pagan Dionysian scenes of violent murders. Following Schoell-Glass's research and using her archival discoveries, Matthew Rampley (2010: 321) argues:

> This violent myth – Orpheus was torn to pieces by frenzied maenads – attested to an aspect of classical culture usually overlooked by art historians. […] However, it is also clear that the *indirect* referent of such texts was modern anti-Semitism, with which Warburg exhibited an enduring preoccupation. Specifically, he saw anti-Jewish violence was as the expression of deep-seated psychic current, and the sporadic outbreak of such aggression in the present continued a primal impulse evident in the monstrous narratives of ancient Greek and Roman myth.

Obviously these connections were not drawn neither seen by the archaeologist and classic scholar Jane E. Harrison. It is even not certain to what extend she analyzed and even understood the violent myths about the ancient maenads as more than symbolic role models for contemporary women. Interestingly, however, maenads also recur in caricatures and depictions of violent suffragettes; in addition to the posture, these images feature above all the umbrellas which were often carried by suffragettes as, as it were, phallic symbols, but which were also frequently used as weapons. A picture of an attack by several women upon a man lying prostrate on the ground is particularly reminiscent of the weapons and agitated slaying gestures of the maenads.

Yokie Prins suggests that the maenad renaissance in early 20th century culture had several contemporary points of reference at large. Thus the Victorian imagination not only doted on the dangers that the multiplied appearance of unmarried and independent New Women could represent for public morality, but also went so far as to invent the discursive horror figure of the modern "wild woman." This was accomplished with lasting effect in the title of an anti-feminist pamphlet that Eliza Lynn Linton published in 1891: "The Wild Women as Social Insurgents." Linton warns her fellow citizens of the growing influence of unmarried women, whom she puzzlingly describes on the one hand as "unsexed" and on the one hand as "oversexed": "Our Lady of Desire, the masterful *domina* of real life – that loud and dictatorial person, insurgent and something more preaches the 'lesson of liberty' broadened into lawlessness and license." (Linton 1891: 596)

Interesting here for the context under consideration is also the mystifying merger of this new pattern of femininity with that of the murderous *femme fatale.* In this the dancing maenad celebrated her special successes as a movement image and goddess of an unleashed artistic modernism. In her doppelgänger-like proximity to the dancing Salome, who knows how to rule even a king, the figure of the mad maenad (s) could also become a model for the suffragettes. *Salomania* thus condensed fascinating fears that were associated with completely different new visibilities of women: the suffragettes demonstrated most clearly how the biblical story of Salome could be read in political terms. This not only through their political theatre and sometimes violent public self-stagings in London, but also and above all through their very own political choreography of the Salome material, in which the dummy head of a leading politician might lay in the dancer's bowl. (Walkowitz 2003: 14).

On the other hand, as Brandstetter (1995/2015) first showed, the figure of the maenad or more generally that of a young woman (Warburg's Nympha) in "wild movement" was linked at the beginning of the 20th century with idealizing notions of the working woman, who traversed public space in brisk steps. In Eugen Wolff's work *Die jüngste deutsche Literaturströmung und das Prinzip der Moderne* (The Most Recent Trends in German Literature and the Principle of Modernism) (1888), the "freely moving woman" confronts us as programmatically modern *and* as an allegory of modernism:

> Thus a woman, a modern, [...], that is, a working woman [...], for example on the way home to her beloved child, for she is not a virgin, [...] is a *knowing*,

> but *pure* woman, […] and wildly moved like the spirit of the time, that is, with *fluttering garments* and *flying hair*, with *onward-moving* gestures […] – that is our new idol: *modernism*! (Wolff: 1988 [1888]: 70)

The maenad appeared in the fine arts across Europe as an aesthetically appealing "figure for mobility that cannot be contained" (Prins 1999: 49), very prominently, for instance, in the paintings of Lawrence Alma-Tadema. "In later paintings, Alma-Tadema represented maenads in a wide range of movements and poses: sprawled on the floor, dancing madly, or playing musical instruments." (ibid.: 50) Many contemporaries, however, saw the maenads, who penetrated more and more into the cultural awareness thanks to the *Dionysian* turn in the discourse about antiquity inspired by Friedrich Nietzsche and Walter Pater, as the very embodiment of violent feminine rebellion.

Harrison, dispensing with any further explanation, first put the biblical dancer in a Hellenistic-pagan context by equating the bacchante Agaue and the Jewish princess, and then declared Salome to be a sister of the ancient Greek maenads. She thus crossed the line of taboo for more than only the theologians of her time.

A look at the iconographic tradition and the writings of the Church Fathers (!) would have furnished Harrison with a good deal of evidence to corroborate a thesis that was so scandalous at the time. As will be shown, this would require a minimal shift in focus away from the death of Pentheus and to the slaying of Orpheus. The latter scene of violence condensed, as Warburg showed, both in terms of motif and iconography, a dynamic *pathos formula* that continued to have effect even beyond Christianity and into modern art. The Church Father Clemens of Alexandria interpreted the figure of Orpheus as a prefiguration of Christ and the scene of the poet's murder served as a model for the representation of the death of Christian ascetics and martyrs. This image transfer "is [also] used for one of the most prominent forerunners of Christ, John the Baptist" (Lindner 1987: 29). The Greek Church Father John Chrysostom, on the other hand, denounced Salome's "sinful dance" and her "even more sinful wages for the dance" as the work of the devil, for "Where there is dance, there is the devil" (Chrysostom (2000 [356]: 70). In the 12th century, Theophanes Ceramaeus, in his commentary on Salome, directly equated her dance with that of a maenad. In this Christian remolding, the Bacchic ecstasy was at the same time strongly sexualized:

> [And] she danced like a bacchante [corybant], shaking her hair, twisting in an unseemly manner, stretching her arms, baring her breasts, alternately

> throwing up her feet, revealing her body by the rapidity of the swirling movement and even exposing her pudenda to view. (Ceramaeus in Daffner 1912: 41)

Around 1900, however, the mainstream of contemporary depictions of Salome in England and France focused not on her proximity to the ancient maenads but above all on her orientalization. As shown in Chapter one and seven, a complex expression of unleashed femininity thus emerged in the figure of the Jewish princess, in which motivic and iconographic tropes of the beautiful but dangerous Jewess and the oriental-exotic woman were superimposed on each other. It should not be forgotten that then contemporary scholarship still considered Dionysus the "foreign god" and his train of followers of Asian-oriental origin (even if he comes back to his hometown Theben). The invention of a feminized antiquity associated with the name "Dionysus" brought forth, as has been seen, a new language of desire. Moreover, the figure of the ancient maenad, seen as "the very embodiment of feminine rebellion and unruly female sexuality", preoccupied Victorian culture in the debate about the "question of women's rights" (Prins 1999: 49).

Harrison's article triggered not only vehement scholarly and theological but also political repudiations (See Fiske 2008: 149-188). It was seen as an attempt to interpret Christian cult-celebrations and soteriological figures as plagiarism of pagan rituals or even to replace them with a "savage ritual." As will be shown, in this the university establishment of Cambridge in 1916/17 thought it discovered an attack on one of the fundaments of the English nation. Of particular interest is the coincidence of a Salome revival of a different kind, which has been discussed in Chapter one, because corresponding to the scholarly rediscovery and discursive production of a Dionysiac antiquity, which crossed the boundaries between the occidental and oriental traditions, were the choreographic artistic reinventions of ancient forms of movement.

Both ancient revivals, that in cultural and religion studies and that in the arts, coincided in their fascination for dancing, women and their "moving accessories", as Warburg called the fluttering hair, veils and robes of the dancers (cf. Didi-Hubermann 2005: 331). In the fragments of his *Ninfa Fiorentina* project, Warburg also spoke directly, in the analysis of Ghirlandaio's frescoes in the Florentine Church of *Santa Maria Novella*, of a survival of the ancient nymph(s) in the form of Salome, for

> ... even the pious Church Father's zeal [...] failed to expel them, yes, failed even to prevent their living on in church art, because apparently as a bona

> fide biblical figure, as a dancing Salome [...] she treads light-footed through the art of the early Renaissance. (Warburg 1901 [2010]: 227)

Here, at the conclusion of this chapter, the argument comes full circle again, because around the same time the dramatically moving body of the dancing maenad or nymph, to which Warburg and, as we have seen, Harrison added Salome, also became an early model for avant-garde dance. (see Brandstetter 2015) In this, as previous chapters have discussed, the Europe-wide and then also America-wide *Salomania*, which revolved around the Dance of the Seven Veils, played a major role. And now, Maud Allan and her *Vision of Salome* came briefly, and in a surprising way, into the focus of scholarly discussion.

Fig. 18: Maud Allan with the Head of John the Baptist (Postcard 1906-1910).

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In her unconventional interpretation of the Salome material, in which the dancer dances around the decapitated head of the Baptist, Allan closely linked the unveiling of female nudity with deadly violence. The dancer's choreography thus confirmed Harrison's radical interpretation. In the venerable *Cambridge Review*, Harrison had even gone so far as to use the Canadian dancer as a reference for her scholarly reading:

> To speak of a dance with the Head is to put the loathsome performance of the modern dancer – that is Maud Allan – in place of the Gospel story. I have lately met more than one person who – such is the power of suggestion – had actually made the transition – actually believed the dance with the Head was part of the Gospel story. […] Yes, both S. Matthew and S. Mark tell us that the head is not the motive of the dance, but its guerdon. Yet by an odd chance the modern dancer hit on the horrible truth – the original dance was with the Head, was motivated by the Head. (Harrison 1916/1917: 216-217)

The use of the distancing adjective "loathsome" to characterize Allan's dance did little to disguise the scandalous fact that a Cambridge classicist gave a controversial choreographic transformation of ancient material the same weight in her interpretation as she did to the evidence of ancient vase paintings or religious source texts. Moreover, a scholar of Newnham College, the second women's college at Cambridge, thus made the biblical dancer from the court of Herod the Jewish sister of the violent pagan maenads. In the form of the *pathos formula* of Salome's dance and that of the intoxicated maenads, in both cases deadly, Dionysian myth is overlaid with biblical narrative. This overdetermination of threatening female "wilde movements" in Harrison's interpretation is better understandable also as a commentary on current events: The rediscovery of ancient expressive repertoires current around 1900 in literature, in the "new dance," and among the suffragettes, may be regarded as the *tertium comparationis*.

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