

Stéphane Mallarmé's Symbolic Head :  
The Molding of *Hérodiade's* "Scène"  
as a Dialogic Reader Response

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1. Toward hermeneutical synthesis of *Hérodiade*

The French symbolist, Stéphane Mallarmé's (1842-98) poetic drama, *Hérodiade*, features a scene of capital punishment, that is, beheading. It occurs in the work's seven concluding stanzas, entitled "Cantique de saint Jean." The number seven represents the Sabbath, the grand rest for the human consciousness that created God. The scene of decapitation may be designated as the finale of the whole work, though rendered in a metaphoric indirectness which compares the head to the sun, just as in the ending speech of *Romeo and Juliet*. The climactical "Cantique" was, however, unpublished during the author's lifetime.

The criminal heroine Hérodiade, well-known by the ethnic name Salome, which was popularized by Oscar Wilde,<sup>1</sup> asks her father-king for John the Baptist's head as remuneration for her dance. Her request is granted, whereas the martyr may have been her potential lover. The legend of the cruel princess is originally presented in the New Testament : Matthew (XIV, 1-11) and Mark (VI, 17-28). According to these anecdotes, a princess of Galilee demanded John's head in compliance with the wishes of her mother, named "Herodias." The mother intended to be married with the king, "Herod," a brother of her husband, an act

which John the Baptist disparaged as being incest.

With miscellaneous manuscripts surviving, Mallarmé's adaptation of the legend is consummated by the "Scène" in its dialogic constellation of speeches of the heroine and her confidante, the nurse-mother. The speeches are with poetic weight by figurative indirectness leading to Racine's preciosity. The "Scène" is a classical work, following the rule of the three unities regarding the place, time, and story. Mallarmé's heroine is successively compared to "lily," "rose," "gold," "diamond," and "stars" with dazzling rays of preciousness, embodying the Mallarméan art of abstraction and refinement. The grand "Scène" (1871), the only part that was published in the poet's lifetime,<sup>2</sup> focuses on the evocation of the princess's attractive but frustrated figure. She conceives an overcharged psychological complex that provokes the outrageous demand and the crime, viz., the beheading, a simulacrum of castration.<sup>3</sup>

The images of the heroine become all the more complicated, as she overlaps with her namesake, the incestuous mother "Herodias." Though Mallarmé's heroine is marked by the author's originality, actualizing his intention,<sup>4</sup> the readers are pushed to superimpose the biblical image of "Herodias" on the Mallarméan "Hérodiade," as is indicated by Maria Assad (46). The New Testament is, in fact, "the canonized intertext" for Mallarmé's drama.<sup>5</sup> The posterior image of Wilde's *Salome* (1893), as well as the precursory image of Stendhal's Mathilde (1830), who gave her last kiss to Julien Sorel's bloody head, also haunt Mallarmé's heroine. The influence of Flaubert's *Salammô* (1863), as well as that of Banville's *Diane au Bois* (1863), is also pointed out (Mondor and Jean-Aubry 1441). The readers are under the intertextual complexity and its weight, which was strategically used by Mallarmé himself to achieve maximal enrichment of his work.

Among 13 speeches of the heroine, except for four connective one-lines, the other nine speeches try to include cosmic wholeness, the images of which are presented by the moving sun ("Le blond torrent... immortel"), the earth to be conquered in its entirety ("joyaux du mur

natal, / Armes, vases depuis ma solitaire enfance"), polar circles ("une ombre lointaine (dans ton cadre gelée)"), unmeasurable future ("un jour / Qui ne finira pas"), sky ("Étoiles pures"), "paradis(e)," night and day ("Nuit blanche"), sea and sky ("l'azur"; "Des ondes"), and the imaginative human mind ("rêveries"). The trilogic form of *Hérodiade*, seen in the 1945 Pléiade version which was edited by Henri Mondor, attains perfectibility with the central scene guarded by a combination of the two wings: a monologue "Ouverture" and a solo "Cantique de saint Jean." The trilogic form follows the author's intention expressed in 1896 regarding his first complete poems to be published by Deman in the near future. According to his intention, a prelude and a finale should be attached to the "Scène."<sup>6</sup> Simulating the central cosmic head, the sun, the second "Scène" dominates the whole text in the consecutive trio, foregrounding the heroine's beauty. If favored with capable voices of actresses, the speeches of the cosmic "Scène" could transform the theatrical space into a mysterious explosion. *Hérodiade*'s costume should be violet, the color that mingles red with blue, because her body is compared to a combination of gardens covered with "amethyst," or "violet quartz" ("jardins d'améthyste"). Different from textual reading, theatrical experience resides in incarnating the artistic effect given by the recognized words through the audience's entire body with the help of spectacular stimulation. Members of the audience give themselves to the images grasped by linguistic consciousness and expanded in accordance with sensuous impressions, just as in the occasion for preachments in Catholic cathedrals. Mallarmé's ambition as a poet can be seen in the full incarnation of artistic effects when he imposes the maximal weight of images, which is realized only by textual reading. Hence, the success of the Mallarméan drama is predictable but immeasurable. Moreover, the dialogued "Scène" made by the androgynous pair, *Hérodiade* and her nurse, produces itself in incessant self-renewal to keep the heroine's figure always fresh. The "Scène" seeks to step into the area beyond language through human bodies, that is, the entirety of the world and beyond, which is fathomless.

As the title "Scène" suggests, the central piece for the dialogue between the heroine and her nurse-mother represents a scene, i.e., a dispute that indicates the equality of the two feminine figures: the princess with her youthful beauty, and the nurse with her weight of experience.<sup>7</sup> With figurative embellishment, their speeches circulate around the heroine's secret in the private setting of her room, as if, ironically, behind the scene. The word "secrets" appears at the central part of the "Scène." The term "scène" came from the Greek "skênê" meaning both the stage and its behind. The dispute-quarrel shows the break between the two, taking place in a break before the tragic event of beheading. The break also corresponds to the initiation for femininity. Nevertheless, the speech acts of both characters cooperate to make up the heroine's figure. Hérodiade only speaks of herself, while the nurse allows and authorizes the continuation of the heroine's speech with her short — therefore all the more ironical — responses. For instance, when the heroine asks her nurse if she is really beautiful, the nurse answers, saying: "Un astre, en vérité / Mais cette tresse tombe...", which challengingly induces the ambitious heroine to announce the tragic day "Qui ne finira pas sans malheur sur la tour." The nurse's second-to-last speech, "Madame, allez-vous donc mourir?" is triply bounded: the word "mourir" signifies that the heroine's previous speech represents the climax of the whole piece, that the heroine can now withdraw from the stage, and that the piece still leaves some space for ending words. The final part proceeds to describe the empty, blue sky, which a short lily as the princess herself cannot reach, though she has the incumbent potential of reaching the sky. She is an angelic figure on the verge of death and life.

Embodying the textual intentionality to mold the heroine's figure as art-beauty,<sup>8</sup> all of her speeches focus on highlighting the essence. In other words, each speech of Hérodiade constitutes a poem as a compressed unit of aestheticized verbal expression. The first speech elevates her body as "lys," which immaculately overcomes her golden hair. The second foregrounds her blond hair as the shining crown

("métal"). The third raises a mirror to reinforce her images in white and gold, which converges on her nudity. The fourth deploys her heart full of blood and anxiety compared to the sun ("jour"). The fifth to tenth, which are short and seemingly only reacting to the nurse's critical interpretation, repeat the imagery which was previously presented by the heroine herself. After the eleventh speech for climax, the twelfth presents her as the sea, the rival of the sky and the last speech describes her lips in red, from which the whole world of the "Scène" expands.

Superimposing such image of dynamism, the "Scène" as the centrality of perception represents an engulfing mirror, tangling with the heroine's shining, blond hair. The "Scène" corresponds to the "façade," that is, gate and face of the whole work, by gathering the five senses, or, metonymically, the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and skin of both the readers and the heroine. This contrasts with — or rather, gives the reversed mirror image of — the beheading in the final "Cantique" and, simultaneously, the preceding "Ouverture" for a portrait of the nurse, the ugly old witch, a shadow of the princess.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the poem's symbolism covers the heroine's vulgarity with the accumulated metonymies. The text irradiates reflections from tangled imagery given by the succession of words for crystalline images, "vierge," "glace," "pur," or "diamant." In the same vein, the climactical assassination in the final canticle is veiled by a rhetorical embellishment intended as an artistic sublimation that metaphorically fuses the severed head into the sun.

Nevertheless, is a scene of decapitation acceptable as any highlight for a work of art? Mallarmé's intended readers supposedly make judgments by the Christian or, at least, modernized measure. One may answer the question by underestimating the complicated poem. For instance, one may declare that the poem's aim is singular, that it is "art for art's sake," and that it is enough for the heroine to occupy the center of enigma as an amalgam of the positive and negative for artistic attraction. According to the "Scène," the princess Hérodiade is

“immacul (ate),” beautiful, and admirable, representing a youthful, auroral beauty as a hidden “lys” in the promising “gardens of amethyst”; this birthstone for February was a symbol of happiness in the Middle Ages.<sup>10</sup> She is, however, offensive as a dangerous, if indirect, cause of the murder to be definitely persecuted within the authorized framework of the Bible. With her remarkable appearance in the Holy Writ, Salome-Hérodiade has been ascribed to the martyr of Saint John. As a flaming dancer, she is the real cause of the crime. According to Mallarmé’s intention, the heroine flings herself into the assassination because the regard of John the Baptist violated her virginity,<sup>11</sup> though it is not indicated in the “Scène” for the preliminary dialogue between the heroine and her nurse-confidante. In the first speech of the “Scène” by Hérodiade, her golden hair is dissolved into the enveloping darkness to be eventually transfigured to sunlight, suggesting her sado-masochistic attraction:

Reculez.

Le blond torrent de mes cheveux immaculés  
 Quand il baigne mon corps solitaire le glace  
 D’horreur, et mes cheveux que la lumière enlace  
 Sont immortels....

“Horreur” represents blackness in the antithesis between “Le blond torrent” and “glace / D’horreur.” Moreover, the “immort (ality)” of the “blond,” the sun, involves the metamorphosed night taking turns with its shining half. The dynamic picture of the cosmic shift is evoked by the beginning imperative “Reculez.” The Oriental blackness represents the potential for the heroine’s refined beauty in Occidental expressivity. The principal feminine character “Reine de Judée” was born in the judicial tribe of the Testament. The textual intentionality directs the real-life reader to recognize the heroine’s insufficient, limited self. Furthermore, the reader is expected to consider the territoriality of the ego to be endlessly expanded in the continuous life-line.

Edited and published by Gardner Davies in 1959, the poet's manuscripts suggest that the beheading represents a camouflaged castration. The heroine fulfills her Freudian desire of the unification with the other for self-multiplication and development in a childish way, seemingly by carrying the severed head between her legs.<sup>12</sup> As a collection of the drafts, the 1959 Davies version — which is entitled *Les Nocces d'Hérodiade: Mystère* — has been evaluated as a major clue for elucidating the revising process of Mallarmé's grand work. Davies points out that the project of writing *Hérodiade* obsessed the author for about 35 years (10). The miscellanea legitimates — or rather requires — the reader's imaginative participation that includes the interpretation of the 1945 Pléiade version with both triadic completeness and unending circularity. His or her creative reading is necessitated for the perfection, or Hegelian, hermeneutical synthesis of the complexed figure of the virgin princess.

## 2. Intra / intertextual mystery

The suspicious personality of Mallarmé's heroine is justified by the heroic qualification using the word "lion" under the blinding heap of metonymies that leave textual fissures. In the polyvalent first speech of the "Scène," *Hérodiade* identifies herself with an insatiable animal-king with the blood from her ancestral conquerors ("Le blond torrent... le glace / D'horreur"; "mes cheveux que la lumière enlace / Sont immortels"). She is led ("Menée") by the reminiscences of ancestors to her bedroom in an old castle, which corresponds to the actress's appearance on the stage ("Entrer"). In her first speech, her room is compared to the cage of lions, "la lourde prison de pierres et de fer," in which haunt the souls of dead kings, viz., "mes vieux lions."

As the "siècle belliqueux" ("Ouverture") has already ended, the gifted princess only frustrates her ambition in a stabilized kingdom in decline represented by "tour cinéraire" ("Ouverture"), the symbol of domestication. The king, or the princess's father, is now on expedition. It is, nonetheless, vainly up north: "le glacier" in the barren

“pays cisalpins,” as is related by the nurse in the “Ouverture.” In the textual anachronism, there is no promising land for the tardy conqueror beyond the “southern,” or Italian Eldorado. It should be noted that originally the story was deployed in the second world of the New Testament. The king seems, or pretends, to be simply optimistic. According to the betraying nurse in the first, mapping “Ouverture,” “Il ne sait pas cela le roi qui salarie / Depuis longtemps la gorge ancienne est tarie.” He cannot commemorate the fallen soldiers (“un tas gisant de cadavres sans coffre”) with a valuable trophy; he only uses the ancient treasure: “il offre / Ses trompettes d’argent obscur aux vieux sapins!”

Pursuing civilizing oppression, the nurse struggles to expatriate the heroine as a bride for another tribe, whether fruitful or barren. As a capable prophet to be a ministerial adviser, the beheaded John may be viewed as one of the desirable candidates on pilgrimage searching for his settlement. The Bibles were written for establishing an ideal kingdom of God. The heroine conceals, in fact, the potential of productive motherhood. She is both a “lily” in her corporeal desert in virginity, as well as a group of sleeping butterflies, viz., “la myrrhe gaie en ses bouteilles closes, / De l’essence ravie aux vieillesses de roses,” according to her nurse in the “Scène.” The princess is a divided Venus, or “black Venus” (Fowlie 136). Both animal and floral merits are suppressed to be frozen into a “diamond.” In the first speech, she pinpoints her core in superlative, dazzling invisibleness, symbolically stripping herself to the nude by the poetized words: “et j’effeuille, / Comme près d’un bassin dont le jet d’eau m’accueille, / Les pâles lys qui sont en moi.” Incidentally, this self-exposing speech of the heroine, which M. E. Wolf qualifies as “metaphorical strip-tease” (36), is challenging for theatrical production. The opera, which foregrounds and incarnates words by the human voices, can be a working solution. The long speech is charged with its musical potential, with the consoling string of sounds [e], [œ], and nasal vowels, accentuated by the acute, stimulative [i] in “lys” and “qui.”<sup>13</sup> It is natural that her internal quintessence should seek for its lost half in the Edenic sky, the sun. Hérodiade’s nostalgia



toward her prenatal cosmos transgresses geological categories made by the segmentation in Genesis, which is, in reality, in overlapping conflicts— animal, floral, mineral, liquid, organic, physical, mental, animate, and inanimate.

The conflicts represent the inner psycho-physical drama of *Hérodiade* in the "Scène" that is apparently without any event. A metaphorical continuity threads "lion," "hair," "mirror," and the firing golden ball in the sky, while the "gardens of amethyst" are connected to ocean, just as the lion, identified with gold, which heightens the heroine's fatal beauty. The irradiant but earthly "gardens" for producing clay stand for the heroine's corporeality with biblical implications. The plurality of the "gardens" denotes both the heroine's body parts and her ancestral connections via an expansive life-line. The gardens include — or, from another angle, transform themselves to — a stratum of gold, "Ors ignorés," representing *Hérodiade*'s muscles and organs. The gold, which is said to be buried under the earth ("Sous le sombre sommeil d'une terre première"), also suggests the correspondence between humanity and nature. When buried at the depth of the heroine's body, the violet stones, "améthyste," represent a frozen womb, the crystallized resources of eroticism. The stones reflect the color of the sea, this baptismal vast water, as well as the hidden firing daylight. The omnipresent stones show the color of the heroine's costume that hides her body.

This expression on the individual / collective mineral and metal corresponds to a visual abstraction for theatrical symbolism, which should be challenging for the producers of postmodern experimental stages of amalgamation. The presentation of her inner drama that simulates an X-ray photograph may add a new aspect. The heroine is attractive because she appropriates all the elements in the world represented by the scrambled identities that involve the mother, nurse, and herself. Via the "Scène," the author aims at the totalizing liquidation of "the conventional European tripartite division of literature into lyric, epic and dramatic" (Worton and Still 22). On the other hand, the heroine

attains to our sympathy, conveying her earnest wish for self-realization with both self-respect and modesty through her speeches. This evokes the author's frustration caused by his unaccomplished work *Hérodiade*. The heroine degrades herself to the valuable, though nonhuman, symbols (i.e., "lion," "lily," and "jewels(-gold)") all of which are displayed in the first comprehensive speech of *Hérodiade* that may be qualified as a big biblical "Word." She cherishes the memory of the milk given by her nurse, to whom she shows her affection, saying "pardonne à ce cœur dur." Her frustrated indomitable unconsciousness is expressed as the mediate but animate "reptile / Inviolé." The symbols from the three categories — animal, floral, and mineral — seek for tetralogic synthesis as humanization. On the stage in a square shape, the synthesis corresponds to the personification of the heroine by an actress from whom the words flow and blossom. The problem is where to find a suitable actress for the complicated heroine's part.

The drama *Hérodiade* is formally and semantically transgressive, though in the frustrating framework of verbal expressions. The light flooding from the self-reflexive text dazzles, but directs the watching reader by presenting branched ways to proceed. The reflective device scrambles the text, which is deconstructed to an intoxicating ebullience of the intersecting rays of light, multiplying the lion's golden manes. In contrast to the absence of the entire structure of the Mallarméan work, besides the obscurity of the biblical model, the heroine symbolizes presence with her imposing name of four syllables in symmetry: "Hérodiade." According to the author, he chose this name over the popular "Salome" because the former is full of poetic resonances (Mallarmé, *Correspondance* 226). Through dreaming, desiring, imagining, alluring, she multiplies and revives with her mirrored doubles as the "wintry" princess of diamond awaiting the spring.<sup>14</sup> The central scene, consisting of the dialogue between the two female characters, is, in fact, dominated by mirrors: from the expressed one, i.e., the princess's dresser located before her in the first speech, to the imaginary mirror made from the text's sound repetitions for self-referentiality.<sup>15</sup>

Through textual supplement by imagination, the readers, including the author himself, are led to cooperate in the feeding of the little princess. The textual doubleness is reinforced by the attached piece "Don du Poëme"; placed before the next long poem, "Hérodiade," in the 1887 first collected poems of Mallarmé, just like a dedication, the sonnet alludes to the author's writing process of the grand work, as well as to itself as an artifact.<sup>16</sup> The sonnet may be viewed as *Hérodiade's* prelude for P.R., suggesting auto-reproduction in the country named "Idumée."<sup>17</sup>

In contrast to the poet's late sonnets in semantic absence including the series of "Tombeaux," his early "Scène" represents double positive with its existential weight of textual formality and meaningful intelligibility given by the human portrait of the princess.<sup>18</sup> The poem makes the outmoded, if essential moral issue forgotten, as thrown by the star-princess "à la française." From another angle, an engaging cultural problem, "art or life," which may be reduced to "consumption or production," rests buried at the textual core, just like treasured resources for the readers' final interpretation.

The sadistic princess in the Bible stimulated many artists of the "fin-de-siècle." They actualized a series of representations, such as G. Moreau's frozen Queen-to-be in his decorative painting, A. Beardsley's symbolic mannequin with its delicate and strained lines in the book illustration, and Wilde's pathetic but stereotyped enamored lacking in inner complex. From a female reader's eye, garmented in extra refinement, they all lack will for — or at least sympathy with — production or creative actualization of their own lives. Those representations are not human, thus not women. The will has, however, no connection with the biblical model's physical condition, virgin or pregnant, which is to be tested and liquidated by a dance before the king. The sequestered virgin heroine, *Hérodiade* or *Salome*, may well be a challenging target for frustrated aggressors, whether male or female, engaged in the interpretation of the reticent ambiguous fable in the Scripture. Mallarmé's adaptation covers itself with symbols and precisosity, focusing on the formulation of the acoustic "sculpt(ure)" of the wintry

princess that evokes both Greek and Roman art: "Oui, c'est pour moi, pour moi, que je fleuris, déserte!" Centered on the old and new, cultural aporia, "beauty or life," Mallarmé's modernized ironical "Scène" anachronistically demands of the interpreter, from its profoundest depth, a classical attempt to make reconciliation of art and morality. These conflicting extremities are represented by a unit of isolated but nodal ego. In her first speech for her own introduction, the heroine deplores: "O femme, un baiser me tûrait / Si la beauté n'était la mort...." The two characters' isolation is embodied by each of their floating but connective speeches — such as "Maintenant?" "Pour moi," and "Adieu" — which are placed sparse among the long alexandrines. The demoniac heritage from Baudelaire, which fermented the decadent tendency of art at the end of the 19th century, needed to be surpassed. The grand source for modern poetry, *Les Fleurs du mal*, consecrates on one hand an idealistic prayer with its chapter named "Spleen et Idéal." Simultaneously, the Mallarméan auto-deconstructive work as a dazzling cosmic luminosity directs the reader to assimilate the incomplete heroine as his or her divided supplemental self for totalization.

The split "Scène" formed by the uncommunicative dialogue embodies the chasm between moral and art, life and culture, or community and self. The text may be compared to a celestial shining body that objectively watches an offense indicated in itself. From the text arises God's eye, this concentrated omnipresence-absolute, taking the Hugolian poem "La conscience" as a crucial intertext. Mallarmé's Hérodiade rivals the ancestral King Hugo as well as the Bible as a big "Word." Because the text is loaded with rays of light from the images of the sun and mirrors, as well as with inter / intratextual echoes, the transfusion of subject and object is quickly realized. The "eye" leads to the modern reader's critical eye, though possibly with tears caused by the brilliance of the Mallarméan work. Capable of closing and destroying the text at anytime, the omnipotent reader vis-à-vis the princess-heroine has the ability to surmount any antagonism by his or

her own interpretation — though within the limit of conventional, cultural consensus in the specific community as a collective self — because interpretation is reduced to permission or prohibition, a result of codification. Another light from everyday reality is expected to dissipate, or rather transfigure, the textual aporia by additional and embellishing molding directed with textual intentionality. The text retains the reader's attention by means of the rivaling principal images of the animal, flower, and precious stones, the interpretation of which develops in a cosmogonic enlargement involving a series of interpretants: "fire," "water," "air," "earth," "magma," and "sunlight." The eye is also *Hérodiade*'s eye looking at herself, this other, in the metamorphosing dresser. In the magical unification of God, the reader, and the doubtful heroine, the heroine-princess can finally be saved. Before everything, she is only a fictive figure, though the process for her salvation corresponds to a poetic function to prepare the reader for facing the harshness of reality.

The reader is also given salvation. With the nurse and the princess, the poetic *Hérodiade* may be viewed as a nursery rhyme. The introductory piece, "Don du Poëme," refers to the birth and feeding of the poet's daughter. In the 1945 version, *Hérodiade* begins with the word "Abolie" ("Ouverture"), evoking a Mallarméan phrase "Aboli bibelot d'inanité sonore" in one of his poems of which the original version has a title "Sonnet allégorique de lui-même."<sup>19</sup> "Bibelot" represents toys among which the Saint's castrated head is included as a transgressive fetish. The mirroring rhyme that gives prescription for fighting with reality should transform nightmare to paradisiac / Edenic dream. *Hérodiade* thus presupposes transgression, the decapitation of Saint John. As inseparable, both of the mental images — nightmare and dream — share a same mind. Self-sufficiency is destined to human life, as is suggested by the solar / lunar Mallarméan work forwarding itself into the actual world of the readers. The books for "children," including *Hérodiade*, are in principle finalized with the consolatory message: "Do not worry, play with me." The message requires negativity to be

positively modified.

Mallarmé's presentation of violence is indirect in the veil of poetic language. It is not necessary to be concerned about any dangerous effect on the uninitiated readers. Different from today's violent media arts, Mallarmé's text is symbolically sophisticated. At first puzzled by his verbal labyrinth, the readers are led to broaden their interpretative capacity through a nourishment by reading, and thus are expected to discover the problem of socialization, or codification, at the textual core, "art or life." Mallarmé's *Hérodiade* allows the readers' ceaseless interpretations.

Fiction and reality commingle after the awaking of the reading "esprit." The word "esprit" — which modernistically combines the physical with mental half-and-half, besides the solar (illumination) with lunar (intoxication) — plays a crucial role in triadically connecting the author, heroine, and readers. The heroine's name, "Hérodiade," is dramatic in itself, symbolizing her inner drama. It is negatively erotic because it is deprived of the letter "s," thus "es(-)prit": Hé(s)ro(s)diade. M. L. Shaw also points out that "dia" means a separation (112). Furthermore, the text is born from the interpretative and creative mind, or "esprit," for segmented systematization to give words. The "sunny" text flowers from a single word, "esprit." Between the nightcap of the Holy Writ and the milky nursery rhymes, intervene detective stories, of which the prototypes are gothic novels. The princess is sequestered in the "tower" like a tomb ("Overture").

In the text's prevailing subversion, who could deny the nurse's crime, the "murder" of the little princess? In the Bible, the mother incites her daughter to kill John the Baptist, thus killing the conscience of her daughter. At the beginning of the "Scène," the heroine is qualified as "phantom" by the nurse who is unreasonably terrified and continues to be accused by the "revived" princess: "Tu vis! ou vois-je ici l'ombre d'une princesse?" The princess implicitly threatens the murderer, demanding a total confession throughout the "Scène," first by the

provoking "Reculez." The nurse is suspicious from the incantatory opening in camouflaged preciousness. She may be viewed as a descendant of the subjugated indigenous gods, "sibylles," similar to the Greek goddesses degraded to the witches by Christianity. According to the lucid princess, the nurse is a "femme née en des siècles malins / Pour la méchanceté des antres sibyllins."<sup>20</sup> The biblical mother's background is also dubious. At least, the nurse has a subconscious motive to wish ill of the king's family. The relation between the king and the nurse may be suspect. Her secret desire can be, and should be, perceived under her garments of euphemism in alexandrines. She feels affection for her "child" *Hérodiade*, though she is jealous, "envieu(se)." The milk given to the princess should be consumed as fuel to the sterile passion of both the women, that is, the wedding with the Saint's severed head. The nurse's following incantation, with the image of the consumed white candle, does not only announce the coming of the eve of the final tragedy: "Et bientôt sa rougeur de triste crépuscule / Pénétrera du corps la cire qui recule!" Her ancestors provide her with the power for accomplishing her ill will:

A l'ongle qui parmi le vitrage s'élève  
 Selon le souvenir des trompettes, le vieux  
 Ciel brûle, et change un doigt en un cierge envieux.

It is natural that the nurse should be disappointed to see the princess in life at the beginning of the "Scène" after her incantatory "Ouverture." With a sigh, the nurse deploras: "Tu vis!" Her disappointment paradoxically emphasizes, however, the somnambulistic princess's elegant appearance on the stage. The heroine perceives the nurse's unfavorable desire. She refuses the approach of the nurse by the first "Reculez," of which the central choking sound [y] — combining [i] with [u] — evokes a scream of the beheaded. The "cul" in "Reculez" leads to "cou" meaning neck. From the beginning, the sound [y] has defamiliarized itself, placed in the first word, "Tu."

What the nurse wishes most may be the assassination of the king by the princess, though the princess takes a displacement (i.e., her at-first-sight lover's beheading) instead of killing her father-king. In that way, she defended the kingdom, herself, and the virtual partner, John the Baptist. The incestuous relationship between the king and his daughter Hérodiade, who hysterically claims her virginity, is suggested, just as in Genesis. F. Chase points out that the biblical Salome was first married to her uncle (50). In Wilde's *Salome*, the king, who repeatedly shows his interest in the heroine, is only her stepfather. Nevertheless, in the Mallarméan symbolic "Scène," the heroine-princess's background is not clarified. Since the heroine is designated as "princesse" in a text as an artistic whole, the king should be considered her father by blood. Furthermore, the original anecdote in the Bible deals with the "incest" accused by John the Baptist. After asking the interlocutor if she is pregnant ("Viendra-t-il parfois?"), the nurse secretly incites the heroine into the vice of incest:

Comment, sinon parmi d'obscures  
 Épouvantes, songer plus implacable encor  
 Et comme suppliant le dieu que le trésor  
 De votre grâce attend! et pour qui, dévorée  
 D'angoisses, gardez-vous la splendeur ignorée  
 Et le mystère vain de votre être?

Incest is an absolute taboo by modern cultures. By denying having such a relationship, the heroine escapes into narcissism. She exists only for herself: "(que je fleuris) pour moi," though the apparently willful princess is constantly threatened by the danger. The repeated French word "eff(-)roi" insinuates both the pressure from the king and her potential of becoming a conquering queen like her successful ancestors; her potential is envied by her degenerated father-king desiring rejuvenation, as well as by the egotist mother-queen. The princess's name, "Hérodiade," conceives that of the king, "Herod." She is also explicitly



qualified by the nurse as "reine." In her first speech, though she comes to explain her worries ("effrois"), she suddenly stops, saying "Je m'arrête." Though illusory, a violent scene is suggested with the "lions"-fathers about to undress her ("de ma robe écartent l'indolence"). The nurse's respectful euphemism that conveys her meanest intention is qualified by the princess as "ironie." The self-deconstructive speech quoted above embodies the nurse as an infectious virus. Moreover, she gives a treacherous kiss and poisonous perfume with her sacrilegious hand: "Ce baiser, ces parfums offerts" and "cette main encore sacrilège."

Nevertheless, the text prevents the reader from problematizing the princess's holiness. Her innocence is guaranteed by her eleventh speech constituting the climax that threads hair, snake, night of ice and snow, dream, heart, and mirror as bombarding litanies. All the elements are entangled and quickly frozen into the star, the diamond in the sky:

J'aime l'horreur d'être vierge et je veux  
 Vivre parmi l'effroi que me font mes cheveux  
 Pour, le soir, retirée en ma couche, reptile  
 Inviolé sentir en la chair inutile  
 Le froid scintillement de ta pâle clarté  
 Toi qui te meurs, toi qui brûles de chasteté,  
 Nuit blanche de glaçons et de neige cruelle!  
 Et ta sœur solitaire, ô ma sœur éternelle  
 Mon rêve montera vers toi: telle déjà,  
 Rare limpidité d'un cœur qui le songea,  
 Je me crois seule en ma monotone patrie  
 Et tout, autour de moi, vit dans l'idolâtrie  
 D'un miroir qui reflète en son calme dormant  
 Hérodiade au clair regard de diamant...  
 O charme dernier, oui! je le sens, je suis seule.

As itself the "charme dernier," the eleventh speech — the latter half of

which is quoted above — consummates the textual crystallization. The speech of 32 alexandrines begins with the white color of lily and ends with the transparency of diamond. The length is, however, insufficient for evoking the heroine's figure in detail, which is not actually described. The speech represents the cosmic whole by presenting the combination of the mental and physical ("Rare limpidité d'un cœur") and the infusion of a totality into the heroine's microcosmic body to complete the fusion of subject and object in superlative transparency ("tout, autour de moi, vit dans l'idolâtrie / D'un miroir qui reflète en son calme dormant / Hérodiade au clair regard de diamant").

With this climax made only of the essence, the central "Scène" focuses on the molding of the heroine's head with hair, skin, a mouth, and her eyes compared to jewels ("purs bijoux" and "diamant"). Fundamentally, mirrors exist for making faces. Even when the text is about to describe her full body, after designating her head as "lys" in her first comprehensive speech, it only pinpoints her last end, "pieds," which emphasizes her head as the corresponding extremity. Her body is just naked, thus not wholly substantiated ("nudité") and out of reach, because it is a star ("étoile"). Her lower body is neglected; it is compared to the unnoted gold ("Ors ignorés"). It is also escaping, just like a slithery snake ("reptile / Inviolé"). The word "Scène" punningly leads to "Seine," which evokes the flowing lines of Hérodiade's hair with waves, hence also leading to "fleuve" and "fleur" as the head of plants. In the "Scène," the hardest jewel, diamond, represents a sublimation of the symbolic head. The final line of Hérodiade's last speech foregrounds the head, which is reorganized to a jeweled crown, apparently falling off from the head: "Se séparer enfin ses froides pierreries."

The principal head has already been molded in the centered piece. Thus, in the final poem, "Cantique de saint Jean," the superfluous head is cut off. This paradoxically emphasizes the main point of the work; Saint John's precious head is unnecessary, though "Do not worry." The fictive decollation (-decoration) does not directly affect reality

and, furthermore, the artistic work, named "Hérodiade," perfects itself by beheading (i.e., eliminating redundancy). As an inevitable stimulation to everyday, ordinary life, art must be complete. Moreover, art-head (viz., the overdetermination of humanness) and life-body should be balanced. The beheading scene simulates the climax of the work because it is a sacrilegious shocking attempt at neglecting the camouflaged climax that is the total "Scène" as a head. The most shocking scene pinpoints a head, which is cut off, as constituting the climax. "Head" literally means a climax. Representing a modernist ambition to reconcile ambivalence, the Mallarméan work therefore aims at both "art and life," which are connected but often in conflict. The publication of the "Scène" as the representative of *Hérodiade* was thus sufficient. It is not necessary for the author to expose other manuscripts to the curious error-prone public eyes. *Hérodiade*, as a symbolic head, in fact stands for a "charme dernier." In the "Scène," which is metonymic (since it features a point), the description of the heroine begins with her corporeal point "doigts" (fingers) marked by the rings ("bagues"). Fundamentally, the verbal text is metonymic, as it is expressed by black lines of letters posited for the reader's interpretation. Moreover, the text is a metonymy for the stage production. The author himself aims at the completion of his grand work to be situated at the forefront of literary history.

In a Freudian way, hatred and love are mingled between the tied couple, the princess and the nurse-mother, under the ambiguous speeches of the Racinean preciousity. The dubious relationship between a father, mother, and newborn daughter is suggested in the attached piece, "Don du Poëme." At least, the custodian nurse is responsible for physical and psychological oppression of the child, *Hérodiade*, which prevented the girl's desirable development of sexual order. It is conceivable that her frustration should have taken the form of the assassination of the martyr. The replacement is efficient to a certain extent, but it amounts to sameness, thus nothing: the destruction of the ancient tribe. The assassinated John may be a rare candidate for the

bridegroom of the enamored princess. Law, religion, education, protocol, formality, and everyday conventions — cultures rival and offend each other. Imperfect culture represents human insufficiency, while, simultaneously, denoting the potential of the challenged human race. The text as a mirrored version of reality is a cultural alarm in the self-sufficient world. In order to nourish thoughts, it offers a break for the interpreter's activities in busy actual life. Through differential signification, the spoiled but victimized heroine's reaction to her surroundings deconstructs the whole text, which represents her psychological complex and frustration, exposing the presuppositional duality of art and morality. Morality is synonymous with humanness; this is a combination of mentality and physicality, or divinity and animality. On the other hand, art embodies a fusion of humanness and inanimateness. The antagonism of overlapped phenomena, art and morality, represents the connected wholeness, thus making up the textual signification that includes the heroine's circular self-identification from inanimateness to divinity.

As the reversed solar version, the virgin princess as a killer-hunter is a substitute of Diana. The "Scène" as the totalized tetralogy to be on the square stage, or mapped world, represents the fusion of the Bibles, nursery rhymes, detective stories, and Greek / Roman mythologies. Diana-Aphrodite, Mary-Eva, Poe-Hugo, and Christ-Judas — those are that androgynous Hérodiade with the Baudelairean shadow, surpassing artistic completion to be an amalgam of deformed images in a mirror with etches. The deformation announces postmodern dramas. The Janus-faced imagery represents the criminal heroine, while, at the same time, simulating the conflictual dialogue with sparks between Hérodiade and the nurse-mother. From the distorted surface of the mirror text, other texts sprout. Their images correspond to each angle of various readers, just as cubist paintings do. Involving numberless readers, textual meanings continue to grow. The trilogic status in the 1945 *Pléiade* version — which fills up the psychological chasm of the heroine as represented by the central, dialogic "Scène" — seeks the

aestheticized completeness as a square shape for both the stage and the world, i.e., the appropriated wholeness. Published during Mallarmé's lifetime, the authorized "Scène" dominates miscellaneous manuscripts. Moreover, the Hegelian dialogue repeats synthesis by a third response, the iterative coming of climaxes that represents the two female figures' each "élan vital."

### 3. Comprisal to a word

The figure of the heroine is created from the superimposition of various levels of dramas which are formalized by the Hegelian dialogue: the transformation of the mineral through the floral and animal, the shifting of days and nights involving the sun, moon, and cosmic darkness, the positioning of reflexive mirrors, the blond lines of the heroine's hair entangled with sunlight, as well as the dramas of families and love. The small ego-head absorbs the wholeness, which follows the Baudelairean "Correspondances," representing a modernist motif. The drama between the daughter-princess and the father-king reflects the conflict between the heroine and the creative and destructive author, Mallarmé. The dramas insinuate, or rather produce, *Hérodiade*'s secret as the cause of her historical self-defense.

Since the secret is not spoken and hidden in the speeches of the two female figures, the secret equals the speeches; the former can be compared to the white face of the heroine, and the latter to her golden hair in waves. These two corporeal parts simulate the sun as the symbol of presence and alchemy. Both the text and its heroine are compared to the sun. The French word "soleil" puns on "seul." The synthesis of the two female figures' speeches, which makes a whole text-words, evokes a picture of the two figures in kiss to be ascribed to the heroine's mouth, this biblical "Word" delivering small words, the textual essence.

The attractiveness of *Hérodiade* resides in the superimposed pictures of the minimum developing to the maximum. The superimposition unifies the poems, presenting the image of an efflorescent rose.

For instance, the heroine's eleventh speech for climax evokes a picture of her birth ("le frisson blanc de ma nudité") from the ancestral nurse, this black soil of fertility ("antres sibyllins").

By the circulating "Scène," Mallarmé intends to embody all-absolute, that is, art; homonymously, "art" leads to existence and presence as an old form of the verb "be." The heroine Hérodiade symbolizes all as a mixture of various figures in the incestuous connection. The poet's esoteric works, such as his late Sonnets, appear to aim at semantic annihilation at first sight, corresponding to the final stage of his poetic career. The layered molding representing his early career, from which emerges the superenriched, thus unseized heroine, emphasizes the comprehensiveness of verbal expression for both the visual and aural, the imaginative and symbolic. Verbal art thus appropriates all the artistic genres. The conventional tool for everyday communication is ironically omnipotent and omniscient as the symbol of human culture. As is declared by the Bible, "In the beginning was the Word." As the general title, "Hérodiade" represents both a word and the gigantic Word comprising all the succeeding verses under the general title, "Hérodiade." The Word freezes all the work. Simultaneously, everything flows from the big Word, half frozen and half melted.

Simulating the central cosmic face, the sun, the Word represents the heroine's mouth in red, from and into which the actress's voice comes and goes. For the author himself, the image of the word "Hérodiade" represents that of an open pomegranate in red (*Correspondance* 226). This flow continues to the Greek siesta full of erotic dreams described in "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune" as "Églogue." In the summer of 1865, Mallarmé wrote the mythical poem as an interlude of *Hérodiade*. In the comical "Faune" as the mirrored pair of the tragical *Hérodiade*, words come forth and continue each local explosion, bursting with images for day-dream, desire, shadow, and light. In "Faune," words are aligned as the "offspring," or semen of *Hérodiade* to be developed by Debussy's orchestration (1894). The work's symbolic colors are green, gold, and white, representing a propagation of plants and a

penetration of sunlight, as concentrated in the expressions such as "ce bois d'or" and "sur l'or glauque de lointaines / Verdures." The bursting images embody the violence of Faune seizing the two nymphs, who are nearly raped. Nevertheless, the violence is fixed inside the words; it is overcome by language as is suggested by the failed rape. The musical and polyvalent words as the monologue of the flutist Faune impress upon the reader the predominance of language over violence. Art is magic, confusing the identities of characters such as the nymphs and *Hérodiade*. But it is additional, thus positive. Since all the readers are language users, they can participate in the completion of the poetic drama. Furthermore, when they recognize that the anti-hero's violence is under verbal expressions, they are more encouraged to join the making of the work, because they stay safe, whether it be the stage production of the play or the emergence of interpretants within imagination.

*Hérodiade* concentrates itself into a central symbolic word, that is, "Scène," in the intertextual fixation by the attached poem "Don du Poème" and the succeeding synecdoche "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune." The guards are doubled. The flowing words of "Faune" are musical and escaping as from the "grappe vide," circulating with desires around the essence represented by the womb of nymphs, or by the mouth of *Hérodiade* as the sun and the Word, this congregation of words. Culminating with a big Word, the poetic enchainment returns to the absolute origin, i.e., a "word," this essential material for making poetry (of which an example represents "*Hérodiade*" with the image of a creative mouth), thus completing incestuous poetic self-sufficiency.

By the "Scène" in red, blond, and white, Mallarmé sets up a universe of art engulfed by a word. Language becomes all, overcoming its own arbitrariness, that is, the conventional relation and distinction of a word and its object-referent. By this wintry theatrical poem, the author intends to "kill" or "behead" the conventional role of verbal signs, the equivocal capacity of language. A word-sign represents a head cut off from its body; the body is compared to the thing arbitrarily connected to the word-sign. The author struggles to demonstrate,

or rather, fictionalize the capability of words as a primary material for artistic expression. Hence, the phantom(-"ombre") of the things-referents as mirror reflections, which are supposedly severed from the words, haunts in the "Scène" with the illusion of golden manes.

The frustrated heroine is identified with the poet in writing, who is doubtful of the success of his work created to save words from their degrading arbitrariness. In making the "Scène," the author is still half-way; the poem needs to deliver the succeeding works including "Faune," "Sonnets," and "Poems of Occasions" to solidify his beliefs in language. The author is vacillating, but overcomes his hesitation by positing black letters for making poetry symbolized by the Oriental *Hérodiade*. This also corresponds to the problematic decapitation, the issue of the work. At least in words, words attain a victory. Nevertheless, the human consciousness tenaciously rises up from the verbal framework, though unable to detach itself from that framework; this is a part of the human consciousness, as being the conventional, linguistic rules in recognition that direct the consciousness. This is the final, self-referential drama that the "Scène" deploys in the mind of the readers, following the magical operation of art that blurs the distinction between content and expression, or tenor and vehicle. The antagonism of the word and mentality-"esprit" is the conflict inside the book as "œuvre" that expands itself to culture and the whole world in creativity. According to the poet himself: "le monde est fait pour aboutir à un beau livre." The interlaced work in self-referential mirrors enriches its meaning, related to the ancient Greek play with masks, the Japanese symbolic Noh play, as well as the Kabuki play using the splashing of colors that evokes sunshine for foregrounding mimetic diversification. The drama of the frustrated heroine's family propagates in everyday context in the mirror reflections making doubles; *Hérodiade* is Mallarmé himself and all the readers.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4. Behead the Father off: the author's Baudelairean complex

If the heroine corresponds to the author Mallarmé, the nurse can be



considered representing his literary master, Baudelaire. In the heroine's speech, "je déteste, moi, le bel azur!" the anagram of the name "Baudelaire," that is, "le bel azur," is shown. At the beginning of the "Scène" (or in the third speech of the nurse), she identifies herself as an old, black book: "comme un vieux livre ou noir." According to the "Ouverture," *Hérodiade's* bed is also a book: "le lit aux pages de vélin."

The dramatic text requires the reader to make a "concrétisation" (Pavis 244-52), i. e., the reader's contextual supplement to the verbal text. Even though that "concrétisation" is to be endlessly continued, the elucidation of the ambivalent, love-hatred relationship between Mallarmé and Baudelaire is a necessary and encouraging step to the making of the "Scène." It covers the surface level of writing involving the author's consciousness, intention, and direct source for his textual creation. The "Scène," as a potential and androgynous "tetralogy," will have an initiative "concrétisation" when the first differential drama between the author and his literary master is superimposed on the textual drama between the heroine and her nurse. Through her speech, the nurse identifies herself as the heroine's director: "J'aimerais / Être à qui le destin réserve vos secrets." With the echo of the previous sounds [m] and [r], the word "Être" puns on "maître" (master).

In *Hérodiade's* speeches, the Baudelairean vocabulary haunts just as the souls of her ancestors: "Funèbre," "ombre," "parfums," "ivresse," "noyer," "languissante," "horreur," "sinistre," "baiser," and "fleurs." The scenic drama between the princess and her nurse represents the author's struggle with his influential master, Baudelaire — to whom he greatly owes the creation of his early poems — to establish his originality (Takeda 104). The overflowing Baudelairean phrases direct the reader to interpret the heroine's curses on her nurse as a reaction of Mallarmé to Baudelaire: for instance, "impiété fameuse," "cette main encore sacrilège," and "Quel sûr démon te jette en le sinistre émoi...." The princess's criticism helps to reconstruct Baudelaire's collected

poems, *Les Fleurs du mal*, as the initial monument of the French symbolism. As an ambitious child-disciple, the author Mallarmé intends to castrate his father Baudelaire. He negates Baudelaire's patriarchal authority, transformed as an oppressed but resistant princess: "Je veux que mes cheveux qui ne sont pas des fleurs...." Mallarmé-Hérodiade attempts to cut him / herself from his and her poetic source, though obsessed with its nostalgic attractiveness: "Arrête dans ton crime / Qui refroidit mon sang vers sa source...." His debt to Baudelaire remains a cause of nostalgia, whereas he tries to overcome the master to be an original poet as "ombre seule et nouvelle fureur." The predecessor Baudelaire was a "frisson nouveau," according to the qualification by Hugo. The late comer dreams of his victory over his "father": "un jour / Qui ne finira pas sans malheur sur la tour...." In the seesaw-like movement of ambivalent feelings, the writer invites a Baudelairean echo; the verses, "Des ondes / Se bercent et, là-bas, sais-tu pas un pays," in Hérodiade's second-to-last speech evoke Baudelaire's poem "L'Invitation au voyage," which is itself nostalgic.

From the beginning, the identity of the heroine is scrambled up; she is on the margin of life and death as a walking phantom. The titling name "Hérodiade" includes two heroes. Her blond hair is antagonistic toward her white body, which is horrified by the attacking hair as the golden mane. Pondering on her own identification, the heroine wonders where she came from: "Par quel attrait / Menée...." The drama of the heroine's divided self leads to the scene between the heroine and her confidante-nurse, and simultaneously to the conflict between Mallarmé and Baudelaire.

The princess Hérodiade, who frustrates before the mirror presenting her naked body, represents Mallarmé's despair caused by his sterility in writing vis-à-vis the Baudelairean model with its enrichment of mirroring reflections. In contrast, Mallarmé's work is poorly white just like the heroine's naked body, leaving the emptiness of white paper, though he struggles to attain his original beauty of refinement that simulates the transparency of mirrors. His intention resides in

purifying and sublimating the Baudelairean beauty of ambivalence (Takeda 104). According to the wintry heroine, "je ne veux rien d'humain et, sculptée...."

The graphic structure of the "Scène" attempts to outline the heroine's body. The first part made by the juxtaposition of lines represents her golden hair. The central part presenting the quick exchange of short speeches between the heroine and her nurse-confidante, which makes up four alexandrines,<sup>22</sup> corresponds to the mouth / navel. The last resumes, however, to make her face, pinpointing her mouth for absorbing milk ("ton lait bu jadis"), besides her eye as a diamond, by quitting halfway the description of her lower body, "jardins d'améthyste." The jewel "améthyste" evokes a head, leading to a star, a diamond in the sky. The description is exceedingly ambiguous, identifying the individual (*Hérodiade*) with the collective (nature) and the mineral ("améthyste") with the metal ("Ors"). The mineral and the metal are grammatically equivalent, as both are appositions in a continuous sentence.<sup>23</sup> The erasure of the heroine's lower body is pursued through the metaphoric verbal superimposition; by the figurative speech of the heroine, her nudity is identified with a dazzling and ephemeral morning star in sunlight: "si le tiède azur d'été, / Vers lui nativement la femme se dévoile, / Me voit dans ma pudeur grelottante d'étoile, / Je meurs!" The princess's figure dazzlingly haunts, following the qualification as the "ombre d'une princesse" in the nurse's first speech. The graphic arrangement of the verbal text faintly evokes a combined two pieces of severed upper bodies. The beheading of Marie-Antoinette is also suggested in the revolutionary "Scène."

Placing a lot of mirrors, *Hérodiade's* inner drama intentionally reflects the author Mallarmé's self-assertion in his poetic tradition, for which he constitutes a part. From another angle, the author's evident rivalry with his master can be considered his intention to animate his "idol," *Hérodiade*. She is, in fact, an ideal doll that the author created. A doll represents art, as well as a margin of life and death. In order for the doll to be a perfect symbol of art, Mallarmé has given the

doll the status of the author's divided self through the suggestive expression that allows the reader to perceive his antagonism with Baudelaire. In short, Mallarmé intends to give life to his doll, so that it may become a transcendental work of art. The author's desire is, before everything, the completion of his poetry.

## 5. Homage to humanity

Despite, or rather, because of its imperfectness with jealousy, the human race could exist. A suite of paradoxical parables in the two Testaments demand the interpreters' commitment to their daily activities in conflicts, thus motivating life and presence pushed to the fore. Utilizing that religious tradition, Mallarmé foregrounds the defective heroine, who is luckily given artful and treacherous light by the symbolist poet. She is dangerous, hence to be punished. She has her excuse, however, for committing the crime. Moreover, is she directly a murderer? The capital scene does not show the beheading hands in the frame of a short poem. The reader may wonder if it came from God's wrath, which sometimes appears arbitrary and becomes the cause of curses such as those of Baudelaire and Mallarmé himself. The poetic text condones the growing heroine. The deconstructing light, as from the upper space, and the congregating subversions, as from the underground, realize the fused wholeness to be molded into the heroine's figure. Before everything, the story is fictive. No one witnessed the scene. At the end of the "Scène," the heroine confesses that she lies: "Adieu. / Vous mentez, ô fleur nue / De mes lèvres." "Lèvres" represents words, punningly leading to "livres," from which flowers meaning. Self-reflexively, the poetic drama discloses its function for fictive creation.

Even after closing the text, the puzzled reader continuously makes interpretations, referring to the words in memory. Presenting the image of circular movement, the poetic text gives the message that it does not make any destruction that might affect the human life system or the existence of this real world. Postponing the judgment on the

heroine in the encouraging echo of the message, "Do not worry," the reader acquires mental provisions, thus preparing him or herself for actual life. With the image of the sun, the Mallarméan work emphasizes advancement, never offering the final solution, or eternal halt. The reader's privilege for creative participation should not be deprived. As a new Bible, the poem's role temporarily finishes, by consecrating a single word to the interpreter for problem-solving, may it be "Hérodiade," "salvation," or "esprit."

The poetic drama *Hérodiade* as double positive represents a totalization of culture, while the sculptural heroine embodies both humanity and art for the foregrounding of humanness; the heroine also involves inanimateness for transcendental divinity. The artifact loaded with concrete human conflicts sublimates itself at the final stage of the poet's career as a series of abstract untitled sonnets focusing on the appropriation of "absence." Through poetic manipulation, the foregrounded "absence" with varied images combines with presence as absorbing everything including death, loss, failure, and nihilism. The Mallarméan late sonnets' message, "Live a life,"<sup>24</sup> presupposes *Hérodiade's* "Live a life, beautifully." The art of metonymy is not distant from the art of absence. As is expressed by the Hegelian dialogue in conflictual heat, the heroine transgresses the categories of good and bad. The hard frames of moral distinction are melted and she completes herself as a beauty connected to life, thus directing us to "condemn the offence and not its perpetrator." Fundamentally art belies. Although the poet seeks for the truth through the ontological questioning of presence at the final stage of his poetic career, he still then relies on art and poetry for the denial of absence. The embellished and foregrounded images of absence make absence turn to presence. The euphoria of universal presence and eternal life is actualized by verbal manipulation in this world of immanence.

In the sense that culture represents the conflictive totality of mentally initiated activities and their results, i. e., art and morality, no human being can live life without culture. In other words, life and

culture are inseparable. The question is how we ameliorate culture, this general sign of humanness. As is suggested by Saint John's death caused by the stressful heroine, culture sometimes takes a form of violence and prison as a bundle of ruling conventions that impose limitation. Our combatting tentatives are, however, promising, because they victoriously accumulate humanness for molding models. By indicating the possibility of various interpretations, Mallarmé's *Hérodiade* prepares a way for developing culture, thereby escaping fascism in paralysis and regression. Humanness represents a willful move for actualizing life in constant renovation, i. e., love that transmutes hatred with trials and errors, which is symbolized by Hérodiade's speeches of cry in colored echoes. Cultural issues are flaringly displayed in Mallarmé's work: verbalization, communication, drama, play, poem, art, dance, education, war, and marriage. Our task is to harmonize art and morality by "esprit," this quintessence of mentality, as is shown by the Mallarméan therapeutic attempt for saving both the criminal heroine and readers.

As an invisible but omniscient observer in the drama for saving the wintry princess as a model for human struggle, Mallarmé remains a creative god, instead of a sterilizing autocrat. The reader is led to recognize that the beheading of Saint John does not constitute a climax for the paradoxically illuminating Mallarméan drama, which is intended to offer the message that violence must be and can be overcome by language, poetry, art, that is, creative love. *Hérodiade*-*"Scène,"* as the work of mirrors, is reflexive and antagonistic. The work aims at creating the citadel for overcoming violence. Violence is appropriated and transmuted to verbal expressions in embellished ambiguity. Is the "Scène" as a sunny work for establishing order consciously intended to make a new culture of antiviolence for an ideal human race? Salome's dance scene, which represents a disorder on earth, is eliminated from the Mallarméan "Scène." Neither is any rape scene presented. Different from Wilde's passionate, simplistic dancer, the resistant princess Hérodiade is frozen under the ice of preciousity, just like the captured Swan

in Mallarmé's Sonnet II.

In conclusion, modernization, which the author himself witnessed and lived in the second half of the 19th century, is closely related to violence, as was attested by a suite of wars ending with atomic bombs, reflecting technological arbitrariness. From another angle, both language and art are antonyms of violence, as the former pair means making, the latter demolishing. Through the Mallarméan poetics of paradoxes, violence may be viewed as being used for setting off art to advantage. In a sense, violence represents double "positive," because it is the redundancy of expressions. Art or violence, life or art: the terms of the questions replace each other in the holistic Mallarméan poem, until the reader reaches with conviction the text's overall conclusion, "life and art," symbolized by the sun in perpetual revival. The camouflaged Mallarméan work's climax is assumed by the "Scène"'s symbolic head as a sun, which is a vehicle of a tenor, i. e., Saint John's head in decapitation. Under the eye of heaven, *Hérodiade* speaks and acts, as a flowering figure in words closest to the sun, this centered cosmic essence, the endless combination of shadow and light. The "Scène" as a head represents the author's strong desire to universalize the ideal life — that is, the harmonized combination of mentality and physicality — through his symbolic verbal art, this representative of modern culture.

#### Notes

1. See Chase 51-52.
2. The first version of the "Scène" was published in the journal, *Le Parnasse contemporain*. The definitive text — the same as the 1945 *Pléiade* version except for some punctuations and three words (an adverb and two articles) — appeared in 1887 in Mallarmé's collected poems, *Poésies* (Mondor and Jean-Aubry 1445). The difference between the first and definitive versions is found slight. According to Chase (52), "Today [i. e., 1969] '*Hérodiade*' is almost always published as a triptych including the '*Ouverture ancienne d'Hérodiade*,'

the 'Scène,' and the 'Cantique de Saint Jean.' This was never the case during Mallarmé's lifetime but the three poems do constitute a logical suite and much can be gained from considering them together." The "Ouverture ancienne" was published by Dr. Bonniot, Mallarmé's son-in-law, in *La Nouvelle Revue Française* in November 1926. The "Cantique de Saint Jean" was also posthumously published in the author's 1913 collected poems.

3. According to G. Davies (*Noces* 21), in the "Scène," "le poète évoque la personnalité de son héroïne." W. Fowlie praises the "Scène," saying that "This is the broadest canvas of the three and contains the full figure of the girl and her mirror-reflection" (139).
4. According to the author himself, "je m'étais mis tout entier" in the work (*Correspondance* 310).
5. The qualification "canonized" is from Worton and Still 144.
6. I owe the bibliographical information to Davies, *Noces* 14.
7. P. Beausire equalizes the princess of innocence and the nurse with her age and experience (77).
8. Chase qualifies Hérodiade as "the symbol of beauty and by extension poetry or the work of art" (61). For P. Walzer, the heroine represents the figure of ideal beauty (123). According to R. Pearson (83), "'Hérodiade' is... a poem about itself."
9. According to R. Cohn (54), the nurse is "a sort of projection of Hérodiade."
10. See "Amethyst."
11. See Davies, *Noces* 16 and Richard 96.
12. See Davies, *Noces* 38, 39.
13. The string of the related consonants, [f] [p] [l] [r], softened by the mixed vowels [œ] and [ã] in Hérodiade's second-to-last speech for the description of burning candles should also be noted in terms of musical effect. The attenuated suite of sounds, which is placed just after the evocation of Venus in the nightly recesses in fire, suggests an onanistic scene.
14. The poet himself emphasizes the connection between the virgin heroine



and winter, by saying: "Il en sortira un cher poème auquel je travaille, et, cet hiver (ou un autre) *Hérodiade*, où je m'étais mis tout entier" (*Correspondance* 310). Fowlie qualifies *Hérodiade* as "the cold bejewelled princess of the winters" (126).

15. Chase ascribes the repetition of the sound "o" in *Hérodiade*'s speech, "O miroir! / Eau froide," to the shape of the mirror, which should be round (63).
16. According to Fowlie, "*Don du Poème* is not only the dedication of *Hérodiade* but it is a commentary on how to see in all poetry" (144). Davies points out that Mallarmé began to write *Hérodiade* in October 1864 and her daughter Geneviève was born in November of the same year (*Mallarmé* 10).
17. See Mondor and Jean-Aubry 1439.
18. According to Davies (*Noces* 12), "Il est probable que la *Scène* que nous connaissons était déjà achevée à la fin de 1865."
19. See Mondor and Jean-Aubry 1488.
20. Chase points out that "sibyls are generally associated with the earlier pre-Christian era" (54).
21. For the identification of *Hérodiade* with the author himself, see Mills 33, Walzer 126-27, and Bourgain-Wattiau 100.
22. See Pearson 85.
23. The verses are as follows:
 

Vous le savez, jardins d'améthyste, enfouis  
 Sans fin dans de savants abîmes éblouis,  
 Ors ignorés, gardant votre antique lumière  
 Sous le sombre sommeil d'une terre première,  
 Vous, pierres où mes yeux comme de purs bijoux  
 Empruntent leur clarté mélodieuse, et vous  
 Métaux qui donnez à ma jeune chevelure  
 Une splendeur fatale et sa massive allure!
24. See Takeda 141-42.

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