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The Diva and the Beast: Susan Strong and the Wagnerism of Aleister Crowley

The suggestion that a musical context might be invoked to explore the works of the occultist, magician, mountaineer, artist, poet and possible double-agent, Aleister Crowley (self-styled 'The Beast') is perhaps not surprising, given Crowley's presence on the cover of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper* album, and the number of references found in popular music lyrics and album titles;[1] the ex-Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page even bought Crowley's Scottish castle, Boleskine House, in 1971.[2] However, links between Crowley and classical music merit further exploration, given that from 1900 onwards, he wrote several poems, prose works and a drama that all made overt references to Richard Wagner and his music. One potential catalyst for this burst of activity was an American soprano who was a prominent figure in musical London at the turn of the twentieth century – Susan Strong (1870-1946). This article explores the nature of Strong's potential influence on Crowley, offering a new context from which to appreciate the Wagnerian references in Crowley's writings.

Before focusing on the Crowley-Strong relationship, a brief overview of Strong's musical career helps to place this discussion in context. Susan Strong was born in Brooklyn, the youngest daughter of the New York State senator Demas Strong. She moved to England in 1894 to continue her studies with the Hungarian tenor, pianist, composer and folksong collector Francis Korbay (1846-1913), who taught at the Royal Academy of Music from 1894 to 1903.[3] It was her extraordinary

impact on the London operatic stage on 16 October 1895 in the role of Sieglinde that made her an overnight sensation; identified as a 'prima donna with a future', she was grouped with the children's writer Ethel Turner and the barrister Marshall Hall as one of the 'rising stars' of 1895.[4] In addition to several Wagnerian stage roles in Britain in this early part of her career (Elsa in *Lohengrin* in 1895, Brünnhilde in *Siegfried* in 1897, and Venus in *Tannhäuser* in 1899), a performance as Aida in 1897 (where she was said to be 'leagues in front of the average Covent Garden soprano'),[5] and a reprise of the Sieglinde role in Naples, Strong also began to develop her American career in 1896, performing with Colonel Mapleson's Opera Company and with the Damrosch Opera Company as Margherita in Gounod's *Faust* at the Academy of Music;[6] after a further trip to America in October 1899 where she again focused on Wagnerian repertoire,[7] she returned to Covent Garden in 1900 in the roles of Venus, Freia (*Das Rheingold*) and Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*; she later appeared on the stage of Daley's Theatre as the Gypsy Woman in Basil Hood's *Ib and Little Christina* in 1904 – the same year that she converted to Roman Catholicism.[8]

Although her American visits continued – including concert and stage performances at the Metropolitan Opera in 1901, and a recital at Mendelssohn Hall in 1906 offering music by Lully, Paisiello, Liszt, Borodin, Quilter, Macdowell, Korbay, Schumann's *Frauenliebe und Leben* and the reconstruction of Beethoven's 'Erlkönig' sketch,[9] Strong remained a regular contributor to British musical life; however, intermittent concerns over the condition of her voice may have led to her abandoning the operatic stage to focus upon the concert platform,[10] and even to her developing a 'controlling interest' in a Baker Street laundry styled as a 'Nettoyage de Linge de Luxe'.[11] She participated in concert versions of Gounod's *Faust* in Norwich (1906) and *Der fliegender Holländer* in Glasgow (1911),[12] was a soloist in Elgar's *The*

Apostles in 1904 and Frederick Cowen's cantata *The Veil* in Leeds in 1912, and performed a range of scenes in a plethora of Wagner concerts in London and the provinces from 1897 to 1910; indeed her inclusion of the closing scene from *Götterdämmerung* in several provincial concerts was often credited with being a British premiere in those towns.[13] Appearances at orchestral concerts – whether selections from *Don Giovanni* at a Philharmonic concert in 1903 or works by Gounod, Mozart, Rubinstein and Schubert at Bournemouth in 1911[14] – were supplemented by her various lieder recitals at the Bechstein Hall between 1902 and 1914, which included 'songs by Liszt which, to her knowledge, have never been sung in London' in 1902,[15] a programme of Haydn, Macdowell, Armas Järnefelt and Sibelius in 1905,[16] a recital of Bach, Schumann, Franz Mikorey, Strauss, Emile Paladilhe, Borodin and Cui in 1906,[17] and a selection by Borodin, Cui and Liszt in 1907.[18] Contributing to what the *New York Times* described as her 'reputation for singing songs which call for intellectual insight in their interpretation' and her deliberate incorporation of music 'of educational value' in her programmes,[19] these recitals came to an end with what appears to be her final British concert appearance on 27 November 1914, where she offered music by Korbay (5 *Schilf-Lieder*), Liszt, Schubert and Arensky. No further references to Strong appear in the British press until news of her death 'after a short illness' in London on 11 March 1946.[20]

The Crowley-Strong relationship

According to Crowley, he first met Strong in May 1899 at a stage production of the *Rites of Isis* at the Théâtre Bodinière in Paris performed by Samuel Mathers, one of the founding members of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and his wife Moina, the younger sister of French philosopher Henri Bergson.[21] Crowley had gone to Paris to confirm his ability to attain the Second Order of the Golden Dawn,

while Mathers needed Crowley's help in dealing with dissatisfaction among Golden Dawn members (including a young W. B. Yeats) in London.[22] Crowley's *Confessions* included a colourful account of his initial attraction to Strong:

> At one of Mathers's semi-public ceremonies, I had met a member of the Order, an American prima donna. She took me by storm and we became engaged. The marriage could not take place immediately, as she had to get rid of some husband that she had left lying about in Texas. But I heard her sing Venus in *Tannhäuser* at Covent Garden; and she courteously insisted on my sampling the goods with which she proposed to endow me. The romance of an intrigue with so famous an artist excited my imagination.[23]

In the event the affair was short-lived, and despite Crowley's attempts to pursue her, the relationship probably lasted no more than a year. Certainly Crowley was still smarting from his rebuffal in 1901; Strong can be easily identified as the subject of his ire in the poem 'Pentecost' from *The Sword of Song*, given the allusion to an emerald engagement ring and a singer as 'scarce forty' (Strong would have been 31 at this point), the obvious Wagnerian references ('But for goodness sake give up attempting Brünnhilde; / Try a boarding-house cook, or a coster's Matilda!'), and the unkind allusion to Strong's size as a 'big beauty' ('Or the dance of Algiers – try your stomach at that! / It's quite in your line, and would bring down your fat.') – reinforced by Crowley's summary in the margin, 'Advice to poet's fat friend'.[24] The latter was an issue that the *Saturday Review* had expressed concern over as early as 1897, noting that Strong was 'treating herself with so little care that she may be shortly included in the list of ladies who are favourites at Covent Garden because they can be seen from the gallery'.[25]

Several elements might be proposed as an explanation for Crowley's attraction to Strong. She was the first of a series of female musicians to whom Crowley was particularly drawn – presumably though a blend of striking looks (see Figure 1), creative talent and otherworldly enthusiasms. Although these women were not formally listed by Crowley among his 'Scarlet Women',[26] some were potential consorts or helpers in his occult explorations, and all were subsequently represented in his poems or prose. One of Crowley's lovers in 1910, for example, was the Australian violinist Leila Waddell, who indulged in ecstatic musical improvisations on Crowley's readings in the 1910 ritual *Rites of Eleusis*:

> I happened to have a few friends in my room in the evening, among them the celebrated Australian violinist, Miss Leila Waddell. It struck me that we might pass the time by a sort of artistic dialogue; I read a piece of poetry from one of the great classics, and she replied with a piece of music suggested by my reading. I retorted with another poem; and the evening developed into a regular controversy. The others were intensely interested in this strange conflict, and in the silence of the room spiritual enthusiasm took hold of us; so acutely that we were all intensely uplifted, to the point in some cases of actual ecstasy, an intoxication of the same kind as that experienced by an assistant at the celebration of the Mass or the performance of Parsifal, but stronger because of its naturalness and primitiveness.[27]

In the same year as the *Rites*, Crowley (under the nom-de-plume Francis Bendick) represented Waddell in the short story 'The Violinist' (1910), where musical performance represents a channel to the spirit world, leading to sexual frenzy and murder. Through Fatal Woman imagery ('Her dress, close-fitted, was of a gold-brown

silk that matched, but could not rival, the coils that bound her brow – glittering and hissing like snakes'),[28] Waddell and her musical prowess were characterised in a typically elaborate fashion:

> Up went her violin, and the bow crossed it [. . .] She tore life and death asunder on her strings. Up, up soared the phoenix of her song; step by step on music's golden scaling-ladder she stormed the citadel of her Desire. The blood flushed and swelled her face beneath its sweat. Her eyes were injected with blood.[29]

Crowley also had an affair with the Yorkshirewoman Alice Richardson, the wife of the Ceylonese art critic, philosopher and historian Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877-1947). It was Richardson's incarnation as Ratan Devi, a mezzo-soprano interpreter of East Indian vocal music able to reproduce the 'quarter tones imperceptible to most European ears' who captivated Crowley;[30] the impact of her singing was described by Crowley in a prose poem published in *Vanity Fair* in 1916:

> Love, like a king-cobra, struck his ruby fangs into my pale heart. Never had such glory fashioned itself in me. I took wing [. . .] The voice was a frail as a tear and strong as space. The flowers, the fireflies, the very rocks became song. The elements were refined and enraptured into music. All things declared their nature; they were eternal, they were beauty, they were love. Nothing fades.[31]

Perhaps the most famous of Crowley's musical lovers was the Canadian-born vaudeville star Eva Tanguay (1879-1947), whose exuberant performance style included Salome's dance of the seven veils, and popular songs such as 'I want someone to go wild with me'. Crowley was apparently so captivated by her in 1918

that he contemplated marriage.[32] His description of her in the *International* reveals the effect that her musical energies had on Crowley:

> She simply keeps on vibrating, both limbs and vocal chords, [sic] without rhythm, tone, melody, or purpose [. . .] She has my nerves, sympathetically irritated, on a razor-edge which is neither pleasure nor pain, but sublime and immedicable stimulation [. . .] She is perpetual irritation without possibility of satisfaction, an Avatar of sex-insomnia [. . .] I could kill myself at this moment for the wild love of her.[33]

Strong possessed an additional attraction for Crowley, however, in her choice of favourite composer: Wagner.[34] In his *Confessions*, Crowley listed Wagner (along with Bach and Beethoven, Haeckel, Helmholtz, Mommsen and Goethe) as part of his boyhood enthusiasm for all things German; an early interest in the 'chivalry and mystery' of the Celtic Church also led to Crowley's familiarity with '*Morte d'Arthur*, *Lohengrin* and *Parsifal*',[35] and it was *Lohengrin* that Crowley experienced during his Cambridge years during a visit to Stockholm in the Christmas vacation of 1896. As his 'first experience of Continental opera', Crowley was 'transported' into his 'own ideal world of love and melody', suitably accompanied by the 'caresses' of his companion with an 'overflowing of ecstatic passion'; his suggestion of appropriate 'temples' in which to perform musical works effectively (rather than in the 'blasphemous and obscene' London concert halls) offers obvious parallels with the *Festspielhaus* at Bayreuth.[36] By the time that Crowley met Strong, she had established herself in Britain as a dramatic soprano of some repute, and was compared favourably to prima donnas such as Emma Albani, Nelly Melba and Maria Brema.[37] It was in Wagnerian roles that she excelled: her extraordinary debut as Sieglinde (her favourite

role, and one that she reprised in Naples in 1896, Covent Garden in 1897, and New York in 1900),[38] was so successful that it led to the erroneous suggestion that she had been engaged for the 1896 Bayreuth Festival;[39] the critic John Runciman confidently described her as the best of 'two or three good Sieglindes in Europe'.[40] Early stage roles as Elsa, Brünnhilde, Freia, Gutrune, Senta and Venus were later selectively reprised in her career as a concert artist, augmented by the *Liebestod* from *Tristan und Isolde*. Her success in these soprano roles testifies to her stamina and vocal agility, although the *New York Times* suggested that she possessed 'more of the range and quality of a mezzo soprano', echoed in *The Lute*'s description of her 'flexible high mezzo-soprano singing'.[41] In terms of vocal quality and production, the epithets 'natural', 'fresh', 'pure', 'beautiful', 'clean', 'clear' and 'powerful' recur throughout reviews of her performances, together with descriptions of 'tenderness and innate discretion';[42] in addition to her declamatory skill, the *Musical Standard* highlighted her equally 'fine appreciation' of *cantabile* passages, sung in *Lohengrin* 'with a captivating enthusiasm and just knowledge of their melodic charm and continuity'.[43] Strong's 1907 recording of Schubert's 'Die junge nonne',[44] although made after she had abandoned the operatic stage, offers some suggestion of her tonal range and musical presence.

However, contemporary critics were clear that her most significant quality as a performer was her 'power of dramatic acting altogether uncommon, which places her in the first rank of operatic vocalists'[45] – something that was particularly striking in her Wagnerian roles. As Sieglinde, there was 'nothing of operatic unreality in her appearance', her 'vocal and dramatic power' were 'simply astonishing in one so inexperienced', and given her 'fine physique', 'unusually dignified stage presence', 'noble' attitudes and 'eloquent' motions, 'her command of beautiful and appropriate

gesture' was 'such as the most experienced singers rarely attain'.[46] A distinctive stage presence was also highlighted in her performance of Elsa in *Lohengrin*:

> Mdme. Albani, at her best, is, in a vocal sense, perhaps, capable of giving a more immaculate performance: but not at all otherwise! Oh, no! Miss Strong has a far greater and more natural dramatic talent [. . .] What she did on the stage was absorbingly interesting in itself [. . .] There was none of that distressingly stagey business, which some think shows laudable experience [. . .] We have never at any evening seen an Elsa who acted with more inborn feeling and force in the love-duet – her dramatic genius was forcibly portrayed here, showing its extraordinary power, intuition, and magnetism.[47]

Runciman cited this dramatic prowess as an antidote to Bayreuth practice. Suggesting that 'the acting of those who follow "the Meister's" traditions cannot compare for grace, power and significance with the acting of [. . .] David Bispham and Susan Strong',[48] he was scathing of the 1896 Bayreuth Festival which compared 'lamentably' with the dramatic skills of Strong, Bispham, Maria Brema and Esther Palliser; bemoaning the 'mechanical regularity' of the 'three or four gestures' practised by Italian singers, and the 'dozen and a half [. . .] not an inch nearer to real acting' at Bayreuth, Runciman singled out Strong in particular for her 'admirable avoidance of Italianisms on the one hand and Germanisms on the other'.[49] Even in the concert scenes critics were struck by Strong's dramatic intelligence; the love scene from Act III of *Siegfried* with Ben Davies was 'a most dramatic rendering', Senta's Ballad possessed 'due dramatic point', and in 1910, Strong's 'considerable dramatic power and a proper appreciation of the psychological aspects' was highlighted in the 'pathos and beauty' of the *Liebestod*, and the 'vividly realistic' final scene from

Götterdämmerung.[50] Korbay's role in terms of the strength and development of these characterisations was not insignificant. Not only did his coaching prioritise the need for dramatic projection ('I fling myself into the part, and imagine myself sometimes to be putting on the light and shade with a heavy hand, while he [Korbay] cries all the while, "more force, broader, stronger"'),[51] but his library of Wagnerian volumes also supplemented the 'sheaf of dainty volumes, from among which you may be sure Wagner literature was not excluded' that were housed in Strong's drawing room,[52] suggestive of an informed approach to Wagnerian roles through background reading.

Crowley's Wagnerian references

Given the heady Wagnerism at the core of the Crowley/Strong relationship, it is not surprising that references to Wagner soon began to appear in Crowley's published writings. Although the vast majority of Crowley's texts focused upon his magical studies (the best known of which include *The Book of Lies*, *Magick in Theory and Practice*, *The Book of the Law*, and material published in *The Equinox* – the organ of the magical order the 'A.·. A.·.'), he also published an extensive body of poetry (including *Rosa Mundi*, described as 'the highwater mark of his achievements as a lyric love poet'),[53] dramatic works, a range of fiction (including the 1917 novel *Moonchild* and a series of short stories outlining the adventures of the occult detective Simon Iff), and several essays in journals such as *The International*, *The Fatherland*, the *Continental Times*, *English Review* and *Vanity Fair*. Before exploring some of the Wagnerian writings, however, two early sonnets written when Crowley was a student at Cambridge are revealing. Combined as 'On hearing the music of Brahms and Tschaikowsky',[54] these were dedicated to C. G. Lamb (1867-1941), a University demonstrator in the Cambridge engineering department who had at one stage hoped to pursue a career in music. As in the later short story 'The Violinist', these sonnets

explored music's sensual qualities, but they established two things: first that Crowley felt the need to describe the intensity of his musical experiences in poetic form, as a form of self-knowledge ('In the strong chain of music I am bound, / And all myself before myself lies bare.'); second, that these ecstatic visionary moments were often set in motion by the focus upon an individual performer: hence the physicality of the opening line of the second sonnet ('The constant ripple of your long white hands') initiates a transition to sound and emotional effect ('The soul-tormenting violin that speaks / Truth, and enunciates all my soul seeks').[55] References elsewhere in Crowley's published writings suggest not only an awareness of Brahms and Tchaikovsky, but also some knowledge of the music of Mozart, Beethoven, Paganini, Chopin, and Richard and Johann Strauss;[56] and his lyrics ('What is money to the bliss / Of the honey of a kiss?') were set to music by Bernard F. Page in 1913 as *The Tango Song*.[57] In terms of Crowley's own musicality, although he admitted in his review of Yvette Guilbert's book *How to sing a song* (1918) that he was 'not a singer' and that 'the technique of music' was 'a mournful mystery' to him,[58] the fact that he produced *The Ragged Ragtime Girls* in March 1913 at the Old Tivoli in London suggests at least some knowledge of the practicalities of mounting a musical performance.

The first significant Wagnerian reference in Crowley's writings, dating from his relationship with Strong (c.1900) but published in 1905 as part of *The Temple of the Holy Ghost*,[59] was the poem 'To Richard Wagner':

> O master of the ring of love, O lord
>
> Of all desires, and king of all the stars,
>
> [. . .] whisper me the secrets of thy heart,
>
> That I may follow and dispel the night,
>
> And fight life through, a comrade unto thee,

> Under Love's banner with the sword of Art!
>
> [ll.1-2, 11-14]

Here the ecstatic tone, deific imagery and characterisation of the composer as a 'strong magician' might suggest parallels with Mallarmé's 'Hommage Á Richard Wagner' (1887).[60] Crowley later reinforced Wagner's mystical status by numbering him (along with Merlin, Arthur, Titurel, Amfortas, Percivale and Goethe) among the members of the Ancient Order of Oriental Templars.[61] This deific image of Wagner also reappears in some of Crowley's wartime writings. In 'We Stand Above', for example, an editorial for the December 1917 number of *The International*, Crowley attacked the polarised positions of 'hack journalists' and their tendency to reduce arguments to national symbols:

> These little minds have no conception of the great ideas which distinguish mind from mannikin. They imagine that Rodin was a Frenchman, and Wagner a German. They do not understand that these persons were not men, but Gods [. . .] the treasures of art, of literature, of music, must this time be preserved for humanity; and we are determined to resist to the death any attack upon those treasures. We are – for the moment – fighting the Germans; but Faust and Siegfried and Zarathustra, the achievement of Kant in philosophy and of Helmholtz in physics, must be put 'out of bounds.' We stand above.[62]

If Crowley saw himself as a Siegfried-like figure in 'To Richard Wagner', (with Strong, by implication, as his Brünnhilde), fighting 'under Love's banner with the sword of Art', it is not surprising that a second form of reference in Crowley's writings developed a focus upon specific Wagnerian imagery or summaries of

operatic narrative. The sword as a symbol of truth appeared only a few years later in the 194-page *The Sword of Song*. Although the two main poems that made up this text ('Ascension Day' and 'Pentecost' – the latter containing the unflattering allusion to Strong, discussed above) were apparently drafted in November 1901 in Madura, while Crowley was planning his ascent of K2, the prologue (where the Wagnerian reference appears) is likely to have been written nearer to the publication date of 1904.[63] The 'Preliminary Invocation', a poem sung by a knight to explain what *The Sword of Song* is, has an overt Wagnerian reference in its title – 'Nothung' – where Crowley's invocation of Siegfried's weapon combines images of music and truth that will herald the dawn of a new era ('My strength this agony of the age / Win through; my music charm the old / Sorrow of years') by inspiring the 'duped herd'.[64] The Nothung imagery was particularly adaptable, appearing frequently in Crowley's writings: Siegfried's striking of the sword upon Wotan's lance is invoked in the magical training of the Earl of Tankerville,[65] and is used in *Magick in Theory and Practice* (1929) to suggest the importance of striking objects during ceremonial magic:

> The reader will recall how Siegfried smote Nothung, the sword of Need, upon the lance of Wotan. By the action Wagner, who was instructed how to apply magical formulae by one of the heads of our Order, intended his hearers to understand that the reign of authority and paternal power had come to an end; that the new master of the world was intellect.[66]

In Crowley's introduction to his 1913 translation of Éliphas Lévi's *The Key of the Mysteries*, Siegfried's successful forging of a new sword out of broken fragments (in contrast to Mime's failed attempts to mend Nothung) is an example of how the magician must formulate a new theory or 'magical weapon' rather than rely upon

ready-made arguments,[67] and the same imagery is invoked in 'The Temple of Solomon the King' (based on Crowley's diaries) to characterise difficulties in establishing a critique of reason:

> This makes me think of Siegfried and the Forging of the Sword. Can I heat my broken Meditation-Sword in the furnace of this despair? Is Discipline the Hammer? At present I am more like Mime than Siegfried; a gibbering ape-like creature, though without his cunning and his purpose.[68]

Crowley's identification with Siegfried may also have led to the poem 'Brünnhilde', first published privately as part of *Rosa Mundi and other love songs* (1905) under the pseudonym H. D. Carr. On the surface a straightforward summary of the narrative at the end of *Die Walküre* ('Be done with the dragons! Awaits for the lord of the sword / On the crest of a mountain the maid, the availing award.'),[69] 'Brünnhilde' may also be an idealised representation of Susan Strong herself, given her association with this role and the autobiographical quality of *Rosa Mundi*; several titled poems in the collection refer to women that he knew or who played an important role in his life – 'Annie' (Annie Besant, who became President of the Theosophical Society in 1907) and 'Mary' (probably Mary Beaton, with whom Crowley fell in love in 1901).[70] Indeed the whole collection was written for Crowley's first 'Scarlet Woman', Rose Kelly (1874-1932), who he married in 1903.

This focus on a Wagnerian character or narrative was also mirrored in later writings,[71] although the majority of these concerned *Parsifal*. Crowley's *Book of Lies* (1913) contains 'The Wound of Amfortas' (a reflection on the fact that 'Amfortas was wounded by his own spear, the spear that had made him king'), and the monologue 'The Swan', written from the point of view of Parsifal himself ('Against this swan I

shot an arrow [. . .] Men smote me; then perceiving that I was but a Pure Fool, they let me pass.').[72] Aspects of the *Parsifal* narrative are also summarised in Crowley's contextualisation of 'The Fool' from the Tarot deck in *The Book of Thoth* (1944):

> Parsifal in his first phase is Der reine Thor, the Pure Fool. His first act is to shoot the sacred swan. It is the wantonness of innocence. In the second act, it is the same quality that enables him to withstand the blandishments of the ladies in the garden of Kundry. Klingsor, the evil magician, who thought to fulfil the conditions of life by self-mutilation, seeing his empire threatened, hurls the sacred lance (which he has stolen from the Mountain of Salvation) at Parsifal, but it remains suspended over the boy's head. Parsifal seizes it; in other words, attains to puberty [. . .]
>
> In the third act, Parsifal's innocence has matured into sanctification; he is the initiated Priest whose function is to create; it is Good Friday, the day of darkness and death. Where shall he seek his salvation? Where is Monsalvat, the mountain of salvation, which he has sought so long in vain? He worships the lance: immediately the way, so long closed to him, is open; the scenery revolves rapidly, there is no need for him to move. He has arrived at the Temple of the Graal. All true ceremonial religion must be solar and phallic in character. It is the wound of Amfortas which has removed the virtue from the temple. (Amfortas is the symbol of the Dying God.)
>
> Accordingly, to redeem the whole situation, to destroy death, to reconsecrate the temple, he has only to plunge the lance into the Holy Grail; he redeems not only Kundry, but himself.[73]

Crowley returned to Wagner's narrative in *Magick in Theory and Practice* – where, in addition to various references to the character of Parsifal, Kundry is linked with 'Armida, Jocasta, Circe' as symbols of a 'force which tempts the Hero' into returning to the Mother figure 'for refuge'[74] – and in his discussion of the nature of love in *The Book of Wisdom or Folly*, an instructional text for his disciple Charles Stansfeld Jones.[75] It is difficult to know how far these later references reflected Crowley's awareness of other literary *Parsifal* refigurings such as Verlaine's sonnet of 1886,[76] but Crowley's meeting with the occultist Theodore Reuss in March 1910 may have been significant, given that Reuss sang in the chorus at the premiere of *Parsifal* at Bayreuth in 1882, and under the pseudonym of Hans von Schelling published *Was muss man von Richard Wagner und seinem Tondramen wissen?* in 1903. One published writing on Wagner that Crowley definitely knew, however, was George Bernard Shaw's *The Perfect Wagnerite* (1898). In Crowley's essay of 1916, *The Gospel According to St Bernard Shaw* – a detailed critique of Shaw's preface to *Androcles and the Lion*, after noting that Shaw 'loves to twist a text to suit his rope', Crowley continued:

> Wagner was a socialist like Mr. Shaw himself; and Mr. Shaw felt himself bound to read the socialism into the operas. The monarchist might just as easily have claimed that Wagner was a king's favourite, and the operas mere praise of kingship. The position would be quite as easy to defend. The result of this was that Mr. Shaw found himself in a very awkward position, for the fourth drama of the Ring would not fit in. He was obliged to ask us to believe that Wagner suddenly and without reason abandoned his great and serious purpose, abandoned the whole course of his thought, and reverted to mere opera with an entire lack of consecution. It is really asking us to believe that

> Wagner became demented, exactly as one would say of an architect who gave forty years of his life to building a cathedral, and then gave up the design and finished it off with minarets.[77]

Autobiography as drama: Crowley's *Tannhäuser*

One additional literary work of Crowley's represents potentially the most significant example of Strong as a catalyst: the drama *Tannhäuser: A Story of All Time*. This was written in a creative frenzy in 1900 following Crowley's experiences with a Mexican prostitute:

> One afternoon, in Mexico, I picked up a woman who attracted me by the insatiable intensity of passion that blazed from her evil inscrutable eyes and tortured her worn face into a whirlpool of seductive sin. I passed some hours with her in her slum; and, walking home, found myself still so unappeased – *lassatus, sed non satiatus* – that my fever developed a delirium whose images assumed the form of Wagner's opera. I went home and sat down at once to write my own poetical and magical version of the story. I neither slept nor ate till it was finished – sixty-seven hours later. I had not been aware of the flight of time. I could not understand why it was afternoon; I thought that I had merely written all night. This play marks the climax of the first period of my poetry.[78]

However, Crowley's *Confessions* juxtaposes this explanation with his description of his whirlwind romance with Strong – suggesting that Strong's influence was also uppermost in Crowley's mind.

The story of Crowley's *Tannhäuser*, which was eventually published in 1902, prefaced with a quotation from Browning's 'Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha' and a dedication to an unnamed lover,[79] is as follows. Act I begins with Tannhäuser riding towards a mountain, seeking the 'mystery of Life and Time, / The Key of all that is not and that is.' On repeating a word from an Egyptian sage that possesses a 'double power', Venus is invoked; she transports the rapt Tannhäuser to the Venusberg. In Act II, Venus and Tannhäuser discuss the nature of their union. Whilst Tannhäuser contrasts the infinite mysteries of their love with the 'petty passion' of earthly relationships, he is troubled by dreams of another being with Venus's likeness. Although Venus tells him to ignore these delusions, and Tannhäuser celebrates the charms of Venus in a song, the visions appear to him again, and he realises that Venus is actually the demon Lilith; Tannhäuser invoked her in error (rather than the true Venus/Hathoör/Mary) because of his 'evil thoughts' when pronouncing the 'double' word. However, Tannhäuser still loves the imposter and her seductive charms, and offers further songs in praise of her.[80] In Act III, a sleeping Tannhäuser experiences visions of the pure Elizabeth, and asks for his freedom to return to her. Although Venus attempts to prevent him, Tannhäuser invokes Mary, and the demon Lilith is defeated. Finding himself at a crossroads in a forest, Tannhäuser hears a shepherd boy playing his flute and singing in praise of Mary and the birth of Spring. Revelling in this 'simple life of love and joy', the hero meets a group of pilgrims who advise him to 'cling to the cross'. The Landgrave and his knights recognise Tannhäuser; explaining that Elizabeth has refused to wed any other suitors, they invite him back to court to join her. The first scene of Act IV, a love scene between Elizabeth and Tannhäuser, is followed by the familiar song contest – here a celebration of the lovers' betrothal rather than (as in Wagner) a competition to (presumably) gain

Elizabeth's hand. After songs on the purity and passions of love, an unknown minstrel disrupts proceedings and causes Tannhäuser to sing of his Venusberg experiences, whereupon the hero is denounced by the court, Elizabeth swoons, and Tannhäuser accuses the knights of hypocrisy, driving them away with his sword. Elizabeth recovers, but realising that they have different conceptions of an ultimate being, decides that marriage to Tannhäuser is impractical, and asks him to gain absolution for his sins in Rome before continuing his quest for the 'ideal God'. In the final act, Tannhäuser returns from Rome, and appears to the knight Heinrich, glowing with an 'unearthly light'. He recounts how the Pope declared himself unable to grant pardon unless his barren staff began to blossom, whereupon Rome was swept away, and Tannhäuser was transported to a 'firmament of secret light', to be transformed by Isis (or Mary) into Osiris. As Orisis, he must die, waiting for the moment to return and redeem the world.

Several aspects of this narrative obviously differ from the Wagnerian account. Given Crowley's particular antipathy towards the Christian religion,[81] it is not surprising that he eschews familiar elements from Wagner's narrative such as the symbolic blossoming of the Pope's staff, or the highlighting of Elizabeth's martyrdom (she simply notes 'Have I not Mary and the angels yet?'), and Crowley's heroic Tannhäuser is able to ward off the Landgrave's knights single-handedly. Crowley's version also sidesteps some of the tensions in Wagner's libretto that have been highlighted as problematic by a range of writers – whether the 'overdetermined' nature of the pilgrimage to Rome (whether Tannhäuser has already intended to make this journey before accepting the hospitality of the Landgrave), the apparently coincidental timing of the song contest, the 'hint' that Elizabeth might be the song contest's prize, the dichotomy between Tannhäuser's promise to 'face the world

unflinchingly as Venus's "valiant champion"' and his 'fall[ing] in line with the values of Wartburg Society' and subsequent penance, or his 'exhibitionist', 'irrational', and 'rash' behaviour in revealing his Venusberg experiences during the song contest – part of the hero's blend of 'impulsiveness and [. . .] extraordinary amnesia'.[82] First, Crowley's Tannhäuser breaks with Venus/Lilith entirely, initially declaring that he will sing 'a new song' of 'praise to God above', removing any difficulties of his oath to Venus. Second, as noted above, the song contest is simply a celebration of Tannhäuser's betrothal to Elizabeth, removing any ambiguity about a 'prize'. Third, in Crowley's version, Tannhäuser's 'confession' of his Venusberg experiences is effected by the 'Unknown Minstrel', representative of 'Tannhäuser in his true self the "Only Being in an Abyss of Light!"', so the hero is not responsible for his actions; and instead of the Landgrave commanding Tannhäuser to journey to Rome, Crowley's protagonist agrees only in response to Elizabeth's entreaty for him to do so after her disappointment. Aware of the 'Hate and disruption and unhappiness' that he has brought 'Unto all purity', Crowley's despairing Tannhäuser follows this path (rather than the Venusberg alternative) despite having 'no hope nor trust in man at all.' Ultimately there is a clear sense of how the seductive delights of the false Venus and the purity of the earthly Elizabeth both threaten to deflect the hero from his ultimate destiny. This reflects Crowley's concept of his drama as a 'series of introspective studies [. . .] in psychology' ('rather the morbid psychology of the Adept than the gross mentality of the ordinary man') that he perceived as being 'nearly identical in scheme with the "Pilgrim's Progress"'; Tannhäuser was symbolic of 'the natural man ignorant of his identity with the Supreme Being', with other characters 'all little parts of Tannhäuser's own consciousness and not real persons at all'.[83]

One might situate Crowley's drama in the context of the many references to and refigurings of the *Tannhäuser* narrative in the late nineteenth century. These included French texts such as Gautier's 1857 review of a performance of *Tannhäuser* at Wiesbaden,[84] Baudelaire's *Wagner et 'Tannhäuser' à Paris* (1861) – the autobiographical resonances of which might suggest parallels with Crowley's approach to his narrative,[85] or contributions to *La Revue wagnérienne* such as Huysman's 'L'Ouverture de Tannhäuser'.[86] There was also a growing preoccupation with the legend in a series of poems, prose and artwork in Britain – whether Richard Monckton Milnes' 'Venus and the Christian Knight' and 'The Northern Knight in Italy' (in *Poetry for the People*, 1840), William Morris's 'The Hill of Venus', Edward Bulwer Lytton and Julian Fane's 'Tannhäuser, or the Battle of the Bards', Swinburne's 'Laus Veneris', R. H. Domenichetti's *The Quest of Sir Bertrand* (1890), John Davidson's 'A Ballad of Tannhäuser' (1896), Theodore Wratislaw's 'Tannhäuser' (*Orchids*, 1896), or Beardsley's novel *Under the Hill* and his illustrations *Tannhäuser* and *The Return of Tannhäuser to the Venusberg*.[87] Of these potential British models, Crowley is unlikely to have found the Christian redemption of Tannhäuser in Bulwer Lytton/Fane appealing. However, he was certainly familiar with the works of Swinburne, noting that the poet had taught him 'the doctrine of justification by sin'.[88] If Crowley knew Swinburne's *Notes on Poems and Reviews*, he would have identified with the poet's desire to 'rehandle the old story in a new fashion',[89] and although Swinburne's 'Laus Veneris' monologue, in contrast to Crowley's drama, focuses upon a Tannhäuser who has chosen to remain with Venus ('not knowing that the [Pope's] staff has in fact budded [. . .] but so convinced of his own damnation that even the budding of the staff would have been irrelevant'),[90] the 'distinct association of eroticism and cruelty'[91] in Swinburne's Venus may have

represented a model for Crowley's approach to this character. Swinburne introduces Venus with vampiric imagery ('her neck / Kissed over close, wears yet a purple speck / Wherein the pained blood falters and goes out; / Soft, and stung softly – fairer for a fleck'),[92] for example, and later combines this with a reference to Medusa, as Tannhäuser describes Venus's catalogue of victims:

> So lie we [. . .] as the souls that were
> Slain in the old time, having found her fair;
> Who, sleeping with her lips upon their eyes,
> Heard sudden serpents hiss across her hair.
>
> Their blood runs round the roots of time like rain;
> She casts them forth and gathers them again;
> With nerve and bone she weaves and multiplies
> Exceeding pleasure out of extreme pain.[93]

Similarly, in Crowley's *Tannhäuser*, not only does Venus-Lilith revel in her snake-like qualities ('Let me assume the belovéd limber shape, / The crested head, the jewelled eyes of death, / And sinuous sinewy glitter of serpenthood', 'Serpent if I were, / My coils should press in dolorous delight / Thy straining bosom, and my kiss were death!'),[94] but his hero associates her with the serpent from the outset ('The snake starts up and hisses / And strikes and – I am thine!', 'Come, love, thy body serpentine and bright!', 'Brood evil, then, in your amazing eyes, / That I may see the serpent grow in you');[95] once Tannhäuser realises that she is the 'woman-serpent' Lilith, he develops the monstrous imagery:

> O sister and O serpent and O mate,

Strike the red fang of hate

Steady and strong, persistent to the heart! [. . .]

Whose long-drawn curse runs venom in my veins?

What dragon spouse consumes me with her breath? [. . .]

Curses leap leprous, epicene, unclean,

The soul of the Obscene

Incarnate in the spirit: and above

Hangs Sin, vast vampire, the corrupt, that swings

Her unredeeming wings

Over the world, and flaps for lust of Death – and Love![96]

Crowley was introduced to the work of Beardsley and the decadents by his intimate friend at Cambridge, Herbert Pollitt; he even commissioned a bookplate and book cover from Beardsley – although the artist died before these were completed.[97] Given that the title character of E. F. Benson's novel *The Babe* (1897) was based on Pollitt,[98] Crowley may also have known Benson's *The Rubicon* (1894), where the femme fatale Lady Eva Hayes uses a performance of *Tannhäuser* to try to ensnare Reggie Davenport.[99] In his *Confessions*, Crowley attempted to distance himself from these decadent models:

> The school of art and literature to which he [Pollitt] introduced me was thus one which I instinctively despised, even while I adored it. The intense refinement of its thought and the blazing brilliance of its technique helped me to key myself up to a pitch of artistry entirely beyond my original scope; but I never allowed myself to fall under its dominion. I was determined to triumph, to find my way out on the other side [. . .] To me it is a question of virility [. .

> .] In my own writings the tempestuous energy of my soul invariably sweeps away the wreckage of my mind. No matter to what depth I plunge, I always end with my wings beating steadily upwards towards the sun.[100]

But if, as Emma Sutton suggests, Beardsley's *Under the Hill* in particular encouraged writers and artists to 'negotiate their own relation' to Wagner as 'authoritative aesthetic progenitor',[101] perhaps Crowley's familiarity with such decadent texts was more significant than he realised.

However, in the context of the Crowley-Strong connection, it is the Tannhäuser-Venus relationship which is open to a more autobiographical interpretation, particularly as Crowley saw Strong's performance in the role of Venus at Covent Garden in 1899. Although the *Musical Times* and *Musical Standard* questioned her characterisation in a performance conducted by Felix Mottl on 15 May 1900 (the former journal suggesting that her Venus was 'stiff, almost to prudery'),[102] the majority of press accounts elsewhere of Strong's various interpretations of this role between 1899 and 1900 mirrored the reception of her earlier Wagnerian readings, underlining the 'dramatic earnestness' of her portrayal,[103] or highlighting Strong's 'interesting' Venus 'of much attraction' that contained 'a seductive and refined grace rarely achieved',[104] and her 'intelligent impersonation [that] was especially successful in showing the real feeling of the goddess toward Tannhäuser.'[105] Having experienced such a dramatic representation of the character, one can only imagine Crowley's excitement over his intimacy with this real-life 'Venus' – surely a catalyst for the intensity of the Tannhäuser-Venus relationship in his drama. Not only does this relationship dominate Crowley's first two acts and the first half of the third (not to mention the retrospective allusions of Tannhäuser's songs in Act IV), but the amount of musical imagery associated with Venus may also be significant. Tannhäuser is

initially struck by Venus's 'Warm breasts that glow with light ephemeral / And move with passionate music to enthral, / To charm, to enchant, to seal the entrancing breath'; even once Lilith's true identity has been revealed, it is their intimate music-making that lies at the core of their relationship:

> VENUS.
>
> Come, sing to me again!
>
> That we may watch each other as you sing;
>
> Feel how it overmasters and o'erwhelms,
>
> The growing pang of hunger for a kiss![106]

Venus's rapturous language once she is invoked ('But our souls leap, flash, unite, / One crownéd column of avenging light, / Fixed and yet floating, infinite, immense, / Caught in the meshes of the cruel sense, / Two kissing breaths of agony and pleasure, / Mixed, crowned, divided, beyond age or measure, / Time, thought, or being!')[107] might even reflect the way that Strong took Crowley 'by storm' at their first meeting. Crowley's prefatory note that 'each foolish utterance of Tannhäuser stings me with shame and memory of old agony' could of course refer to his earlier spiritual naivety, as well as his short-lived affair with Strong.[108] However, it is the overt symbolism of Crowley's characterisation of Venus that invites autobiographical parallels. As the demon Lilith she is of course an imposter, and not who she appears to be; potentially representative of a figure allowing the hero to gain higher knowledge (as Strong would initially have been seen by Crowley), in contrast she turns out to be an impediment to his spiritual development. Crowley would also have enjoyed making her a more spiteful figure than her Wagnerian counterpart – one who simply plans to

use Tannhäuser to gain a ‘human soul’ and to ‘Renew the terrible war against the Gods’:

> Sleep on, poor fool, and in thy sleep deceived
> Defy the very beauty that thou seekest!
> [. . .] I will drag thee down
> Into mine own unending pain and hate
> To be one devil more upon the earth. [. . .]
> Let me assume the belovéd limber shape,
> The crested head, the jewelled eyes of death,
> And sinuous sinewy glitter of serpenthood,
> That I may look once more into his face,
> And, kissing, kill him![109]

Indeed, rather than reluctantly allowing Tannhäuser to leave the Venusberg temporarily (in the belief that he will return after being rejected by the mortal world), Crowley’s Venus tries to deceive the hero into stabbing her (an act that will enable her to inhabit his body), and conjures up a range of creatures to prevent his departure:

> Meanwhile my chant shall tremble in the air,
> And rack thy limbs with poison, wither up
> The fine full blood, breed serpents in thy heart,
> And worms to eat thee. Living thou shalt be
> A sensible corpse, a walking sepulchre.
> Come, come, Apollyon! Come, my Aggereth!
> Belial, cheat his ears and blind his eyes!
> Come, all ye tribes of serpents and foul fish!

> Beetle and worm, I have a feast for you![110]

Even after this invocation to the demons, Venus still offers her 'splendid body, and the shape / Of mighty breasts, and supple limbs, and wide / Lips, and slow almond eyes! Adorable, / Seductive, sombre, moving amorously',[111] so there is an instability at the heart of the Venus-Lilith figure as she lurches between murderous fury and seductive persuasion. Once Tannhäuser-Crowley is able to extricate himself from the demon's embraces, spiritually he never looks back. So despite Crowley's attempt to distance himself from a purely autobiographical reading of *Tannhäuser* ('Let no man dare to reproach me with posing as the hero of my tale [. . .] "it is not 'I' Distinct, but 'I' incorporate in All" [. . .] I am but an asker of questions, such as may be found confronting those who have indeed freed their minds from the conventional commonplaces of the platitudinous, but have not yet dared to uproot the mass of their convictions, and to examine the whole question of religion from its most fundamental source in the consciousness of mankind'),[112] there is a fascinating resonance in the later writings of Oscar Wilde:

> Sometimes, when I listen to the overture to Tannhäuser, I seem indeed to see that comely knight treading delicately on the flower-strewn grass, and to hear the voice of Venus calling to him from the caverned hill. But at other times it speaks to me of a thousand different things, *of myself, it may be, and my own life, or of the lives of others whom one has loved and grown weary of loving*, [my italics] or of the passions that man has known, or of the passions that man has not known, and so has sought for.[113]

If the *Tannhäuser* drama was a reflection of Crowley's conclusion, fuelled by a sense of rejection, that Strong, his real-life Venus, was a cruel, inauthentic and temporary

distraction to his spiritual development, a poetic counterpart offers a contrast in tone. Crowley's poem 'Venus', eventually published in *Oracles* (1905), was apparently written 'in the Temple of the L.I.L., No. 9, Central America',[114] which suggests some time between July 1900 and April 1901.[115] Although not identified overtly, the first-person voice is surely that of Crowley/Tannhäuser, with Strong again as his Venus. Comprising eighteen four-line verses, the poem begins with a representation of Crowley's anxieties over the relationship ('Mistress and maiden and mother, immutable mutable soul! / Love, shalt thou turn to another? Surely I give thee the whole! / Light, shalt thou flicker or darken? Thou and thy lover are met. / Bend from thy heaven and hearken! Life, shalt thou fade or forget?'). The concluding ecstatic entreaty ('Be thou my one desire, my soul in day as in night! / My mind the home of the Higher! My heart the centre of Light!') offers a more idealistic model of the relationship: a union allowing the lover to transcend earthly boundaries, and, by abandoning himself to the goddess's seductive pleasures (as in the Swinburne model), attaining a higher intellectual and emotional plane. This is exactly what Crowley would attempt to do in his subsequent magical experiments with his succession of Scarlet Women.

Although an awareness of the number and range of Wagnerian references in Crowley's published writings from 1900 onwards is fascinating in its own terms, therefore, one inevitably wonders what might have sparked this flurry of activity. Surely, his brief yet intense relationship with the Wagnerian soprano Susan Strong and her particular talent for communicating the dramatic nature of several female roles in Wagner's music dramas was one potential catalyst. Not only might this experience have focused Crowley's mind upon Wagner's deific status and the narratives and imagery of the music dramas – something that he returned to frequently

in his later writings – but the nature and context of poems such as 'Brünnhilde' and the drama *Tannhäuser* suggest the potential for autobiographical readings. Although Crowley's own readership may have been restricted to a relatively small group, to borrow Stoddard Martin's terminology, Crowley ultimately represents an interesting addition to the more familiar 'philosophic Wagnerians' in the French tradition of Baudelaire – 'one who discerned in Wagner's work a symbolic representation of the struggles of his own career.'[116]

[1] Crowley appears on the back row of the 1967 *Sgt. Pepper* cover, between Sri Yukteswar Giri and Mae West; The Doors are grouped around a bust of Crowley on the back cover of their 1970 album *13*. Additional popular music references to Crowley include David Bowie's 'Quicksand' from *Hunky Dory* (1971), Graham Bond's 1971 solo album *Holy Magick* (Bond believed himself to be Crowley's illegitimate son), Ozzy Osbourne's 'Mr. Crowley' from *Blizzard of Oz* (1980), Iron Maiden's 'Moonchild' (from Crowley's novel of the same name) on *Seventh Son of a Seventh Son* (1982), Marilyn Manson's 'Misery Machine' from *Portrait of an American Family* (1994), and Death SS's 1997 album *Do What Thou Wilt*. Mick Jagger, Marianne Faithful and Jimmy Page were also associated with the Crowley-inspired films by Kenneth Anger, *Invocation of My Demon Brother* (1969) and *Lucifer Rising* (1972). See R. Serge Denisoff, *Tarnished Gold: the Record Industry Revisited* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1997), pp.410-22.

[2] Boleskine House appears in Led Zeppelin's video *The Song Remains the Same*, and Crowley's phrases 'Do what thou wilt', 'So mote be it' were inscribed into the vinyl of the US pressings of their 1970 album *Led Zeppelin III*.

[3] After abandoning his early singing career in Hungary owing to vocal strain, Korbay became a pupil of Franz Liszt (his godfather), touring as a pianist. Liszt arranged the unpublished *Zwei Lieder von Francis Korbay*, S368, in 1883. According to *The Times*, 14 March 1913, p.11, Strong attended Korbay's Kensal Green funeral along with other singers including Harry Plunket Greene, Charles Santley and George Henschel.

[4] 'A Prima Donna with a Future', *Minim*, 3 (January 1896), p.58; 'Rising Stars', *Windsor Magazine*, 3 (January 1896), p.81.

[5] J[ohn]. F[rancis]. R[runciman]., 'Concerts and Opera', *Saturday Review*, 83 (22 May 1897), p.574. By 1899, Strong was represented by W. Adlington of Regent Street, the agent for Plunket Greene, Frederick Lamond and Ignacy Paderewski; see the *Chord*, 1 (May 1899), p.81.

[6] 'The Opera Concert', *New York Times*, 16 November 1896, p.5; 'Faust at the Academy', *New York Times*, 10 November 1896, p.5. Strong also sang Elisabeth's Prayer from *Tannhäuser* on this visit.

[7] This included work with the Metropolitan Opera in the roles of Venus in *Tannhäuser*, Elsa in *Lohengrin* (a role she had performed in America on 27 January 1897) and Sieglinde, Freia and Gutrune in *The Ring*, recitals and orchestral concerts; see the *New York Times*, 26 November 1899, p.10; 6 January 1900, p.6; 9 January 1900, p.7; 18 February 1900, p.18; 21 February 1900, p.6; 22 February 1900, p.7; 25 February 1900, p.18. The same newspaper, 'The Opera Season', 17 December 1899, p.20, listed additional roles of Senta, Eva and Isolde, Pamina in *The Magic Flute*, and Selika in Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine*.

[8] J. H. G. B., 'Ib and Little Christina', *Musical Standard*, 21 (16 January 1904), p.37; Francis Cowley Burnand, *The Catholic Who's Who and Year-Book* (London: Burns & Oates, 1908), p.380.

[9] 'Metropolitan Opera Concert', *New York Times*, 14 January 1901, p.7; 'Wagner at the Opera', ibid., 7 March 1901, p.8; 'Susan Strong's Recital', ibid., 31 January 1906, p.11.

[10] See 'Music', *Athenaeum*, 3932 (7 March 1903), p.314; 'Ib and Little Christina', p.37; 'Susan Strong's Recital', *New York Times*, 31 January 1906, p.11.

[11] Burnand, p.381; Oscar Thompson, *The American Singer: A Hundred Years of Success in Opera* (New York: The Dial Press, 1937), p.198.

[12] 'Music in Norwich and District', *Musical Times*, 47 (June 1906), p.415; 'Glasgow', *Musical Times*, 52 (March 1911), p.191.

[13] 'At Random', *Musical Standard*, 32 (18 September 1909), p.188.

[14] 'Music', *Athenaeum*, ibid.; 'Bournemouth. Miss Susan Strong', *Musical Standard*, 36 (23 September 1911), p.199.

[15] Concert of 7 May 1902; see 'People and Things', *Musical Standard*, 17 (26 April 1902), p.267, and 'Musical Gossip', *Athenaeum*, 3918 (29 November 1902), p.731. Strong also included Liszt's lieder 'Schwebe, Schwebe, blaues Auge', 'Bist du', and 'Wo Weilt er?' in a Broadwood concert of 5 November 1903; see 'Broadwood Concerts', *Musical Times*, 44 (December 1903), p.808.

[16] 'Current Events and Concert Notes', *The Violin Times*, 12 (May 1905), p.66.

[17] 'Bechstein Hall.– Miss Strong's Vocal Recital', *Athenaeum*, 4125 (17 November 1906), p.627.

[18] 'Curtius Concert Club', *Musical Standard*, 23 (15 April 1905), p.235. See also 'Vocal Recitals', *Musical Times*, 55 (January 1914), p.46.

[19] 'Concerts of the Week', *New York Times*, 14 January 1906, p.x2.

[20] 'Deaths', *The Times*, 13 March 1946, p.1.

[21] See Mary K. Greer, *Women of the Golden Dawn: Rebels and Priestesses* (Rochester: Park Street Press, 1995), pp.222-3. The ceremonial offerings and dances of the *Rites* were performed in Egyptian dress.

[22] See Richard Kaczynski, *Perdurabo: The Life of Aleister Crowley* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2010), pp.71-80.

[23] *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley: An Autohagiography*, ed. by John Symonds and Kenneth Grant (London: Arkana, 1989), p.204. Given the lack of evidence concerning Strong's 'husband' in Texas, Kaczynski, p.586 n.9, speculates that this may have been a ruse on Strong's part to delay her marriage to Crowley. Strong's relationship with Golden Dawn members may have been established through their Wagnerian enthusiasms; Annie Horniman (a friend of William Ashton Ellis, Wagner's English translator), and Maud Gonne both attended the Bayreuth Festival in the 1880s and 1890s, for example, and W. B. Yeats was introduced to Wagnerian aesthetics by Arthur Symons in the 1890s; see A. J. Bate, 'Yeats and the Symbolist Aesthetic', *Modern Language Notes*, 98.5 (December 1983), 1214-33, Sheila Goodie, *Annie Horniman: A Pioneer in the Theatre* (London: Methuen, 1990), pp.22-3, and Greer, pp.31, 173.

[24] See Aleister Crowley, *The Works of Aleister Crowley,* 3 vols. (Foyers: Society for the Propagation of Religious Truth, 1905-7), II, pp.166-7.

[25] J[ohn]. F[rancis]. R[uncimann]., 'At the Opera', *Saturday Review*, 83 (19 June 1897), p.685. 'The Nibelung's Ring', *New York Times*, 21 February 1900, p.6, referred to Strong's 'buxom Freia, suffering from fatty degeneration of the voice'.

[26] Kenneth Grant, *Aleister Crowley & The Hidden God* (London: Frederick Muller, 1973), pp.19-29, reproduces Crowley's listing of these women as his wife Rose Crowley (née Kelly), Mary d'Este Sturges, Jeanne Foster, Roddie Minor, Marie Röhling, Berta Almira Prykryl and Leah Hirsig.

[27] Crowley, 'The Rites of Eleusis: Their Origin and Meaning', *The Bystander*, 23 November 1910, 384. In addition to her own music and examples from Bach, Schumann, Wieniawski, Mendelssohn, Brahms, Beethoven, Vieuxtemps, Paganini, Tchaikovsky and others in the *Rites*, Waddell also played the *Preislied* from

Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* (representative of an 'intensely sensual passionate piece' in contrast to the 'cold, passionless, intellectual' music of a Brahms *Adagio*) and the *Liebestod* from *Tristan und Isolde* ('her passionate melody, her siren melody, her despairing "Venus in Tannhäuser" melody'); see Crowley, *The Rites of Eleusis* (Thame: Mandrake, 1990), pp.298, 97, 134.

[28] 'The Violinist', *The Equinox*, 1.4 (Fall 1910), 277-80 (p.277). Waddell may also have been the subject of Crowley's later poem, 'Lines to a Young Lady Violinist on her Playing in a Green Dress Designed by the Author', *The Equinox*, 1.9 (Spring 1913), 13-15, which begins 'HER dress clings like a snake of emerald / And gold and ruby to her swaying shape'; see also Crowley's 'Apollo Bestows the Violin', *The Equinox*, 1.7 (Spring 1912), 244-8, where 'a maiden of a close fitting dress of crimson silk broidered with gold' breaks the strings of a lyre, and is given a violin by Apollo that allows her to play 'sounds so ethereal, so soul shaking, so divine', suggestive of improving musicianship by spiritual means.

[29] 'The Violinist', pp.278-9.

[30] *Confessions*, p.773. After experiments in sexual magic, Devi became pregnant with Crowley's child, but had a miscarriage while travelling (apparently at Coomaraswamy's request) from America to Britain; see Lawrence Sutin, *Do What Thou Wilt: A Life of Aleister Crowley* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2000), pp.256-7, Kaczynski, pp.298-308, and *Confessions*, pp.774-5.

[31] 'Ratan Devi: Indian Singer', *Vanity Fair*, May 1916, p.79, written under the pseudonym of Sri Paramahansa Tat. Chapter 4 of Crowley's 1917 story *Not the Life of Sir Roger Bloxam*, http://hermetic.com/crowley/not-the-life-of-sir-roger-bloxam/chapter4.html [accessed 26 June 2012], refers to Devi's 'perfect pianissimo'; Crowley's poem, 'A Perfect Pianissimo', *International,* 9.10 (October 1917), 301,

which begins, ‘Hush to the harps and the hymns! For the soul in my body groans. / I tremble in all my limbs!’, is therefore likely to be related.

[32] Sutin, p.266.

[33] Crowley, ‘Drama Be Damned! An Appreciation of Eva Tanguay’, *International*, 12.4 (April 1918), 127-8. According to the *Syraceuse Herald*, 9 March 1919, p.10, Crowley also completed a painting representative of ‘the dead spirit of Eva Tanguay’.

[34] ‘A Prima Donna with a Future’, p.58.

[35] *Confessions*, pp.746, 121.

[36] Ibid., p.116.

[37] E. A. B., ‘Comments and Opinions’, *Musical Standard*, 11 (8 April 1899), p.210.

[38] See Kathleen Schlesinger, ‘Covent Garden Stars in their Favourite Roles’, *Strand Magazine*, 18 (July 1899), p.85.

[39] ‘Music’, *Athenaeum*, 3547 (19 October 1895), p.541; Amphion, ‘Musical Echoes’, *Bow Bells*, 32 (25 October 1895), p.428; ‘Opera at Covent Garden’, *Academy*, 1224 (19 October 1895), p.323.

[40] J[ohn]. F[rancis]. R[unciman]., ‘The Bayreuth Pilgrimage’, *Saturday Review*, 82 (8 August 1896), p.133.

[41] ‘Susan Strong’s Recital’, *New York Times*, 31 January 1906, p.11; ‘Miss Susan Strong’, *The Lute*, 185 (1 May 1898), n.p.

[42] ‘Opera in English’, *Musical Standard*, 4 (2 November 1895), p.291; ‘Marking Time’, *Musical Standard*, 4 (28 December 1895), p.414; ‘Faust at the Academy’, *New York Times*, 10 November 1896, p.5 and 31 January 1906, p.11; ‘Opera in English’, *Monthly Musical Record*, 25 (November 1895), p.257; ‘Manchester. The Gentlemen’s Concert’, *Musical Standard*, 11 (4 February 1899), p.74, and ‘The Valkyrie’, ibid., 4 (19 October 1895), p.259.

[43] 'Miss Strong's Elsa', *Musical Standard*, 4 (9 November 1895), p.306; see also 'Music', *Athenaeum*, 3550 (9 November 1895), p.652.

[44] See *Schubert, Lieder on Record 1898-1952, Volume I, 1898-1939* (EMI Classics, 7243 5 66151 2 1), released in 1997.

[45] 'Miss Susan Strong', *The Lute*, ibid.; see also Faust at the Academy', p.5, and J[ohn]. F[rancis]. R[unciman]., 'Concerts and Opera', *Saturday Review*, 83 (22 May 1897), p.574.

[46] 'The Valkyrie', p.259; 'The Opera', *Musical News*, 9 (19 October 1895), p.322; 'English Opera', *The Times*, 17 October 1895, p.6. Not all were persuaded, however; 'Opera at Covent Garden', *Musical Opinion and Music Trade Review*, 19 (November 1895), p.87, and G. M., 'The Joy of London', *The Speaker*, 12 (26 October 1895), p.443, suggested 'a tendency to overact' and to be 'at climax all the time'.

[47] 'Miss Strong's Elsa', p.306.

[48] Runciman, 'The Bayreuth Pilgrimage', p.134.

[49] John F. Runciman, 'The Bayreuth Hallucination', *The New Review*, 15 (September 1896), pp.338-9.

[50] 'Leeds Musical Festival', *Musical Standard*, 28 (19 October 1907), p.242; 'Bournemouth. Wagner at the Winter Gardens', *Musical Standard*, 31 (10 April 1909), p.236; H. Y., 'Susan Strong's Return', *Musical Standard*, 33 (11 June 1910), p.376.

[51] M. R., 'Miss Susan Strong', *Magazine of Music*, 12 (December 1895), p.264.

[52] Ibid. These volumes included Gustav Kobbé's analysis of *Die Walküre*, whether in *Wagner's Life and Works* (New York: Schirmer, 1890), or *How to Understand Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung* 6th edn. (London: W. Reeves, 1895).

[53] Sutin, p.115.

[54] *The Works of Aleister Crowley,* I, p.113.

[55] Sonnet I, lines 7-8; sonnet II, lines 1-3. Music also inspired Crowley's art – his painting of Madame Yorska was apparently stimulated by her response to a performance of violin music in Greenwich Village, where Crowley saw her 'throw her head back and close her eyes'; see Kaczynski, p.341, and *An Old Master: The Art of Aleister Crowley* ed. by Hymenaeus Beta (London: The October Gallery, 1998).

[56] See Crowley's 'Honesty is the Best Policy', *The Fatherland*, 1.23 (13 January 1915), p.11, and 1.24 (20 January 1915), p.5, 'The Nonsense about vers libre', *Vanity Fair*, December 1915, p.65, *Magick in Theory and Practice* (Paris: Lecram Press, 1929), pp.202, 287, and *Confessions*, p.838. Crowley's 1917 novel *Moonchild: A Prologue* (London: The Mandrake Press, 1929), includes references to Chopin, Tchaikovsky, Richard Strauss, Fritz Kreisler and Pablo Casals. Crowley was also acquainted with the mathematician and music critic J. W. N. Sullivan (1886-1937) who published *Beethoven: His Spiritual Development* in 1927; see Kaczynski, pp.369-70.

[57] *The Tango Song* (London: Wieland & Co., 1913); the lyrics appear in Mary d'Este and Aleister Crowley, 'The Tango: A Sketch', *The Equinox*, 1.9 (Spring 1913), 295-305, (p.300).

[58] 'The Tank', *The Equinox*, 3.1 (Spring 1919), p.290, a review of Yvette Guilbert's *How to Sing a Song: the Art of Dramatic and Lyric Interpretation* (New York: Macmillan, 1918).

[59] See 'To Richard Wagner', *The Temple of the Holy Ghost*, in *The Works of Aleister Crowley*, I, p.179.

[60] Mallarmé, 'Hommage Á Richard Wagner', first published in the January 1886 issue of *La Revue wagnérienne*, and subsequently as part of *Plusieurs Sonnets* (1887). In a

work apparently ghost-written by Crowley, Evangeline Adams' *Astrology: Your Place in the Sun* (London: Frederic Muller, 1971), p.250, Wagner also appears with Martin Luther within a discussion of the influence of the planet Neptune in Sagittarius, representative of 'Artistic revival' and 'New religious ideas'.

[61] Crowley, Liber LII; see http://hermetic.com/crowley/libers/lib52.html [accessed 2 July 2012].

[62] 'We Stand Above', *International*, 11.12 (December 1917), 354. In 'Honesty is the Best Policy', Crowley included Wagner in a German musical canon (with Bach, Beethoven, Brahms and Strauss) in his criticism of British attempts to boycott German goods. For the complex status of Crowley's wartime writings and his links to British Intelligence, see Richard B. Spence, *Secret Agent 666: Aleister Crowley, British Intelligence and the Occult* (Los Angeles: Feral House, 2008), Sutin, pp.246-51, and Kaczynski, pp.283-93.

[63] *The Sword of Song* was dedicated to Allan Bennett, an analytical chemist and significant magical influence on Crowley, who experimented in ceremonial magic in Crowley's Chancery Lane flat.

[64] 'Nothung', *The Sword of Song*, in *The Works of Aleister Crowley*, II, p.141 (lines 25-7, 23).

[65] *Confessions*, p.550.

[66] *Magick in Theory and Practice*, p.84.

[67] Éliphas Lévi, *The Key of the Mysteries,* trans. by Aleister Crowley (London: Rider and Company, 1969), p.8. Responding to Levi's line 'O nations of Europe, to whom the East stretches forth its hands, unite and push back the northern bear!', Crowley, ibid., 50, was critical of this attempt 'to use Imperialism as his [Lévi's] magical weapon', noting 'All these second-hand swords break, as Wagner saw when he wrote

Siegfried, and invented a new music, a Nothung which has shorn asunder more false sceptres than Wotan's.'

[68] 'The Temple of Solomon the King', *The Equinox*, 1.8 (Fall 1912), 5-48 (pp.11-12). Crowley also invoked Wagnerian storm imagery when discussing his mountaineering exploits in *Confessions*, pp.325, and alluded to Wagner's operatic narratives in general in 'Concerning "Blasphemy" in General & the Rites of Eleusis in Particular', *The Bystander*, 16 October 1910, pp.321-2: 'It should waste my time if I were to prove that the rites of Eleusis, as now being performed at Caxton Hall, are orderly, decorous ceremonies. It is true that at times darkness prevails; so it does in some of Wagner's operas and in certain ceremonies of a mystical character which will occur to the minds of a large section of my male readers.'

[69] 'Brünnhilde', *Rosa Mundi and other love songs*, in *The Works of Aleister Crowley*, III, pp.58-9 (lines 5-6).

[70] Other female figures in titled poems from *Rosa Mundi* ('Dora', and Socrates' wife 'Xantippe') reappear in Crowley's poem *Alexandra, A Birthday Ode* (1905, published in 1906), which catalogues former lovers (although the complete alphabetical sequence might suggest that some of these are imaginary):'To Ann, Bess, Clara, Dora, Ethel, Florrie / Grace, Helen, Ida, Jane, Kate, Lily, May, / Nan, Olga, Prudence, Queenie, we say "Sorry!" / And turn away. / Even from Rosa, Sal, Tabs, Ulrica, Violet, / Winnie, Xantippe, Yolande, Zaza, we / Turn like the magnet to the sailor's eyelet / To thee – to thee.'

[71] 'The Old Man of the Peepul-tree', *International*, 12.4 (April 1918), 107-10, written under the pseudonym James Grahame, borrows characters from *Die Walküre*: Sieglinda [sic] von Eichen lives with her twin brother Siegmund – a composer whose

discarded popular song makes them rich, allowing the Metropolitan Opera to produce Siegmund's opera *Heine's Tod*; their incestuous union occurs later beneath the tree.

[72] Aleister Crowley, *The Book of Lies* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1972), pp.130-1, 44-5.

[73] The Master Therion (Aleister Crowley), *The Book of Thoth* (New York: Samuel Weister, 1974), '"The Rich Fisherman" – Percivale', p.59. See also Crowley's 'The New Parsifal: A Study of Wilhelm II', *Open Court*, 29.8 (August 1915), 499-502 (p.501), where he suggests that Wilhelm II was 'to a certain extent conscious of himself as an incarnation of Lohengrin, Siegfried, Parsifal', and continues: 'Wagner's intellect was socialistic. But the prophet in him, as in every true artist, was aristocratic; and every time he drew, he drew a saviour. His hero was not merely a king, but a holy king. He was the custodian of a sacred treasure; he wielded magic weapons, and wore armour consecrated and invulnerable.'

[74] *Magick in Theory and Practice*, p.34.

[75] See *Liber Aleph Vel CXI: The Book of Wisdom or Folly* (West Point, California: Thelema Publishing Company, 1962), pp.44 and 207, which quotes from the final words of Wagner's *Parsifal* libretto, '"Hoechsten Heiles Wunder! Erloesung dem Erloeser!".' Charles Robert Stansfeld Jones (1886-1950), a follower of Crowley, under the name Frater Acad published *The Chalice of Ecstasy: Being a Magical and Qabalistic Interpretation of the Drama of Parzifal* in 1923. Crowley's Liber 71, published as a supplement in *The Equinox*, 3.1 (Spring 1919), which included his annotations on Mme Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence*, contains several *Parsifal* references in his comments on precepts 49, 57, 70. See http://hermetic.com/crowley/equinox/iii/i/LIBER/lib71a.html [accessed 6 July 2012]

[76] Verlaine's 'Parsifal' was first published in *La Revue wagnérienne* on 8 January 1886.

[77] *Crowley on Christ* ed. by Francis King (London: The C.W. Daniel Company, 1974), p.19. Crowley's *Gospel* was originally published privately (via 200 typewritten copies) in 1953, before being incorporated into King's edition. Its purpose was to show 'that he [Shaw] has entirely misread the Bible, that he has picked out texts to suit his purpose, and ignored those which contradict him; and that he has done this (no doubt unwittingly) in order to prove that the whole essence of the teaching of Jesus is no more or less than the epitome of the political propaganda of the distinguished essayist.'

[78] *Confessions*, pp.204-5.

[79] After its 1902 publication, it was subsequently included in *The Works of Aleister Crowley*, I, pp.222-64; for ease, all subsequent references are to this latter text. Crowley quotes stanzas 15-17 of Browning's 'Master Hugues', the beginning of Act II includes a quotation from Keats' *Lamia* ('But a moment's thought is passion's passing bell'), Act III from Spencer's *Hymn in Honour of Love* ('For Love is lord of truth and loyalty [. . .] Of heavy earth, up to the heaven's height.'), Act IV from Browning's 'Two Poets of Croisic' ('"So, force is sorrow, and each sorrow, force [. . .] Radiant, assured his wild slaves win the race!"') and Act V from Swinburne's *Hertha* ('"One birth of my bosom [. . .] man that is made of me, man that is I".').

[80] In contrast to Tannhäuser's initial songs to Venus in Wagner's opera, where praise is undercut by earthly memories, Crowley's songs focus purely on Tannhäuser's ecstasy in the Venusberg; this creates an increasing sense of abandon at the end of Act II in particular.

[81] Having been a devout Plymouth Brother as a child, Crowley, *Confessions*, p.53, cited the death of his father as a turning point in his spiritual development; he explained, ibid., p.73: 'I was trying to take the view that the Christianity of hypocrisy and cruelty was not true Christianity. I did not hate God or Christ, but merely the God and Christ of the people whom I hated. It was only when the development of my logical faculties supplied the demonstration that the Scriptures support the theology and practice of professing Christians that I was compelled to set myself in opposition to the Bible itself.'

[82] See Mary A. Cicora, 'Aesthetics and Politics at the Song Contest in Wagner's Tannhäuser', *The Germanic Review*, 67.2 (2010), 50-58 (pp.52-3); Dieter Borchmeyer, *Drama and the World of Richard Wagner* trans. by Daphne Ellis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p.145; Ilias Chrissochoidis, Heike Harmgart, Steffen Huck and Wieland Müller, '"Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't": A Counterfactual Analysis of Richard Wagner's *Tannhäuser*', available at http://else.econ.ucl.ac.uk/ papers/uploaded/377.pdf [accessed 17 November 2012]; D. Millar Craig, 'Some Wagner Lapses', *Musical Times*, 80 (1939), 17-18 (p.18); Carl Dahlhaus, *Richard Wagner's Music Dramas* trans. by Mary Whittall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p.25.

[83] Crowley, *Tannhäuser*, pp.224-5.

[84] See Heath Lees, *Mallarmé and Wagner: Music and Poetic Language* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp.66-8.

[85] See Margaret Miner, *Resonant Gaps: Between Baudelaire and Wagner* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995).

[86] Also published in the 1886 edition of Huysman's *Croquis Parisiens*; see J.-K. Huysmans, *Parisian Sketches*, trans. by Brendan King (Sawtree: Dedalus, 2004), and

Andrés Villar, 'The *Gesamtkunsthaus*: Music in *À rebours*', *Image & Narrative*, 16 (February 2006), n.p., available at http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/house_text_museum/villar.htm [accessed 23 November 2012].

[87] Other references to the Tannhäuser legend in British literature include: L. D. G., 'Tannhäuser', *Once a Week*, 5 (17 August 1861), 210-12, an English translation of a 'quaint old ballad', where Tannhäuser returns to live with Venus 'Until the day of judgement, when / God will his doom declare'; Thomas Carlyle's translation of Ludwig Tieck's 'Der getreue Eckart' in *The Works of Thomas Carlyle* ed. by H. D. Traill, 30 vols (London: Chapman and Hall, 1896-9), XXI, pp.233-318, where 'the Tannenhäuser' returns to the Hill of Venus after being refused forgiveness by the Pope; and the brief allusion in Arthur Symons' 'Mundi Victima', published as the final section of *Amoris Victima* (London: Leonard Smithers, 1898). For wider discussions of literary references to the Tannhäuser narrative, see Emma Sutton, *Aubrey Beardsley and British Wagnerism in the 1890s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Jessie L. Weston, *The Legends of the Wagner Drama: Studies in Mythology and Romance* (London: Nutt, 1896); *Wagnerism in European Culture and Politics* ed. by David C. Large and William Weber (Ithica & London: Cornell University Press, 1984); Sessa, *Richard Wagner and the English*; Raymond Furness, *Wagner and Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), pp.32-8; Stoddard Martin, *Wagner to "The Waste Land": A Study of the Relationship of Wagner to English Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1982); William F. Blissett, 'George Moore and Literary Wagnerism', *Comparative Literature*, 13.1 (Winter 1961), 52-71; Florence S. Boos, 'Ten Journeys to the Venusberg: Morris' Drafts for "The Hill of Venus"', *Victorian Poetry*, 39.4 (Winter 2001), 597-616. For a

discussion of Wagner's literary models in *Tannhäuser* (including Tieck, E. T. A. Hoffmann and Heine), see Mary A. Cicora, *From History to Myth: Wagner's Tannhäuser and its Literary Sources* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1992).

[88] *Confessions*, p.142.

[89] Algernon Charles Swinburne, *Notes on Poems and Reviews* (London: John Camden Hotten, 1866), p.16.

[90] Julian Baird, 'Swinburne, Sade, and Blake: The Pleasure-Pain Paradox', *Victorian Poetry*, 9.1/2 (Spring-Summer 1971), 49-75 (p.73).

[91] Clyde K. Hyder, 'Swinburne's *Laus Veneris* and the Tannhäuser Legend', *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association* 45.4 (December 1930), 1202-13 (p.1212). For additional studies of Swinburne's poem, see Baird, pp.63-75, Martin, pp.20-24, Robert Peters, 'The Tannhäuser theme: Swinburne's "Laus Veneris"', *Pre-Raphaelite Review,* 3.1 (1979), 12-28, Thaïs E. Morgan, 'Swinburne's Dramatic Monologues: Sex and Ideology', *Victorian Poetry*, 22.2 (Summer 1984), 175-95 (pp.185-92), and Adam Roberts, 'A Note on the Intrinsic Structure of Swinburne's "Laus Veneris"', *Victorian Poetry*, 28.1 (Spring 1990), 89-92.

[92] Algernon Charles Swinburne, *Laus Veneris and Other Poems and Ballads* (New York: Carleton, 1866), 3, 'Laus Veneris', ll.1-4.

[93] Ibid., 7-8, 'Laus Veneris', ll.105-20.

[94] *Tannhäuser,* pp.234, 235.

[95] Ibid., pp.230, 234, 237.

[96] Ibid., p.239.

[97] Kaczynsky, p.38.

[98] Ibid., p.39.

[99] See E. F. Benson, *The Rubicon* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1894), pp.197-217.

[100] *Confessions*, p.144.

[101] Sutton, p.22. Crowley referred to the nursery building near his Abbey of Thelema at Cafalù in Sicily as 'Under the Hill', suggestive of a familiarity with Beardsley's text; see Sutin, p.285.

[102] 'The Royal Opera', *Musical Times*, 41 (June 1900), p.391, which also noted that Herr Bertram as Wolfram was 'a very clerical, not to say priggish, person'; R. Peggio, 'Opera-House Impressions', *Musical Standard*, 13 (19 May 1900), p.306.

[103] 'Music', *Athenaeum,* 3786 (19 May 1900), p.635; see also 'Royal Opera', *The Times*, 18 June 1900, p.9.

[104] 'Royal Opera', *The Times*, 20 May 1899, p.10; 'Current Notes', *The Lute*, 198 (June 1899), p.804; 'The Royal Opera', *Musical Times*, 40 (June 1899), p.390: all responses to Strong's performance of 15 May 1899 under the conductorship of Karl Muck. Although 'Music', *Athenaeum*, 3734 (20 May 1899), p.634, suggested that she 'revealed more of the tenderness than the passion of the goddess' (a view reinforced in issue 3794, 14 July 1900, p.66) this was a relatively mild criticism in the context of negative responses to Strong's colleagues.

[105] 'The Opera Season', *New York Times*, 20 December 1900, p.8.

[106] *Tannhäuser*, p.237.

[107] Ibid., p.229.

[108] Ibid., p.225.

[109] Ibid., p.234.

[110] Ibid., p.241.

[111] Ibid.

[112] Ibid., p.225.

[113] Wilde, 'The Critic as Artist', *Intentions* (London: Methuen and Co., 1913), pp.144-5. For discussions of Wilde's Wagnerism in relation to *Tannhäuser* in particular, see Martin, pp.33-54. It may also be significant that the character Oliver Haddo in Somerset Maugham's *The Magician* (1908), based on Crowley (even, apparently, to the point of repeating conversations that Crowley had with the author), is associated with decadent literature and imagery; not only does Haddo refer to Wagner when mocking the French landscape painter Meyer about the nature of the discourse that he has just interrupted ('"Was it the celebrated harangue on the greatness of Michael Angelo, or was it the searching analysis of the art of Wagner?"'), but one wonders whether Crowley's Wagnerian interests lay behind Maugham's decadent-laden description of Haddo's seductive pianism as he demonstrates his influence over Margaret: 'His fingers caressed the notes with a peculiar suavity, and he drew out of the piano effects which she had scarcely thought possible. He seemed to put into the notes a troubling, ambiguous passion, and the instrument had the tremulous emotion of a human being. It was strange and terrifying'; see Maugham, *The Magician* (London: Vintage Books, 2000), pp.26, 97. For Crowley's attack (under the pseudonym Oliver Haddo) on *The Magician*, see 'How to Write a Novel! After W. S. Maugham', *Vanity Fair*, 30 December 1908, 838-40.

[114] *The Works of Aleister Crowley*, II, pp.29-30. 'L.I.L' refers to the Lamp of Invisible Light, a new magical order that Crowley created in the Mexican city of Guanajuato; see Kaczynski, p.86. *Oracles* also contains the poem 'To "Elizabeth". With a copy of Tannhäuser'; this can be read as an allusion to Crowley's drama, given the line 'The great magician's soul / Is far too weak to risk Elizabeth'.

[115] Crowley's interest in Venus can also be seen in his earlier poem, 'Ode to Venus Callipyge' in *White Stains* (1898), a reference to the statue housed at the National Archaeological Museum, Naples.

[116] Martin, p.34.