

TRANSGRESSION AND UNITY: LANGUAGE OF
OSCAR WILDE

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A THESIS SUBMITTED
FOR THE DEGREE OF
Ph.D.

Department Of English Studies
University Of Strathclyde
Glasgow

APRIL 1991

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To MY FAMILY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am greatly indebted to my supervisor Dr. Nigel Fabb for his most valuable guidance, genuine encouragement and support throughout this research.

I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Alan Durant for his joint-supervision, help and advices.

I would like to thank Dr. David Jago for his time and Mr. John Doyle for his meticulous proof-reading. I owe special thanks to Dr. Nabil Ades from the Department of Civil Engineering for his help with the computer. Many thanks go to the following people: Mrs. Jean Leithead, Mrs. Margaret Philips, Miss Alison MacDonald and all members of staff in the Programme in Literary Linguistics and the Department Of English Studies at the University Of Strathclyde for all kinds of assistance.

Finally, I would like to thank the government of Syria, Ministry of Higher Education and Damascus University for giving me the chance and the grant to carry out this research.

Abstract

This study in general examines aspects of transgression and unity in Oscar Wilde's particular use of language. Chapter One examines the art of Decadence as an art of difference and explores, in relation to literary style, Oscar Wilde's and the Decadents' attempts to step beyond material, intellectual and spiritual boundaries. Chapter Two examines verbal and non-verbal expressions in Salomé which reflect various kinds of constraints, the individuals' desire to transgress these constraints into self-unity and the implications of such acts of transgression. The chapter also explores, under the light of the same stylistic analysis of Salomé, verbal and non-verbal expressions in The Duchess Of Padua, A Woman Of No Importance and Lady Windermere's Fan which all present elements of boundaries, transgression and self-preservation. Chapter Three celebrates characters in The Importance Of Being Earnest and An Ideal Husband as triumphant over their world and explores the role of form in their perversity of social standards. It examines aspects of familiarisation, defamiliarisation, inclusion and exclusion, and the use of plural style in the language of the main characters. Chapter Four explores concepts of transgression and unity in De Profundis which are expressed at the level of both content - principle of dialectic - and form - use of rhetoric - and exemplified by the characters of Christ and children. The chapter then explores models of transgression and unity and the use of language in Wilde's short stories: The Happy Prince, The Nightingale And The Rose, The Fisherman And His Soul and The Birthday Of The Infanta. Chapter Five concludes the study by exploring the relation between Wilde's style and his views of the world. It advances the idea that Wilde's style in general is dependent on his view of the world: continuous movement and change till the world progresses towards a utopia.

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TRANSGRESSION AND UNITY: LANGUAGE OF
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CHAPTER ONE

DECADENCE: AN ART OF DIFFERENCE

1.0. Introduction

On May the 25th 1895, Oscar Wilde was sentenced to two years imprisonment with hard labour. The following day, *The Evening News* published this account:

He was a social pest, centre of intellectual corruption. He was one of the high priests of a school which attacks all wholesome, manly, simple ideals of English life, and sets up false Gods of decadent culture and intellectual debauchery ... To him and such as him we owe the spread of moral degeneration among young men with abilities sufficient to make them a credit to their country.

Normality - wholesome, manly, simple ideals of life - meant Englishness.

Abnormality was anything outside the boundaries of Englishness: intellectual 'corruption', 'unmanliness', 'unwholesomeness', moral 'degeneration', 'falsehood' and 'debauchery'. Abnormality then was the ideal of the Decadent culture which opposed the dominant Englishness.

It was not only the newspaper's account of Wilde's imprisonment that stated the 'abnormality' of Decadence, but also all previous reviews of Wilde's and the Decadents' works and primarily their *Yellow Book*: *The National Observer* described the *Yellow Book* as:

bizarre, eccentric, uncomfortably heavy to the hand ... the audacious vulgarity and the laborious inelegance of the cover..a misarrangement, inornament..nonsensical and hysterical matter.

'Bizarre', 'eccentric', 'uncomfortable', 'vulgar', 'inelegant', 'misarranged', 'nonsensical' and 'hysterical' are all qualities of difference which reflect departure from the normal English taste. *The Times* suggested:

The *Yellow Book*, an illustrated quarterly, Vol.1, April 1894 (Elkin Mathews and John Lane), is, we suppose, destined to be the organ of the New Literature and the New Art. If the New Art is represented by the cover of this wonderful volume, it is scarcely calculated to attract by its intrinsic beauty or merit; possibly however, it may be intended to attract by its very repulsiveness and insolence, and in that case it is not unlikely to be successful. Its note appears to be a combination of English rowdyism with French lubricity.¹

The Glasgow Herald looked at other 'daring' aspects of the book:

We would also be pleased to know if anything more bizarre than Mr. Beardsley's sketch for a book plate has ever seen light ... And Mr Arthur Symons writes a love poem which would certainly make a Glasgow magistrate blush if it was too suddenly presented to him.²

Punch said: 'Uncleanliness is next to Bodliness'. (Bodley is the name of the publication house of the magazine). *The Westminster* commented on Beardsley's drawings in the magazine:

We do not know that anything would meet the case except a short act of parliament to make this kind of thing illegal.³

'repulsiveness', 'insolence', 'uncleanliness', and 'immorality' are all qualities of difference which marked a departure from the norm. The Decadents' *Yellow Book* was, then, seen as a symptom of illegality and was associated with Oscar Wilde. On the 5th of April 1895, when Oscar Wilde was arrested on charges of immorality, the press announced the following day: 'Arrest of Oscar Wilde, *Yellow Book* under his arm'. The

newspapers said that on his way back, Wilde 'grasped his suede gloves in one hand and seized his stick with the other. Then he picked up from the table a copy of *The Yellow Book* which he placed in security under his left arm'. The arrest of Oscar Wilde marks the end of the Decadent Movement in England: the publishers withdrew all his works and supervised Beardsley's drawings; *The Yellow Book* ended in 1897 with Volume XIII.⁴

The Decadents, then, had what can be called an 'ideology of difference', which Edward Said interprets as a 'supervening actuality of "mixing", of crossing over, of stepping beyond boundaries, which are more creative human activities than staying inside rigidly policed borders'.⁵

Raymond Williams formulates these tendencies as follows:

however dominant a social system may be, the very meaning of its domination involves a limitation or selection of the activities it covers, so that by definition it cannot exhaust all social experience, which therefore always potentially contains space for alternative acts and alternative intentions which are not yet articulated as a social institution or even project.⁶

Decadence in the late 19th century was one of the many currents that emerged challenging the systematic view of the dominant English culture and other cultures which showed differences from, if not opposition to, its ideals. The Decadents stated directly their intention to depart from cultural traditions in their announcement for the publication of *The Yellow Book*:

The aim of ... *The Yellow Book* is to depart as far as may be from the bad old traditions of periodical literature, and to provide an Illustrated Magazine which shall be beautiful as a piece of book making, modern and distinguished in its letter-press and its pictures, and withal popular in the better sense of the word ... Altogether, it is expected that *The Yellow Book* will prove the most interesting, unusual, and important publication of its kind that has ever been undertaken. It will be charming, it will be daring, it will be distinguished.

The explicit intention to be 'daring', 'unusual' and to depart from existing traditions reflect a tendency to be different. Such a literary current, with its alternative acts and intentions, with its qualities of difference, its tendencies of 'abnormality', and its deviation from cultural norms, could not be articulated as a social institution. The normal punishment for going against the 'law' - the norm - was imprisonment. Concepts of prison, boundaries, limits, and borders provide the basis of my metaphor in the rest of the chapter: the Decadents' acts of difference will be explained in the light of their attempt to cross over the bounds of the social world, to break free from the material, intellectual and spiritual prisons. It is important to explore now how the Decadents, with Wilde as a leading figure, practised their acts of 'difference' which went against 'sameness'. It also important to explore how and why these acts were interpreted as intellectual 'corruption' and 'debauchery'.

The Decadents were accused of foreignness in general and Frenchness in particular. Critics up till now hold the view that Wilde's imprisonment was partly due to his allegiance to France. Jean Pierrot

claims that the sentence passed on Wilde in 1895 was 'the product, in fact, not merely of Victorian puritanism but also of a chauvinist reaction to what were seen as excessive French influences on the nation's literature'.⁷ In Oscar Wilde: L'influence Francaise dans son oeuvre, Kelter Hartley examines the strong French influence on Wilde: 'For although his early education, the one imposed on him, had been largely classical, the second, on the other hand, the one acquired by familiarity with books and people of his own choice, was almost entirely French'.⁸ This strong French influence was recognised by their contemporaries. The newspapers' accounts of the Decadents, for example, associated them with France, and implied their departure from the English norms:

1888. *Sat Rev.* 6 Oct. 417/2:

M. Darmesteter has written in a style occasionally a little decadent and over elaborate.

1889. *Ibid.* 22 Nov. 602/2:

..the very noisy and motley crew of younger writers in France..naturalists, decadents, scientific critics, and what not.

1889. *Daily News*, 8 Nov. 5/2: A wonderful piece of 'decadent' French, in a queer new style, as if Rabelais's Limousine had been reborn, with fresh manner of being unintelligible.⁹

Wilde expressed his admiration for 19th century writers who were regarded as having great influence on the Decadents: Gautier, Baudelaire, Poe and Flaubert; and in 1888, Wilde declared himself a disciple of Flaubert. In a letter to W. E. Henley (Dec.1888), Wilde wrote:

To learn how to write English prose I have studied the prose of France. I

am charmed to know that *you* recognise it: that shows I have succeeded ...
Yes! Flaubert is my master, and when I get on with my translation of the
Tentation I shall be Flaubert II, *Roi par grâce de Dieu*.¹⁰

During the period 1885-1895, Wilde introduced French literature to Britain, and was soon acknowledged as the leader of young writers who made up the Decadent movement during the 1890s in Britain. Pierrot considers Wilde one of the people who formulated the aesthetic foundations of the two parallel currents, Decadence in France and the 'Aesthetic school' in Britain. He says that French literature has the right to 'number Wilde among its contributors, since he was in fact deeply imbued with French culture'. Speaking of the French Decadence, Pierrot comments:

By dissociating art once and for all from the goal that had always been assigned to it - the faithful imitation of nature regarded as the supreme norm - the decadent period constituted an essential line of cleavage between the classical esthetic and the modern esthetic ... In working out this esthetic and in making their contemporaries conscious of these new trends, two writers in particular played an essential part: Paul Bourget and Oscar Wilde.¹¹

So, Wilde was at the centre of the French Decadence. He is regarded as having an essential role in the movement's reaction against dominant tendencies of literature such as Naturalist, Realist and Parnassian, which regarded nature as the supreme norm.

Wilde was also at the centre of Mallarmé's Symbolist literary circles in Paris which involved people such as Huysmans, Whistler, Degas, Moreas, Laforgue, Viele-Griffin, Paul Valéry, Henri de Regnier, Pierre Louys, Paul Claudel, Rémy de Gourmont, Andre Gide, Arthur Symons,

George Moore and W.B. Yeats, who all continued the Decadents' reaction against the dominant modes of art. Wilde participated in the movements' subversion of literary style and subject matter.¹² (The Symbolist movement as a whole was introduced to English readers mainly by those artists who attended the symbolists' literary circles in Paris, namely, Oscar Wilde, George Moore, Arthur Symons and W.B. Yeats).

Other critics believe that the fact that some participants in the movements such as Wilde, Shaw, Yeats and Moore, were Irish and not English contributed to the factor of foreignness which was associated to the movement. In Realism, Naturalism and Symbolism, Roland Stromberg explains how the fact that the Decadent movement as a whole had something 'un-English' about it contributed to its literary death. The decade 1890-1900, he suggests:

came to a grand climax with the arrest and trial of Oscar Wilde, its chief symbol. After this England recoiled from everything associated with Wilde and the aesthetic movement. The influence of the French had been strong, and the Irish - Wilde, Shaw, Yeats and Moore - had participated prominently in the literary movement of the nineties, so there seemed something rather un-English about it. Yet for a time even the Victorian public had been affected by this modern movement in literature and in the arts, with its aggressive assault on bourgeois philistinism.¹³

The factor of foreignness took another form: the Decadents' involvement in un-English and un-Victorian elements which was due to their early participation in the Aesthetic movement. Aesthetes produced foreign and oriental elements such as china, ivory, Venetian glasses and enamels,

Japanese fans, blossoms, storks and tall female figures as essential parts in their designs and decorations. Aesthetes included details from foreign lands in their interior decorations. Lord Leighton's house, for example, had elements from the medieval and antique period, from foreign places such as Italy, Rome, Naples, Florence, Cairo, Spain. Aesthetes also included motifs from nature such as shells, oysters, Iris, etc.¹⁴

Some critical works attribute the downfall of the Decadent movement, alongside the concept of foreignness, to the factor of effeminacy. Ian Fletcher suggests that the term Aestheticism was the outcome of much confusion, chauvinism, and moralism: 'It was not British; it was effeminate, it was ... damme, sir, it was French - "poisonous honey"'.¹⁵ The Decadents' art involved womanly elements dominating or fused with manliness and was thought of as disturbing the 'wholesome', 'manly' ideals of the bourgeois model of the family, of the sexual relation, and of the whole political and social order. (I will return to this point later). The Decadents' involvement in elements of womanliness is also due to their early participation in the aesthetic movement which encouraged and intensified the role of women in the movement. The Aesthetic Movement had included women artists and had already been accused of being effeminate. In 1863, the *Saturday Review* protested against the use of the word 'artist' indiscriminately and linked

the Aesthetic movement directly with women. It described those with 'aesthetic sensibilities' or 'artistic temperaments' as discontented with common life. Their precedents are Lydia Languish, Maria Edgeworth's tales of the "Unknown Friend", Byronism, and Wertherism. These artists believe that the artist is born to follow his impulses if he does not harmonise with society.¹⁶ Aesthetic women artists contributed to the movement's thoughts and activities. Lady Eastlake advocated the idea of separating language from thought and ideas. Miranda Hill established a missionary society for the 'diffusion of beauty'. Other women participated in the Dress reform Movement which reacted against the constrictive clothing of the Victorian and wore shapeless garments which rejected the demands of their age. Some women aesthetes like Violet, Duchess of Rutland, Nina Cust, Lady Elcho and Lady Desborough lived in an artistic atmosphere which combined the ideals of Aestheticism, Pre-Raphaelitism and Decadence.¹⁷

The Decadents' involvement in elements of foreignness and womanliness might have contributed in some ways to the movement's downfall. However, I will argue in this chapter that these elements are only parts of a larger literary tradition which they all shared: transgressing the limits of the social world into self-unity. Below, I aim to investigate

elements of transgression and unity, not as they appear in the Decadents' works, but as they come in their literary style. Drawing on some of Wilde's poems and other Decadents' poetic works and paintings, I argue that concepts of transgression and unity are essential parts in their very use of language. Then I explore the possible social reasons behinds their transgression, and finally their attempt to escape into art as they regarded it as the only thing capable of providing unity, perfection and utopia.

1.1. Transgression And Unity In The Art Of Decadence: Literary Linguistic And Social Context:

In The Duchess of Padua, Guido tells the Duchess, a transgressor woman who kills the barrier that stands between her and the fulfilment of herself, about the social interpretation of the act of transgression:

Sin was the barrier, you have raised it up;
Crime was the barrier, you have set it there,
The barrier was murder, and your hand
Has builded it so high it shuts out heaven,
It shuts out God.¹⁸

Guido regards transgression as a social crime against God and society (sin, murder, crime). The very act of transgression which aimed at removing the boundary that stands between the Duchess and the fulfilment of herself, however, has enforced the element of boundaries (the barrier is raised, the barrier is set, is builded, it shuts out heaven, it shuts out God),

and furthered the distance between the transgressor and self-realisation. Later, Guido speaks himself of the wonder of this act and shifts the importance from the social explanation of transgression into the self's interpretation of it:

Guilty? -let those
Who know what a temptation is,
Let those who have not walked as we have done,
In the red fire of passion, whose lives
Are dull and colourless, in a word let those,
If any such there be, who have not loved,
Cast stones against you.¹⁹

Temptation led to transgression, to walk in the fire of passion, to different life, and to Love. Transgression takes the transgressor, not only to self-satisfaction, but also to much better life. It unites the transgressor with the self and with love.

Transgression and unity, which are the focus of this work, were enhanced by the influence of French Symbolism which had two sets of symbolisms leading to two sets of ideas: a human symbolism which expressed the desire to expand and transgress human qualities; and a transcendental symbolism which expressed the desire to extend the physical world and included a perfect and supernatural world which all human kind should aspire to.²⁰ The Decadents' two main aims paralleled the Symbolist ideas: first, individual liberty to express feelings and sensations; secondly, a perfect world which embodies the dream of total

unity. I will explore first the elements of transgression in Wilde's work then examine the elements of unity.²¹

In The Symbolist Movement In Literature, Arthur Symons describes the Decadents' expression of individual liberty in their attempt to evade the limits of the present social world including 'the old bondage of rhetoric, the old bondage of exteriority':

We find a new, an older, sense in the so worn form of things; the world, which we can no longer believe in as the satisfying material object it was to our grandparents, becomes transfigured with a new light; words which long usage had darkened almost out of recognition, take a fresh lustre.²²

The Decadents' desire to step beyond the ordinary use of English words which language had 'darkened out of recognition' can be seen in their use of foreign words or English words that relate to foreign concepts. Volume II of *The Yellow Book*, for example, contained foreign words for titles: "Pour Cousin Louis" by Ella D'Arcy, "Madame Rejane" by Dauphin Meurier and words that denote foreign concepts "The Roman Road" by Kenneth Grahame and "The Composer Of Carmen" By Charles Willeby. The volume included paintings: "The Comedy-Ballet of Marionettes", "The Portrait Of Madame Réjane" by Aubrey Beardsley.²³ Oscar Wilde's poems contained foreign words for titles: "Ave Imperatix", "Louis Napoleon", "Quantum Mutata", "Libertatis Sacra Fames", "Theoretikos", "Sata Decca", "Italia", "Rome Unvisited", "Urbs Sacra Aeterna", "Impression Du Matin", "Athanasia", "Serenade", "La Bella Donna Della Mia Mente", "Phédre",

"Panthea", "Apologia", "Quia Multum Amavi", "Silentium Amoris", etc.²⁴

The Decadents' desire to cross over the limits of the actual world can be seen in their use of words and images that denote limits. Wilde's poem below produces a language of transgression.

The Ballad Of Reading Gaol

I know not whether Laws be right,
Or whether Laws be wrong;
All that we know who lie in gaol
Is that the wall is strong;
And that each day is like a year,
A year whose days are long.

But this I know, that every Law
That men hath made for Man,
Since first Man took his brother's life,
And the sad world began,
But straws the wheat and saves the chaff
With a most evil fan.

This too I know - and wise it were
If each could know the same -
That every prison that men build
Is built with bricks of shame,
And bound with bars lest Christ should see
How men their brother maim.

With bars they blur the gracious moon,
And blind the goodly sun;
And they do well to hide their Hell,
For in it things are done
That Son of God nor son of Man
Ever should look upon!²⁵

This poem has words with social meanings: Laws, right, wrong, goal, prison, shame, etc. Concepts of boundaries and limits may be attributed

to this poem in several ways: words like 'prison' and 'gaol' explicitly denote elements of limits; words like 'right', 'wrong', 'laws' imply elements of boundaries. The poem is full of words and sentences that refer to concepts of limits: wall, bricks of shame, bars, blur the moon, bound, blind the sun, hide their Hell, etc. The verbs that refer to the speaker denote cognition (I know not, but this I know, this too I know), but the verbs which refer to the speaker's world denote situations (laws be, wall is strong, each day is) or dynamic actions held by other people (who lie, men made for Man, man took, straws the wheat, man build, they blur, and blind, they do well to hide). This situation reflects an imprisoned speaker who is unable to perform any action in a world full of action and limits imposed by others. This poem was written by Wilde in his prison, so it is not surprising to find these elements of limits in content and style. The poem below was written by Wilde long time before his imprisonment, yet it produces the same elements of limits.

Sonnet To Liberty

Not that I love thy children whose dull eyes
See nothing save their own unlovely woe,
Whose minds know nothing, nothing care to know;
But that the roar of thy Democracies,
Thy reigns of Terror, thy great Anarchies,
Mirror my wildest passions like the sea
And give my rage a brother - ! Liberty!
For this sake only do thy dissonant cries
Delight my discreet soul, else might all kings
By bloody knout or treacherous cannonades
Rob nations of their right inviolate

And I remain unmoved - and yet, and yet,
These Christs that die upon the barricades
God knows it I am with them, in some things.²⁶

The poems has words with social connotations: (woe, democracies, anarchies, liberty, kings, nations, barricades, etc.). It has frequent verbs but not full of actions: verbs denoting attitudes (I love, delight my soul, I am, I remain), or situation (roar, mirror). Only the verb 'give' denotes action. It contains adjectives that refer to entities that exist on both social and psychological planes and produce negative effects: dull, unlovely, wildest, dissonant, discreet, bloody, treacherous, etc. Concepts of limits and prisons may be attributed to this poem in many ways. The social and cultural words such as 'kings', 'nations', 'barricades' may denote elements of limits. Words like 'anarchy', 'democracy' and 'liberty' denote the removal of limits or the reaction against them. However, the verbs (love, delight, I am, I remain) denote lack of action on the part of the speaker. Nouns and adjectives such as 'dull eyes', 'unlovely woe', 'wildest passion', 'discreet soul', 'bloody knout', 'treacherous cannonades', and 'dissonant cries' refer to psychological entities and denote the limits of human passions which imprison the soul such as hate, anger and rage.²⁷

So, in the above two poems, there are elements of boundaries, little action on the part of the speaker who examines a world full of actions. These elements of transgression were produced in many other poems,

particularly in those which refer to foreign lands. In "Louis Napoleon", Wilde describes the achievements of the French:

That France hath kissed the mouth of Liberty,
And found it sweeter than his honied bees,
And that the giant wave Democracy
Breaks on the shore where kings lay couched at ease.²⁸

Notice again the social references (liberty, Democracy, kings) which denote some elements of limits. Verbs here (kissed, found, breaks) are dynamic and refer to foreign lands. In "Sonnet On Approaching Italy", he describes his feelings on the sight of Italy:

I reached the Alps: the soul within me burned,
Italia, my Italia, at thy name:
And when from out the mountains' heart I came
And saw the land for which my life had yearned.²⁹

Most of the verbs which relate to the speaker are either cognitive (saw), or intransitive which do not require object (burned, came, reached). They do not denote dynamic actions which occurred in the above poem (kissed and breaks). Wilde describes Italy in many other poems; "Italia", "SONNET Written In Holy Week At Genoa", "Rome Unvisited", "Urbs Sacra Aeterna" (sacred and eternal city), "SONNET On The Dies Irae Sung In The Sistine Chapel" and "Easter Day".³⁰ In Oscar Wilde, Ellmann notes that when Wilde visited Verona in his first trip to Italy, he wrote a sonnet about Dante's exile there in 1303-04:

behind my prison's blinded bars
I do possess what none can take away
My Love, and all the glory of the stars.³¹

Wilde surrounds the poet with a prison imagery. He uses words and images that relate to bars (prison, blinded bars) on the one hand and images that relate freedom on the other (love, stars). Wilde also admired ancient Greece. In "The New Helen", Wilde writes:

Where hast thou been since round the walls of Troy
 The sons of God fought in that Great emprise?
 Why dost thou walk our common earth again?
 Hast thou forgotten that impassioned boy,
 His purple galley and his Tyrian men
 And treacherous Aphrodite's mocking eyes?
 For surely it was thou, who, like a star
 Hung in the silver silence of the night,
 Didst lure the old world's chivalry and might
 Into the clamorous crimson waves of war!

Wilde then mentions the wonders of the old world: the temple of the 'Empress Sidon', the Cyprian sailor, calpé, the cliffs of Herakles, young Sarpedon, Memnon, Hector, Thetis' child, Ilion, Calypso, Lethaeon stream and Erycine. He finally asks Helen, who symbolises the Greek chivalric and beautiful times, to come and illuminate the present:

For we, close-caught in the wide nets of Fate,
 Wearied with waiting for the World's Desire,
 Aimlessly wandered in the house of gloom,
 Aimlessly sought some slumberous anodyne
 For wasted lives, for lingering wretchedness,
 Till we beheld thy re-arisen shrine,
 And the white glory of thy loveliness.³²

Notice again the use of words that denote boundaries: nets, world, house, shrine (noun); and close-caught (adjectives). He also employs words that relate to the present helplessness: wearied, wasted, slumberous, lingering

(adjective); and aimlessly (adverb). These words help to make a contrast between the helplessness in contemporary England with ancient times and bring an allusion and a nostalgia to what seemed as past prestigious eras - un-Victorian times. In "Quantum Mutata" (How much changed), Wilde talks about past English glories:

There was a time in Europe long ago
 When no man died for freedom anywhere,
 But England's lion leaping from its lair
 Laid hands on the oppressor! it was so
 While England could a great republic show

Wilde wonders in this poem why England has changed so much:

How comes it then that from such high estate
 We have thus fallen, save that Luxury.³³

In "Theoretikos", Wilde describes the glories of old England that contrast with the disadvantages of the present:

This mighty empire hath but feet of clay,
 Of all its ancient chivalry and might
 Our little island is forsaken quite:
 Some enemy hath stolen its crown of bay,
 And from its hills that voice hath passed away
 Which spake of Freedom: O come out of it,
 Come out of it, my soul, thou art not fit
 For this vile traffic-house, where day by day
 Wisdom and reverence are sold at mart,
 and the rude people rage with ignorant cries
 Against the heritage of centuries.³⁴

The words here refer either to worlds of limits (traffic-house, island), or to world of 'freedom'. Words like 'ancient chivalry' and 'might' refer to the past, whereas words like 'vile', 'mart', 'ignorant', 'rude', 'feet of clay'

refer to the present. This poem reflects a 'soul trapped in the present world and a yearning for freedom: 'come out of it, my soul, thou art not fit/ for this vile traffic house'.

In Oscar Wilde: The Works Of A Conformist Rebel, Norbert Kohl claims that Wilde's *nostalgie de l'étranger* is part of a movement which awakened in him, as in other Decadents, the desire to find not the 'blue flower' of the Romantics, but the artificial 'paradises' sought by Baudelaire:

Discontent with everyday reality aroused in him and in many other poets a boundless sense of ennui. A passion for foreign lands, especially the Orient, and for past times, above all antiquity and the Renaissance, points not only to the frustrations of a sensitive soul trapped in space and time, but also to the problem of the extreme individualist whose lack of formal and social ties forces him to seek compensation in fantastic visions of distant worlds.³⁵

So, the Decadents' act of transgression produced the elements of foreignness which they were accused of. Elements of transgression continued to appear in the Decadents' works and were particularly noticeable in their paintings which presents several images of men and women and which led to the accusation of womanliness. I will explore below how this kind of act of difference was expressed in the language of their painting.

In a painting by P. Wilson Steer, "Portrait of Himself", a young woman occupies the centre of the painting while the man stands in the

background with his back to the viewer and his head cut off by the edge of the painting (see Appendix I). Yet it is called a portrait of 'himself'. In this painting, 'himself' is excluded, placed in the back and is replaced by a woman. 'Himself' could be seen as a young woman seated in the middle of the painting performing an action. In "George the Fourth", Max Beerbohm presents a man of war with feminine qualities. George IV has rounded shoulders and hips, a womanly complexion, and vague sexual organs. So, the character in this painting could be either a man or a woman. In this painting, then, womanly and manly qualities are mixed together; hence, archaic social concepts of manhood and womanhood are disturbed. Consequently, these concepts lose their original meaning: man is womanised and woman is given manly qualities. In "A Portrait of Aubrey Beardsley", "Mr. Richard Le Gallienne", and "Portrait of Mr. George Moore"; by Walter Sickert; men perform no action apart from posing for the painter. In "Portrait of a Girl", by Robert Halls, "Skirt Dancing" by Wilson Steer, and "Come into Those Yellow Sands", by H. Isabel Adams, women look strong, energetic and active.

The womanly elements in the Decadents' art had a wide and a large reference which included woman's sexuality and sexual relationship as parts of a larger social and political structure. I. Adams' "Come into the Yellow Sands", and Walter Crane's "Renaissance of Venus" present nude

women. R. Halls' "Portrait of a Young Girl" presents a girl with a loose and simple Greek dress. In these paintings there is a reference to women's freedom of the body. In Sex, Politics & Society, Geoffrey Weeks examines sex, sexual relation as part of power relation in the family or in society. He claims that sex in the 19th century was generally suppressed and that sexual freedom was illegal act which went against both society and nature. Society formulated the role of sex and assigned the role of women and provided the family model. The ruling classes realised the strong necessity of providing a strict family structure which everyone should copy. They maintained that, in order to keep the security of the existing order; there had to develop an example, a code, a social form of a family structure which people took as a norm and from which they drew their habits and actions. Women were to repress their sexual desires, preserve the image of 'chastity' and were part of the hierarchic domesticity which society, the bourgeoisie in particular, acted upon. The family was the biological reality which carried ideological concepts of what the distribution of power should be in the family and how sexuality should be expressed. Its function, then, was to secure the existing social order economically, ideologically and sexually. Sexual and family stability became a vital part of social and political stability and a stable home was seen as a vital part of a stable society: it reflected moral and financial

respectability; secured the legitimacy of children; offered safer pleasures; and was the source of virtues and emotions.³⁶ The bourgeois forms of sexuality and sexual relations, were disturbed by Wilde and the Decadents. In their works, woman, whose sexuality had to be repressed for the sake of 'morality', 'decency' and 'virtue', spoke in the language of the body. Woman was stripped of the Victorian dress and freed from the imprisonments of Victorianism. Family structure (man-woman relation, children, legal and safe pleasures, morality and hierarchical stability) was also disturbed by the Decadents. Man-woman-children, the family unit which society acted on was replaced by a man-man relationship, and by what were seen as 'illegal', 'immoral' and dangerous sexual pleasures. The fact that the two sexes merge in some of the Decadents' works, and that Wilde, Beardsley and some participants in the movement were homosexuals, reflects a desire for new forms of sexuality and sexual relationship and presents a disruption of the family model, the microcosm of the overall social macrocosm.

Some Decadents wrote poems which referred to sexuality and sexual freedom and increased the derogatory association of the movement. I will show below how these poems produce a language of both transgression (sexual freedom) and unity (natural setting). I will then explore, through a stylistic study, the concept of unity in Wilde's work.

In the poem "Mandolin" (1896), Arthur Symons introduces to the English public a translated version of Paul Verlaine's "Fetes Galantes". Sensation, imagination and legendary periods and places all exist in the poem's *Commedia dell'arte* setting:

The Singers of serenades
Whisper their faded vows
Unto fair listening maids
Under the singing boughs.

Tircis, Amnite, are there,
Clitandre is over long,
And Damis for many a fair
Tyrant makes many a song.

Their short vests, silken and bright,
Their long pale silken trains,
Their elegance of delight,
Twine soft, blue, shadowy chains.

And the mandolins and they,
Faintlier breathing, swoon
Into the rose and grey
Ecstasy of the moon.³⁷

Sensation (the love-making and the existence of human senses: taste, sight, smell, touch, and hearing), and imagination (the unattainable dream world of the poem) signify the artist's attempt to escape the denial of sexual freedom in present social world. Verbs in this poem refer to very little action: whisper, are, is, makes a song, breathing, swoon, etc. (little action referred to helplessness in the social world in the poems above). The poem is full of adjectives which describe a pictorial world: faded vows,

fair listening maids, sighing bows, short vests, silken and bright, pale trains, elegance of delight, blue shadowy chains, grey ecstasy. This situation refers to a static world of no movement, no conflict, and of continuous pleasure.

In "Betrothed", published in volume II of *The Yellow Book*, Norman Gale writes:

She is mine in the day,
 She is mine in the dusk;
 She is virgin as dawn,
 And as fragrant as musk.

And the wood on the hill
 Is the home where we meet-
 O, the coming of eve,
 It is marvellous sweet!

To my satisfied heart
 She has flown like a dove;
 All her kisses are taught
 By the wisdom of love.

And whatever my grief
 There is healing, and rest
 On the pear-blossom slope
 Of her beautiful breast.³⁸

Sensations (virgin, fragrant, musk, sweet, kisses, pear-blossom, breast), which cover a large part of the love poem, take over the emotional side and intermingle with aspects from nature (dusk, dawn, hill, eve, dove, slope, pear). This poem also refers to Gale's escape from cultural constraints into nature and from love into sensations. As in the above

poem, verbs in this poem have little actions: she is, the wood is, it is, she has; kisses are, there is, etc, (they refer mainly to states of being). It is full of adverbial phrases: on the day, in the dusk, on the hill, of eve, of love, on the pear-blossom, of her beautiful breasts. The use of adverbs here serves to refer to aspects from nature (day, dusk, hill, eve, pear-blossom) which help to express the escape from the movement of the social world into the static world in nature.

In "A Dream of November", published in volume I of *The Yellow Book*, Edmund Gosse lets sensations take over the subject of the poem. Gosse first stresses the idea that the world he is referring to does not belong to the present world, but is 'far, far away':

Far, far away, I know not where, I know not how
The skies are grey, the boughs are bare, bare bough in
Flower:

Then goes on to describe this imaginary world:

Beneath that tent an Empress sits, with slanted eyes,
And wafts of scents from censers flit, a lilac flood;
Around her throne bloom peach and plum in lacquered dyes,
And many a blown chrysanthemum, and many a bud.

Beneath her wings of lilac dim, in robes of blue,
The Empress sings a wordless hymn that thrills her bower.
My trance unweaves, and winds, and shreds, and forms anew
Dark bronze, bright leaves, pure silken threads, in triple flower.³⁹

So, in the above poem also, there is an escape from the present social world into sensation. Aspects such as scent, lilac, peach and plum, lacquered, bud, robes of blue, songs, bronze, bright, silken and flower,

which refer to human senses (smell, taste, sight, touch and hearing), enjoy a limitless freedom in Nature.

Hence, in these poems, there is an escape from nets, houses, anodynes, shrines, walls, from concepts of democracy and republic, from oppression and liberty, from rage and anger and all limits which the Decadents faced in the social world, into freedom, pleasure and unity. These poems, which were thought of as expressing sensation and sexual freedom only, mark a transition from a world of limits and movements into a static world of no bounds. Transgression, then, led the Decadents into unity. In The Symbolist Movement In Literature, Symons explains how the acts of evading 'rhetoric' and 'exteriority' took the Decadents to a much older life and articulated their aim of portraying a perfect and unified life:

Description is banished that beautiful things may be evoked, magically, the regular beat of verse is broken in order that words may fly, upon subtle wings. Mystery is no longer feared, as the great mystery in whose midst we are islanded was feared by those to whom that unknown sea was only a great void. We are coming closer to nature as we seem to shrink from it with something of horror, disdaining to catalogue the trees of the forest. And as we touch aside the accidents of daily life, in which men and women imagine that they are alone touching reality, we come closer to humanity that may have begun before the world and may outlast it.⁴⁰

The act of transgressing the limits of the exterior social world takes the Decadents to pre-social places and epochs such as nature, humanity and mystery that had existed before the present world and will continue to

exist for ever.

I will now explore how some of Wilde's poems produce words and sentences that denote unity.

Impression De Voyage

The sea was sapphire coloured, and the sky
 Burned like a heated opal through the air;
 We hoisted sail; the wind was blowing fair
 For the blue lands that to the eastward lie.
 From the steep prow I marked with quickening eye
 Zakynthos, every olive grove and creek,
 Ithaca's cliff, Lycaon's snowy peak,
 And all the flower-strewn hills of Arcady.
 The flapping of the sail against the mast,
 The ripple of the water on the side,
 The ripple of girls' laughter at the stern,
 The only sounds: -when gan' the west to burn,
 And a red sun upon the seas to ride
 I stood upon the soil of Greece at last!⁴¹

This poem has words with natural connotations (mainly nouns): sky, air, wind, lands, olive, cliff, snowy peak, flower strewn hills, water, sun, seas, soil. These words have no elements of boundaries or limits: words like sky, sea, air, lands, water, soil refer to limitless entities; but words like hill, cliff may refer to limits within the vast and limitless world. The adjectives refer to colours (blue lands, red sun), or natural entities (snowy peak, flower-strewn hills, sky burned like heated opal, sapphire coloured). The colours and the natural elements in the use of adjectives help to portray a pictorial image in nature. In the poem, there is also a co-existence of opposites (east-west, steep-peak) and a reference to elements

which make up life (water, soil, air, fire) which all relate to the unity of nature. The speaker here does not perform actions (I marked with eye, I stood). The words that relate to the natural elements denote both dynamic actions (the sky burned, wind was blowing, lands lie) and state of being (the sea was).

The character in the poem below performs dynamic actions in a natural setting.

Fantaisies Decoratives

Le Panneau

Under the rose-tree's dancing shade
There stands a little ivory girl,
pulling the leaves of pink and pearl
With pale green nails of polished jade.

The red leaves fall upon the mould,
The white leaves flutter, one by one,
Down to a blue bowl where the sun,
Like a great dragon, writhes in gold.

The white leaves float upon the air,
The red leaves flutter idly down,
Some fall upon her yellow gown,
And some upon her raven hair.

She takes an amber lute and sings,
And as she sings a silver crane
Begins his scarlet neck to strain,
And flap his burnished metal wings.

She takes a lute of amber bright,
And from the thicket where he lies
Her lover, with his almond eyes,
Watches her movements in delight.

And now she gives a cry of fear,
And tiny tears begin to start;
A thorn has wounded with its dart
The pink-veined sea-shell of her ear.

And now she laughs a merry note:
There has fallen a petal of the rose
Just where the yellow stain shows
The blue-veined flower of her throat.

With pale green nails of polished jade,
Pulling the leaves of pink and pearl,
There stands a little ivory girl
Under the rose-tree's dancing shade.⁴²

The poem has natural elements (tree, leaves, sun, air, metal, sea-shell, roses, flowers) and human parts (nails, neck, hair, eyes, ear, veins, throat). The awareness of the body did not exist in poems which refer to the social world. The poem is also full of colours (pink, green, red, white, pale, blue, yellow) which are sometimes derived from the natural or bodily elements (pink-veined, blue-veined, pearl, jade, ivory, gold, silver, scarlet). The adjectives in this poem also denote natural elements: dancing shade, ivory girl, polished jade, amber lute, scarlet neck, silver crane, almond eyes, pink-veined sea-shell ear, etc. Most of the verbs which relate to the girl refer to action (she pulls, takes, sings, gives, laughs) and denote a freedom in nature where there is no bounds. In this poem, there is some sort of parallelism. The first section starts with the rose tree and the ivory girl. The second section starts with red leaves (line 1), the white leaves

(line 2) and then refers to the sun and the gold. The third section parallels the second one: it starts with the white leaves (line 1), the red leaves (line 2), then the gown and the hair of the girl. The fourth section starts with the girl's act of singing (line 1, 2), then her lover (line 3, 4). The fifth section parallel the fourth one: it begins with the girl's act of singing (line 1, 2), then her lover (3, 4). The sixth section starts with the girl's pain (line 1, 2) due to a natural element (thorn) which hurt her (3, 4). The seventh section parallels the sixth one: it begins with the girl's happiness (line 1) due to another natural element (petal) which fell upon her (line 2, 3, 4). The last section reverses of the first one (the ivory girl and the rose) and the poem ends where it started. Parallelism in the construction of the poem denotes sameness, continuity and a cyclic movement in life in nature. Parallelism may also, as Roman Jakobson claims, express thought with some sort of emphasis.⁴³ The emphasis here is laid on lovers in nature. Besides, there is no negation in the natural settings. "The Ballad Of Reading Goal" started with 'He did not' and the negation continued throughout the poem: I never saw, he does not die, he does not sit, he does not wake, does not stare, there is no chapel, we had no other things to do, I know not whether, etc. Watt raises the philosophical point that 'there are no negatives in nature, but only human consciousness'.⁴⁴ This point correlates with Wilde's assumptions that the

human mind creates nature, reality, and the world. In nature, man is turned into an artist who makes, fashions, and recreates the world. Negatives only exist in the social world which denies the expectations in the artist's mind. (This point will be discussed later in Chapter Four in relation to Wilde's concept of Christ as an Artist).

I claimed above that the Decadents, with Wilde as a leading figure, transgressed the bounds of the social world, but their transgression did not seek a chaos as the Victorians interpreted it; rather, it sought the utopia which they were in search of. The question which may arise now is: why did the Decadents want to transgress the actual world and seek unity?

It is generally known that British society at that time, with the advances in industry and science, was a society of fragments and extremes; a society of extreme luxury as well as extreme misery; of rich industrialist and poor workers and servants; of silks and rags; of beautiful districts and rotten slums. The complexity of life led to the break up of culture, and what was thought of as a coherent wholeness of life was reduced to fragments and parts. London for example, was a city of divided extremes: the fashionable West End and the working classes' East End. Both the West and the East sides were thought to be completely separate nations. There were 'two nations', wrote Benjamin Disraeli early

in the Victorian age,

Between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are a different breeding, are fed by different food, are ordered by different manners, are not governed by the same laws ... the Rich and Poor.⁴⁵

Thinkers in the 19th century protested against the ugliness of the present state of society which generated ugly feelings, thoughts and acts. Karl Marx, whose interpretation of culture came in the middle of the century, believed that life is determined by the present social conditions:

Upon the several forms of property, upon the social conditions of existence, a whole superstructure is reared of various and peculiarly shaped feelings, illusions, habits of thoughts, and conceptions of life.⁴⁶

Oscar Wilde was among those who reacted against the existing conditions and detached himself from what Marx called the 'superstructure' of 'shaped feelings', of 'thought' and 'conception' of life which were determined by the contemporary social conditions. He belonged to the minorities who were not established by the habits and the notions of their class and whom Matthew Arnold described as; 'persons who are mainly led, not by their class spirit, but by general humane spirit, by the love of human perfection'.⁴⁷ Wilde awakened what Raymond Williams calls 'the best' that is latent in all men but is obscured by the inadequacy of class ideology and habits. He depicted social, political, economic and geographical divisions and contradictions that existed in society at that

time and expressed a desire for human perfection. In Lord Arthur Savile's Crime (1891), the rustics see a strange London:

A London free from the sin of night and smoke of day, a pallid, ghost-like city, a desolate town of tombs! He wondered what they thought of it, and whether they knew anything of its splendour and its shame, of its fierce, fiery-coloured joys and its horrible hunger, of all its makes and mars from mom to eve ... He felt that they have lived with Nature, and that she had taught them peace. He envied them all that they did not know.⁴⁸

This passage expresses the horror of the social world in London (sin, smoke, ghost, tombs, hunger, shame, fierce) and contrasts it with the peaceful nature. Wilde attracts the reader's attention to the extremes which exist in London at all levels (splendour and shame, fierce and joys, makes and mars). In The Happy Prince, the swallow flies to the great city and sees:

The rich making merry in their beautiful houses, while the beggars were sitting at the gates! He flew into dark lanes, and saw the white faces of starving children looking out listlessly at the black street. Under the archway of a bridge two little boys were lying in one another arms to try and keep themselves warm. "How hungry we are!" they said. "You must not lie here", shouted the watchman, and they wandered out into the rain.⁴⁹

Again, the passage presents words that relate to the social world (houses, lanes, gates, street, archway, bridge, watchman, hunger) which denote some elements of limits. Wilde also awakens the reader to the unfair social life and depicts the extremes as he sees them: the rich and the beautiful houses (West End), and the hungry, the poor and the cold at gates and dark lanes (East End). The Happy Prince presents Wilde's humane spirit, love of human perfection and the desire to reconcile

opposites which continue to exist in most of his short stories. The Canterville Ghost, offers a contrast between ghosts and humans, spiritualism and materialism, antiquity and modern life. The Young King presents a sharp contrast between poverty and wealth, palaces and poor houses. The Birthday Of The Infanta presents a contrast between beauty and ugliness (dwarf and the little princess), palaces and nature. The Fisherman And His Soul explores the divisions between body and soul, human and non-human, man and mermaid, pleasure and pain, nature and culture, spirit and materials. The Star Child describes the opposition between the self and others, pleasure and pain, pride and humiliation, love and hatred. Most of his other short stories including The Nightingale And The Rose, The Selfish Giant, The Devoted Friend, continue the same themes. In most of these works, there is a character who performs an act of transgression from one opposite into another. The Young King refuses to wear expensive clothing for his coronation day and dresses instead poorly, the ugly dwarf goes from the natural world to the palace and imagines the little Princess in nature, the fisherman lives with the mermaid, the selfish and haughty child feels humble and humiliated, and the ghost is frightened by people and dies. Other stories have models of self-unified characters who perform acts of unity and Christian Love like the Prince, the Nightingale, the Child who appears in the giant's garden,

and Hans, the devoted friend. Wilde's Plays also present acts of transgression and unity which articulate self-satisfaction and abolish the social demand. Salomé, A Woman Of No Importance, The Duchess of Padua and Lady Windermere's Fan, all present women who transgress for the sake of self-preservation and whose acts of transgression are made crimes. The Importance of Being Earnest and An Ideal Husband, produce transgressions on the level of form. His rich rhetorical letter, De Profundis, deals with the concept of unity and disunity in the world and contemplates the possibility of making a utopia.

Wilde depicted social realities - contradiction, ugliness of the age, injustice - and argues in favour of human perfection. He offered an escape from these social conditions, from their 'superstructure' of 'shaped feelings', of 'thought' and 'conception' of life, into an art which he described in "The Decay Of Lying":

Art begins with abstract decoration, with purely imaginative and pleasurable work dealing with what is unreal and non-existent. This is the first stage. Then Life becomes fascinated with this new wonder, and asks to be admitted into the charmed circle. Art takes life as part of her rough material, recreates it, and refashions it in fresh forms, is absolutely indifferent to fact, invents, imagines, dreams, and keeps between herself and reality the impenetrable barrier of beautiful style, of decorative and ideal treatment. The third stage is when Life gets the upper hand, and drives Art out into the wilderness. This is the true decadence, and it is from this that we are now suffering.⁵⁰

The Art of Decadence, then, as Wilde views it, attempts to recreate the existing social world and deals only with what is unreal. Later, it leads

the reconstruction of the social world into a utopia.

The escape through art was the result of Wilde's realisation that the age of the machine had damaged what he thought of as the old integrity and perfection of life, and is leading the world towards destruction. He argued in favour of an organic society and stressed aspects of 'interrelation' and 'interdependence'. In "The Soul Of Man Under Socialism", he says:

Socialism, Communism, or whatever one chooses to call it, by converting private property into public wealth, and substituting co-operation for competition, will restore society to its proper condition of a thoroughly healthy organism, and ensure the material well-being of each member of the community.⁵¹

He, then, talks of a future utopia based on the reverse of the present social conditions:

Human slavery is wrong, insecure, and demoralising. On mechanical slavery, on the slavery of the machine, the future of the world depends ... A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and seeing a better country, sets sail.⁵²

Wilde believed that Art is the embodiment of an ideal truth, the only thing that is capable of restoring the old unity, and consequently substituted it for social realities. Art, which intensifies the role of individualism (individual liberty), provides basis for a healthy organic society (perfect life). Machine production, commerce, and industrial cities are all antithetical to Wilde's view of Art and Individualism:

A work of art is the unique result of a unique temperament. Its beauty

comes from the fact that the author is what he is. It has nothing to do with the fact that other people want what they want. Indeed, the moment that an artist takes notice of what other people want, and tries to supply the demand, he ceases to be an artist, and becomes a dull or an amusing craftsman, an honest or dishonest tradesman ... Art is the most intense mode of individualism that the world has known.⁵³

The escape through art and the idea that art is the embodiment of an ideal truth, however, was part of the prevailing modes which some writers were engaged in. Art, in the 19th century, was closely related to life. This relation started with A.W. Pugin who believed that 'different nations have given birth to many various styles of architecture, each suited to their climate, customs, and religion'⁵⁴, and whose thoughts became familiar in the rest of the century particularly in the works of artists such as John Ruskin and William Morris. Ruskin regarded art as an embodiment of aspects of a universal and 'ideal' truth, and the artist is an instrument of revelation, an agent of perfection who has personal spiritual goodness. Ruskin argued for an 'organic' society which stressed interrelation and interdependence and grew in opposition to *laissez faire* society:

It is verily this degradation of the operative into a machine, which, more than other evil of the times, is leading the mass of the nations everywhere into vain, incoherent, destructive struggling for a freedom of which they cannot explain the nature to themselves.⁵⁵

Degradation of present conditions and consequently opposition towards them appeared in the works of Carlyle, Ruskin, Pugin, Dickens and Morris. William Morris stated his hatred of modern life and described the ugliness of the industrial age saying:

Our cities are wildernesses of spinning wheels instead of palaces, yet the people have not clothes. We have blackened every leaf of English greenwood with ashes, and the people die of cold; our harbours are a forest of merchant ships, and the people die of hunger.

Morris encouraged the workman's labour which was reduced into 'pitiful existence' by civilisation and the machine age:

It is the province of art to set the true ideal of a full and reasonable life before him (workman), a life to which the perception and creation of beauty, the enjoyment of real pleasure that is, shall be felt to be as necessary to man as his daily bread, ...⁵⁶

Morris believed that the cause of art is the cause of all the people and that 'one day we shall win back Art, that is to say the pleasure of life: win back Art again to our daily labour'. He advocated the tendency to return to Nature, Art and Crafts in theory and practice and around which the Art Nouveau (William Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones, James McNeill Whistler, Norman Shaw and Edward Godwin) centred. This tendency came as a reaction against the industrial age. Gradually, a taste for 'vegetable fashion' developed and was applied on oriental silk and fabrics with motifs such as lilies and sunflowers. The 'vegetable fashion', Eckardt notes:

was but the earliest manifestation of a still valid belief that a civilised society can be sustained only if art and good taste achieve control over machine production and commercialism. For all their frothy decadence, Oscar Wilde and other Aesthetes immeasurably advanced this cause under the banner of the lily, the sunflower, and Beauty.

So, good taste was one way of achieving control over machine and industry. The fusion of Art and Nature, and Art and Crafts, gradually

spread throughout society. Max Beerbohm describes it as follows:

Peacock feathers and sunflowers glittered in every room, the curio shops were ransacked for furniture of Annish days, men and women, stirred by the fervid words of the young Oscar, threw their mahogany into the streets. A few smart women even dressed themselves in suave draperies and unheard-of greens. Into whatever ballroom you went, you would surely find, among the women in tiaras and the toffs and the distinguished foreigners, half a score of comely ragamuffins in velveteen, murmuring sonnets, posturing, waving their hands. 'Nincompoopino', the craze was called at first, and later 'Aestheticism'.

So, Aesthetes and Decadents advocated an art which intensified individualism and refused to imitate nature or obey the demand of the age. Wilde believed that art is alien to the spirit of industry and to the machine age. Aubrey Beardsley translated the sharp contrasts in society in terms of black and white; Ruskin believed that Art and architecture would bring redemption from the sin of a Victorian world that had worshipped the machine; Morris believed that the evils of industrialism would be expelled by the virtues of humble craftsmanship inspired by art.⁵⁷ (Other non-Aesthete writers such as Alfred Lord Tennyson and Robert Browning also talked nostalgically about romantic virtues, and expressed contemporary anxieties and distrust of the age of science and materialism).

Through Art, Wilde and the Decadents rejected the age and proposed programmes for the future. Wilde, and Beerbohm and others, particularly the last generation of the Victorians, looked forwards into a better future. Everything they discussed was self consciously 'New': the 'New

Individualism', the 'New Hellenism', the 'New Remorse', the 'New Spirit', the 'New Humour', the 'New Realism', the 'New Hedonism', the 'New Drama', the 'New Unionism', the 'New Party', and the 'New Woman'.⁵⁸

Talking of the 'new' Individualism, Wilde says:

The new Individualism, for whom Socialism, whether it wills it or not, is working, will be perfect harmony. It will be what the Greeks sought for, but could not, except in Thought, realise completely because they had slaves, and fed them; it will be what the Renaissance sought for, but could not realise completely except in Art, because they had slaves, and starved them. It will be complete, and through it each man will attain to his perfection. The new individualism is the new Hellenism.⁵⁹

This attempt was one of the reason behind the strong Victorian rejection of the Decadents. Norman Denny comments that the Decadents' *Yellow Book* was a youthful and vigorous attempt to 'make a beginning, to break new ground, to clear the air - and, of course, (in the phrase its editor would have preferred), to *épater le bourgeois*'. The solemn century, Denny continues, 'was outraged at being treated as though it were already over'.⁶⁰ Yet, the image of the future was an image of a world where the present contradictions and disintegration exist as unity. The 'ideal' age which the Decadents aspired to was still dominated by the one they wanted to escape. Walter Benjamin suggests that in reaching a new status 'there correspond images in the collective consciousness in which the new and the old are intermingled'. Thus, the new (ideal status) intermingles with the old (complexity, fragmentations, extremes) in one image. The

collective consciousness seeks, through these images, to transcend the immaturity and the deficiencies of the social order of production:

In the dream in which every epoch sees in images the epoch which is to succeed it, the latter appears coupled with elements of Prehistory - that is to say of a classless society. The experiences of this society, which have their store place in the collective unconscious, interact with the new to give birth to the Utopias which leave their traces in a thousand configurations of life, from permanent buildings to ephemeral fashions.⁶¹

Benjamin's thought parallels Wilde's theory of Art. Art, as Wilde explains, deals with the ideal non-existent - Benjamin's elements of classless society. Then Art takes life as part of its rough material and recreates it in fresh forms - Benjamin's utopias which have traces in real life.

The stylistic analysis of Wilde's poems and some of the Decadents' works above (language of transgression and unity) provided a better understanding of his literary issues, and social and political background. A stylistic analysis of Oscar Wilde's works, as this study shows, contributes to an understanding of his work in general, discloses principle of utterance and illustrates something about words, their order, their nature and their pattern. A style study also illustrates something about events and characters revealed through the medium of sentences and their pattern. Hence, it aims in general at an investigation and exploration of Wilde's literary concepts through his modes of expression which might advance

our understanding of his literary works. This study in general employs the stylistic approach in order to enhance our understanding of Wilde's two main literary issues; transgression and unity.

As this chapter explored the literary, social and political dimensions of the Decadents' art in relation to their style, the next chapter explores Wilde's relation to the literary traditions of his times in relation to his style. The style study in Chapter two illustrates something about characters and events which is revealed through the medium of sentences. It explores verbal and non-verbal expressions in Salomé which reflect, on the one hand, Salomé's position in the social world as she herself expresses it (she speaks a language of a helpless person whose actions do not take place in the social world; while other characters speak a language of self-assertion); and, on the other hand, articulate her acts of transgression (she makes silent gestures of undressing, dancing, and satisfying all her sexual desires). Salomé disobeys the rules, transgresses the bounds imposed on her and moves towards self-unity. The rich language in the play also reflects verbal and non-verbal expressions of an anti-Realist world: the idea of unity and disunity, the divided world, the voyeur who penetrates into the unknown, the symbols that link earth with heaven and present with future, all produce an anti-Realist setting which works towards an integral world. The same examination of the language

of women characters in other plays leads to the same conclusion: women's verbal expressions articulate their social positions while their non-verbal expressions silence them. The Duchess in The Duchess of Padua, Mrs. Arbuthnot in A Woman of No Importance, and Mrs. Erlynne in Lady Windermere's Fan, all present non-verbal acts which silence the social world and that contradict their verbal expressions. The chapter concludes by suggesting that women in tragedies die (the outcome of their act of transgression) and achieve some sort of unity, but women in comedy live behind limits and bars for the rest of their lives.

The stylistic approach in Chapter Three explores the role of verbal and communicational styles in characters' acts of transgressing the rules of culture. While Chapter Two presents women in Wilde's work as weak, Chapter Three celebrates men and women as triumphant over their world. The Importance of Being Earnest, as I shall explain, celebrates the role of form in Wilde's perversity of social and ideological concepts. Wilde displays a wide range of cultural forms which serve as a process of familiarisation to the audience; yet, at the same time the language of the play hides its internal laws which explain how these cultural forms are constructed and produce the defamiliarisation effects. This technique helps Wilde to invert the traditionally established beliefs and break down the habitualisation of thoughts. The chapter then examines the language of the

existing ruling classes which constructs their power in the real world: the language of Lady Bracknell, a powerful person, includes the policy of exclusion and inclusion, the tendency to defamiliarise and to use the plural as a style which impose a certain social structure and serves the interests of the ruling classes. The language of dissenters in the play works on the strategy of defamiliarisation: women, children, country people, servants and all participants in the play who make the 'Other' defamiliarise received thoughts and detach themselves from the concept of 'Otherness'. They all rebel through their language style. Besides transgression, the play explores the concept of unity between various kinds of opposites such as lying and truth, nature and society, imagination and reality, men and women, etc. The chapter as a whole concentrates, not on What Wilde is presenting, but on How he is presenting his work. The chapter then explores the same points in Wilde's An Ideal Husband which also presents a large number of cultural references in order to familiarise the audience. The process of defamiliarisation comes when cultural references - various social and cultural beliefs - are linked to various forms of fashion. The examination of the language of three main characters in the play shows elements of defamiliarisation, the strategy to exclude and include, and plural and general range of topics.

The style study in Chapter Four investigates Wilde's modes of expression which makes it possible to understand his literary issues and intellectual concerns. The Chapter explores the acts of transgression and the idea of total unity in the language of De Profundis. It is suggested that the letter is built on the principle of dialectic which prevailed in the 19th century. The principle of dialectic helped Wilde to transgress from thesis into antithesis and achieve unity -synthesis- which will later lead to total unity and utopian world. Ideas of transgression and unity are expressed at the level of both form and content. It is argued that the rhetorical devices of meaning and structure in the letter provide Wilde with patterns which suit his dialectical thought. The chapter then explores the ideal models which the principle of dialectic leads to. Both Christ and children, who represent uncultured and self-unified personalities, are Wilde's models of transgression and unity. The chapter then examines models of transgression in other works. The Happy Prince presents an example of a person (Prince) who moves from life to death and transgresses from the self into others and whose language reflects this shift. The Nightingale And The Rose also presents models of unity in the Nightingale whose language reflects universal statements of truth. The Fisherman And His Soul has two types of sentences which provide two points of views: long sentences which portray a pictorial world and relate

to an imperfect world; and short sentences which denote a unified perfect world. The Birthday Of The Infanta provides two types of expression: creative which relates to nature and helpless which relates to the social world.

Chapter Five concludes my study by exploring the relation between Wilde's style and views of the world. Wilde's style in general is dependant on his view of the world: continuous development till the world progresses towards a utopia.

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CHAPTER TWO

VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL EXPRESSIONS IN

SALOMÉ AND OTHER PLAYS

2.0. Introduction

This chapter examines the image of women in Oscar Wilde's works and questions whether this image carries the traditional clichés and archaic concepts of women as part of the concept of Other which sustained, in the 19th century, a certain political and social order. In Europe's Myths Of The Orient, Rana Kabbani suggests that, in Medieval Europe, women, Jews and faraway cultures always constituted the Other. These themes, she adds, still have their significance up to the present moment, but 'it was in the 19th century that they found their most deliberate expression, since that period saw a new confrontation between West and East - an imperial confrontation'.¹ Kabbani argues that Europe at that time had a communal image of the Other which was created by previous writers and artists and which carried the same antiquated metaphors and archaic concepts which sustained a certain power structure.

The chapter contextualises Oscar Wilde's Salomé. It examines its relation to other Salomés and to the image of the destructive woman that appeared in the 19th century art. My argument falls into two parts: the first part focuses on the verbal expressions of Salomé which reflect her relation to the external world as she herself perceives it. The second part

examines the non-verbal expression of Salomé's act of transgressing the bounds imposed on her by the external world. In both cases, the dance of Salomé signals a significant change in the development of the text.

A stylistic analysis of the language of Salomé reflects her as the negative and the receiving part of her social world. Salomé only loves, desires, hears, listens. Most of her actions do not constitute part of the real world. The language of other participants in the play reflects them as strong and assertive whose actions take place in the real world. After the dance is performed, the language of Salomé changes into definite actions and articulates strong position in society. A psychoanalytic examination of her language leads to the same point: it reflects pain under repression and represents her inability to satisfy her desires. The dance, I argue, gives her the chance to transgress the bounds of social repression into self-satisfaction and unity.

Having suggested that the dance marks the change in Salomé's language which reflects the change in her life, I regard the dance as a non-verbal expression of rejection and rebellion. It is argued that the dance is antithetical to the language and that it silences the social and political values which language articulates. In order to dance, Salomé takes her dress off; an act which marks her departure from society. Having performed the dance, Salomé satisfies her sexual desires; an act

which marks her departure from the social values into the self, nature and into self unity. So, while verbal expression reflects the social world, non-verbal expression reflects the organic self.

A comparison of Wilde's *Salomé* with its contemporaries in terms of their linguistic expression will further support my argument about Wilde's declining to represent *Salomé* or any other women in the light of the Victorian patriarchal discourse. While other writers represent her as a 'temptress', a 'virgin whore' with blind lust, and emphasise aspects of femininity and devouring sensuality, Wilde portrays her as a sexless human being who kills for the sake of liberty.

Having suggested that *Salomé* performs acts of transgression and self-unity, I then claim that these acts do not only centre round the character of *Salomé*, but constitute essential elements in the whole atmosphere of the play. The language of the play in general, as the examination shows, reflects images of boundaries, which include acts of transgression, and concepts of unity which links Wilde to Anti-Realism.

The final step in my argument explores the voice of women in other plays by Oscar Wilde. The main women characters in *The Duchess of Padua*, *A Woman of No Importance*, and *Lady Windermere's Fan*, also perform non-verbal acts which contradict their verbal expression. A stylistic analysis of the language of these characters reflects their relations

to the world. I conclude by advancing the idea that while women in tragedy die achieving some sort of unity, women in comedies remain in a world full of boundaries and limits.

2.1. Salomé

The attempt to locate Wilde's Salomé in its context is important. Does Wilde, who presents in this play a perverse woman of blind lust and sensuality, belong to the large tradition in the 19th century which portrayed the character of Salomé as a 'virgin whore' and the character of women as inferior or evil? My argument and analysis will show that Oscar Wilde's Salomé is a story of a young woman whose perverse virginity comes as a result of strict cultural and moral values, whose blind lust is the result of long-term suppression, and whose rebellion and explosion are the natural consequences of the denial of freedom.

Salomé has undergone different historical and literary representations. Most of these representations portrayed her as a destructive women. After the Biblical times, Salomé, as a literary theme, disappeared until the 4th century when she became a favourite of the Roman decadent literature and where she was made satanic. She returned again in the Middle Ages and appeared everywhere: on tympana, stained glass windows, the vitraile of the cathedral of Rouen. She appeared during the Renaissance occasionally

with emphasis on her beauty more than her devouring aspects. She disappeared as literary subject again until the 19th century with the publication, in 1842, of Heinrich Heine's *Atta Troll* where she symbolised the ideal of great beauty. The concepts of beauty and destructiveness continued to attribute to the character of Salomé for the rest of the century: Paul Baudy presented "The Dance of Salomé" (1874), Flaubert wrote *Salammbô* (1876), which stressed the elements of devouring beauty, Moreau drew 120 drawings on the subject out of which 70 were of Salomé alone, but his most famous paintings are: "Salomé Dancing" (1876) in oils and "The Apparition" in watercolour (1878), and Flaubert wrote "Herodias" in which he made Salomé a virgin whore showing in her dance, 'the details of a passion her body had not yet experienced'.² Joris-Karl Huysmans referred to Moreau's paintings of Salomé in A Rebours (1884) which also added to her destructive beauty. She was described as 'the symbolic reincarnation of the world old vice, the goddess of immortal Hysteria, the curse of Beauty supreme above all beauties ...'

The representations of Salomé in the fin-de-siècle art continued and most of them centred round the same theme: the inherent perversity of women, the whoredom of beauty and virginity, and decapitation. Mallarmé wrote "Hérodiade" in which he stressed in Salomé the 'horror' of 'virginity', the 'terror' of beauty, the serpent qualities, and the latent

destructive nature. Edouard Toudouze painted "Salomé Triumphant" (1886) showing a blind sensuality of a virgin temptress. Arthur Symons wrote his poem "The Dance of the Daughters of Herodias" (1897) epitomising Salomé as Everywoman: 'They dance, the daughters of Herodias / Everywhere in the world'. Jules Laforgue pursued the theme of Salomé in his Six Moral Tales depicting the aspect of the virgin whore's lust and crime. Max Slevogt explored the supposed degeneracy of women, Jews and Africans in his painting "Salomé's Dance" (1895). Hugo von Habermann painted "Salomé" (1896) and emphasised the degeneracy of the woman. Others, like Jacque-Emile Blanche, emphasised the universality of Salomé. Stuart Merrill wrote the poem "Ballet" (1898), Fritz Erler painted "Dance" (1899) and Juana Romani painted "Salomé" (1899), giving an orthodox representation of Salomé. Gustav Klimt's "Salomé" (1901) or "Judith" emphasised the headhuntress theme and Otto Friedrich's "Salomé" (1912) portrayed an evil temptation.³ The only work that had no sign of bloodlust and degeneration among all these representations of Salomé was Ella Ferris Pell's "Salomé" which emphasised the elements of strength, youth, self assertion and confidence of Salomé (it was the only work portrayed by a woman). Wilde's Salomé counts as the second work of Salomé that portrays her as a repressed, destructive but sexless character.

Hence, Salomé, the theme of a fatal woman, belongs to a larger tradition in the 19th century which attributed to women qualities of destruction, abnormality and devilishness. This image was supported by social, political and scientific elements. The image of woman as a destroyer developed in the fantasies of the Victorian man who regarded middle class housewife as a destroyer of his wealth and labour (due to her interest in gold and clothes), and the low class woman as a destroyer of his health (due to diseases which resulted from prostitution). This image was enforced by some scientific researches which assumed that women and non-European races were on lower stages of evolution which was due either to their slow development or descent from a higher stage.⁴ In 1870, Herbert Spencer claimed that the difference between the sexes started when evolutionary process stopped in women earlier than men, and energy was diverted from psychic and intellectual development into reproduction. In 1889, Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thompson published The Evolution of Sex in which they argued that sex differences could rise from a basic difference in cell metabolism. At the level of the cell, maleness was characterised by the ability to dissipate energy (Katabolism exhibited by the sperm), and femaleness by the capacity to store and build up energy (Anabolism exhibited by the ovum). Katabolism and Anabolism produce, respectively, aggression and rationality in the male, and passivity

and intuition in the female.⁵

Although these researchers presented woman as different, not as 'inferior', and entitled her to equal social and civil right; the classification of the sexes was assimilated into the conventional idea of man's and woman's position in society. The scientific evidences were taken as reinforcements of old social and cultural arguments about femininity and non-European societies. Joanna De Groot comments:

Science and expertise seem to converge on both women and non-European here, and indeed this is merely one example of a whole new set of structures within which 'knowledge' and 'understanding' of these groups were established by European males.⁶

Images, values and stereotypes used previously to define both femininity and non-European cultures, combined new scientific techniques with old cultural traditions.

Gradually, the image of the Femme Fatale developed as part of the image of woman which had developed as part of the concept of 'other' in the fin-de-siecle art. The image of the destructive woman was given many representations: virgin whores, outward purity and inward lust, devilish angels who drain man's intellect and health, images of death (sometimes with wings of angels); the image of plague; of destruction and war; and of the search for empires and gold. In Huysmans' A Rebours, syphilis was personified in the form of a working class woman. In Owen Meredith's "The Legend of Eve's Jewels" (1887) women's interests in

gold and clothes were attributed to the serpent's teaching: 'From that day forth Eve eyed with tenderness/ The Serpent to whose craft she owed her dress'. In Eduard Von Hartman's The Sexes Compared (1895), the husband of the second half of the 19th century was portrayed as a man caught in a terrible struggle against the 'cruel, heartless, and selfish thoughtlessness with which a woman tries to encumber her husband with all burdens'. Castration became a common theme in the turn-of-the-century art. Artists and intellectuals of that period depicted stories of emasculating females such as Samson and Delilah, Judith and Holofernes, Salomé and John the Baptist and others which alluded to women's evil nature. The story of Salomé and John the Baptist is part of the image of the Femme Fatale which, supported by social and scientific evidences, developed in the 19th century and which in turn supported archaic stereotypes and cliches.

Oscar Wilde's Salomé is a destructive person. The questions which I would like to raise now are: is she destructive because she is a woman, a being biologically and socially inferior? Is she destructive because she repeats the archaic political and historical meanings which were attributed to the character of Salomé? My examination below shows that Wilde's particular use of language in Salomé strips the play of the traditional concepts of the character of Salomé and of women. The language of

Salomé reflects images of limits and boundaries which she is unable to cross. Later, she crosses them all and intends to be a new woman in the future. The Stylistic analysis focuses on how the story of Salomé is presented and examines Wilde's medium of expression which distinguishes his play from its contemporaries.

2.1.1. Language: Verbal Expression Of The Social World:

I will examine now the last passage that Salomé utters after the dance, and after she receives the head of Jokanaan. Salomé speaks of her past and of her future, after the dance. We shall find out that her past was negative, but in her future, she intends to be positive and assertive. Later, I will examine Herod's language and see how it contrasts with that of Salomé. Herod's language reflects strength and assertion.

In "Through Glass Darkly: Through Dark Glasses", Deirdre Burton examines the relationship between language, suppressed thought and the sociolinguistic construction of society. Burton argues that all knowledge is contained and produced within an ideological framework and that it is important to distinguish between a work which supports an oppressive dominant ideology and a work that challenges it:

I take it as axiomatic that *All* observation, let alone description, *must* take place within an already constructed theoretical framework of socially, ideologically and linguistically constructed reality, whether the observer/describer of observations is articulately aware of that frame work

or not.⁷

Burton suggests a close analysis of the linguistic construction of texts and the 'realities' they represent. She takes for her case a passage from Sylvia Plath's autobiographical novel The Bell Jar. While analysing aspects of clause construction in the passage, Burton pays specific attention to the simple question: 'who does what to whom?' She adapts Michael Halliday's model of processes and participants in the structure of clauses. Halliday offers a model of the underlying semantic options available in English as *Types* or processes which are expressed in the clause. These options are known as the *Transitivity* options. Quoting Berry, Burton makes choices between different types of processes, between different types of participants, different types of circumstances, different roles for participants and circumstances, different numbers of participants and circumstances, different ways of combining processes, participants and circumstances. The following figure is Burton's simplified map of these choices:

		<u>Intention Process</u>
		John kissed Mary
		I kicked the ball
	<u>Action Process</u>	
	John kissed Mary	
	The boy fell over	
<u>Material Process</u>		<u>Supervention Proc</u>
John kissed Mary		The boy fell over
The boy fell over		I dropped the vase
The lake shimmered	<u>Event process</u>	
	The lake shimmered	
	The car back fired	

		<u>Perception Process</u> John saw Mary She listened attentively
	<u>Internalised Process</u> John saw Mary She Likes Bach She considered the question	<u>Reaction Process</u> She likes Bach They hate America
<u>Mental Process</u> John saw Mary She likes Bach She considered the question He said that	<u>Externalised Process</u> He said that I announced the decision	<u>Cognition Process</u> She considered the question I thought hard
<u>Relational Process</u> Truth is Beauty She is my daughter They are in the garden		

Burton is concerned with processes and participants and is interested in 'making strange' the power-relationships that obtain in the socially constructed world, 'be it in the "real" world of public and private relationships or the spoken and written texts that we create, hear, and that ultimately construct *US* in that "real" world'. She suggests with Sapir (1956), Whorf (1956) and Volosinov (1930), that the world is linguistically constructed, but disagrees with Whorf that we are trapped in that linguistic construction. She provides instead an optimistic view of reconstructing reality in a different way.

However, Burton distinguishes between three kinds of images of women in literature: (1) Images of women in literature written by males, particularly in relation to details of social history. (2) Images of women in literature written by feminist women. (3) Images of women in literature written by women who were not/are not feminists - either by free choice, or because they were unaware that the choice was available to them.⁸ Sylvia Plath's work, Burton suggests, fits into the third category. Plath writes of herself as a victim and talks of suicide. (Burton does not suggest that only women are victims or construct themselves as such.)

I will use Burton's method of analysis in analysing Salomé's voice in Wilde's play. The result of my analysis shows that Wilde presents Salomé as a woman who was trapped in a patriarchal world, and that her language constructs her in this world. The following text is said by Salomé at the end of the play. She had already danced the dance of seven veils and is now waiting for the head of Jokanaan.

The text

There is no sound. I hear nothing. Why does he not cry out, this man? Ah! if any man sought to kill me, I would cry out, I would struggle, I would not suffer ... Strike, strike, Naaman, strike, I tell you ... No, I hear nothing. There is a silence, a terrible silence. Ah! something has fallen upon the ground. I heard something fall. It is the sword of the headsman. He is afraid, this slave. He has let his sword fall. He dare not kill him. He is a coward, this slave! Let soldiers be sent. (She sees the Page of Herodias and asks him to bring the head. Now the head is in front of her) ... Ah! thou wouldst not suffer me to kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan. Well! I will kiss it now. I will bite it with my teeth as one bites a ripe fruit. Yes I will kiss thy mouth Jokanaan. I said it, did I not

say it? I said it. Ah! I will kiss it now.⁹

The passage underlies mixed feelings of fury, happiness, hatred, love, sensuality, defeat and victory. But in order to understand what is happening in the language of this passage which leads us to such responses we should follow the following steps. These steps, Burton suggests, enable us to get hold of the persona's 'reality' as constructed in the clause-by-clause make-up of the text as a whole:

1. isolate the processes *per se*, and find which participant (who or what) is 'doing' each process;
2. find what sort of process they are, and which participant is engaged in which type of process;
3. find who or what is *affected* by each of these processes.

In the first step, the text is repeated again but sentences are numbered and the processes are isolated and underlined in order to ease the reference:

(1) There is no sound. (2) I hear nothing. (3) Why does he not cry out, this man? (4) If any man sought to kill me, I would cry out, I would struggle, I would not suffer ... (5) Strike, strike, Naaman, strike, I tell you ... (6) No, I hear nothing. (7) There is a silence, a terrible silence. (8) something has fallen upon the ground. (9) I heard something fall. (10) It is the sword of the headsman. (11) He is afraid, this slave. (12) He has let his sword fall. (13) He dare not kill him. (14) He is a coward, this slave! Let soldiers be sent. (15) thou wouldst not suffer me to kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan. (16) I will kiss it now. (17) I will bite it with my teeth as one bites a ripe fruit. (18) Yes, I will kiss thy mouth Jokanaan. (19) I said it; did I not say it? (20) I said it. (21) I will kiss it now.

The next step is to abstract out the actors in each process and the lexical realisation of each of the processes associated with them :

Sentence No	Actor	Process
1.		is
2.	persona (Salomé)	hear
3.	He (Jokanaan)	does cry out
4.	any man	sought to kill
4a.	persona	would cry out
4b.	persona	would struggle
4c.	persona	would not suffer
5.	persona's direct speech	
6.	persona	hear
7.		is
8.	something	has fallen
9.	persona	heard...fall
10.	It (sword)	is
11.	He (slave)	is
12.	He (slave)	has let..fall
13.	He (slave)	dare not kill
14.	He (slave)	is
15.	Thou (Jokanaan)	would not suffer
16.	persona	will kiss
17.	persona	will bite
18.	persona	will kiss
19.	persona	said
19a.	persona	did say
20.	persona	said
21.	persona	will kiss

The above table gives access to a clear picture of what is happening, (who is doing what) in the persona's description of the 'world' around her. It seems that the persona as an actor dominates in this passage (13 out of 21), the slaves performs action four times (11, 12, 13, 14) and Jokanaan acts twice (3, 15). All these actions are taking place in the persona's mind. The three characters interact together, then everything drops out at the end and the persona (Salomé) takes over forcefully. However, this does not give us a full description of the kind of actions each character

performs nor does it analyse the 'reality' behind the text. The next step describes the Types of processes involved in the passage which could make things clearer:

1. ___ is = relational
2. persona hear = mental- internalised perception
3. He does cry out = mental externalised
4. Any man sought to kill = mental-internal-cognition
- 4a. persona would cry out = mental-externalised
- 4b. persona would struggle = mental-action-intention
- 4c. persona would not suffer = mental-internal-cognition
5. persona's direct speech
6. persona hear = mental- internalised- perception
7. ___ is = relational
8. something has fallen = material-event
9. persona heard = mental-internalised-perception
10. It (sword) is = relational
11. He (slave) is = relational
12. He has let ... fall = material-action-intention
13. He dare not kill = material-action- intention
14. He is = relational
15. Thou wouldst not suffer me = material-action-intention
16. persona will kiss = material-action-intention
17. persona will bite = material-action-intention
18. persona will kiss = material-action-intention
19. persona said = mental-externalised
- 19a. persona did say = mental-externalised
20. persona said = mental-externalised
21. persona will kiss = material-action-intention

A close examination of the above list brings us to some interesting points. Let us examine each character's actions. First, the slave's actions (11, 12, 13, 14) are either relational or material-action-intention processes

and in both cases, they constitute part of reality. Secondly, Jokanaan's actions are: (3) mental externalised (Salomé wonders why does he not cry out), and (15) material-action-intention (Salomé express her extreme happiness because he would no longer torture her as he used to do in the past). Both actions, although they do not take place at this moment, constitute part of the speaker's reality. Thirdly, Salomé's or the persona's actions which dominate are in most cases mental-internalised-perception processes (2, 6, 9) or mental-internalised-cognition (4c). The persona only hears things from the external world, receives and suffers, and all these actions do not take part in external reality. However, in her imagination, she manages to produce mental-externalised process (4a) and material-action-intention process (4b) (if any man sought to kill me, I would cry out, I would struggle). Some of her actions are mental-externalised (19, 19a, 20), they are mental because the persona only says things or has said things, but has not carried actions out. It is only when the persona speaks of the future that her actions shift to material-action-intention processes (16, 17, 18, 21), but none of them construct the present world, and when they do become part of the present world after the dance, the persona is killed. Finally, my analysis shows that all characters around the persona, Jokanaan and the slave, seem to be affecting the reality that the persona receives, perceives and expresses.

Things take part in the environment around her but all beyond her control, e.g; processes (1, 7, 8) when silence prevails and things fall upon the ground.

One more analysis could also explain the persona's perception of her reality and her position in it. It isolates who or what is *affected* by each process and shows the passivity of her actions:

1. O affects the environment by relational process.
2. persona affects O by perception process.
3. Jokanaan affects O by externalised process.
4. Anyman affects persona by intention process.
- 4a. persona affects O by externalised process.
- 4b. persona affects O by externalised process.
- 4c. persona affects O by cognition process.
5. _____
6. persona affects O by perception process
7. O affects the environment by relational process.
12. slave affects sword by intention process.

This kind of analysis gives us a clearer description of the speaker of this passage. She affects nothing and nobody, whereas everybody around her affects her and her environment. We could see this analysis more clearly, if we move a bit further in the same passage said by Salomé (I will not analyse all the sentences):

Text

How is it that the red viper stirs no longer? ... Thou wouldst have none of me Jokanaan. Thou didst reject me. Thou didst speak evil words against me. Thou didst treat me as a harlot, as a wanton, me, Salomé, daughter of Herodias, Princess of Judaea!

(All these events happened in the past, they no longer constitute a part in the present or the future reality of Salomé)

1. red viper stirs : red viper affects O by intention process.
2. Thou (Jokanaan) wouldst have none of me: Jokanaan affects persona by intention process.
3. Thou didst reject me: Jokanaan affects persona by intention process.

Salomé, as it has been shown, reveals herself to us as a helpless, negative and marginal character who lives and is killed in an unjust world. The analysis shows that the whole world affects Salomé by intentional process.

It is interesting to note that Aubrey Beardsley's illustrations of Salomé (see Appendix II) suggest the same idea. In these drawings, Salomé is either seated doing nothing or being affected by the world: Picture 1. Salomé is standing doing nothing. Her dress is excessively stylish with layers and designs. Picture 2. Salomé is seated doing absolutely nothing. She affects nothing and nobody. Picture 3. Salomé is dancing. She also affects nobody. Picture 4. She is being affected by somebody. Her make up is put on her by other people. Interest in make up and decoration is shown in this picture. Picture 5. Interest in decoration and sex is shown. Salomé is decorated by other people while nude. Picture 6. She receives the head.

Below, I examine the language of the both Page of Herodias and

Herod in the play in the same way, and find out whether this language reflects the male's assertion and positiveness as opposed to the female's negation. Here is the Page of Herodias, lamenting the death of the Young Syrian:

Text:

(1) He was my brother, and nearer to me than a brother. (2) I gave him a little box full of perfumes, and a ring of agate that he wore always on his hand. (3) In the evening we used to walk by the river, among the almond trees, and he would tell me of the things of his country. (4) He spake even very low. (5) The sound of his voice was like the sound of the flute, of a flute player. (6) Also he much loved to gaze at himself in the river. (7) I used to reproach him for that.¹⁰

Analysis I

1. He was = relational
2. Persona gave = material-action-intention
3. persona used to walk = material-action-intention
4. He spake = mental-externalised
5. He (his voice) was = relational
6. He loved to gaze = mental-internalised-reaction
7. persona used to reproach = mental-externalised

Analysis II

1. He affects O by relational process
2. persona affects him by intention process
3. persona affects him intention process
7. persona affects him by externalised process.

It might be interesting to note that in the play there is a hint of a homosexual relation between the Page of Herodias and the Young Syrian. The former always loved the latter and treated him as if he was a female. I will also examine Herod's speech talking about the Young Syrian:

Text:

(1) His father was a king. (2) I drove him from his kingdom. (3) And you made a slave of his mother, who was a queen, Herodias. (4) So he was here as my guest, as it were, and for that reason I made him my captain. (5) I am sorry he is dead. (6) Ho! Why have you left the body here? (7) I will not look at it - away with it. (8) It is cold here. (9) There is a wind blowing.¹¹

Analysis I

1. Syrian's father was = relational process
2. persona drove = material-action-intention
3. persona's wife made = material-action-intention
4. Syrian was =relational
- 4a. persona made = material-action-intention
5. persona is = relational
6. somebody has left = material-action- intention

Analysis II

1. Syrian's father affects O by relational process
2. persona affects Syrian father by intention process
3. persona's wife affects Syrian's mother by intention process
- 4a. persona affects Syrian by intention process
6. somebody affects Syrian's body by intention process.

The above analysis leads us to some interesting points in the male's language in the play which constructs him as a male. In most cases, the persona in these passages affects by intentional process. The male character reveals himself as constructive of his 'reality'. Unlike the female, he affects the world by intentional process. The play ends with the male asserting himself and his supremacy by killing 'that woman'.

Wilde does not represent individuals' realities through the use of language - man as assertive and woman as inactive - because he

reinforces the stereotypes of his society. The dance which, as I claim later, has no sign of sexual attraction or femininity produced in other Salomé's is the non-verbal expression of the self which indicates that Salomé's real self is antithetical to the self imposed on her by society. I will also show later that there are various kinds of non-verbal expression that silence the social world and appear in Lady Windermere's Fan, A Woman Of No Importance and The Duchess of Padua. In each of these plays there is a non-verbal act of stepping over the boundaries into self-fulfilment.

Having examined the outward reality of Salomé as she herself perceives it, I will now, drawing on Freud's interpretation of repression, explore her inward reality as she articulates it. I regard repression, which is imposed on Salomé by Jokanaan and the social order as a factor of limit. The psychoanalytic interpretation of Salomé's language shows that she expresses continuous images of love-repression-hate. Repression is the limit which she has to cross in order to fulfil and express her love. Realising that she is unable to do so, Salomé generates hate towards the other part. When Jokanaan is killed (the event which followed the dance), the repressive element is removed and Salomé expresses continuous love by fully satisfying her desires.

In "Repression" (1915), Freud argues that 'the essence of repression lies simply in the function of rejecting and keeping something out of consciousness'. He goes on to say that this process involves elements of pleasure and pain in the person:

... we see that satisfaction of an instinct under repression is quite possible; further, that in every instance such satisfaction is pleasurable in itself, but is irreconcilable with other claims and purposes, it therefore causes pleasure in one part of the mind and pain in another.¹²

Repression, Freud continues, does not stop the instinct from continuing to exist, it only interferes with the instinct's relation and presentation to the consciousness.

On the ground of Freud's comments, I will explain Salomé's reaction as a woman against oppression. Man, male-dominated society, and patriarchal cultural values repressed women. Salomé, whose desires were kept out of consciousness, presents that feeling of pleasure and pain under repression. These feelings of pleasure and pain come in a love-hate form. Whenever Salomé expresses her love and her sexual desires, Jokanaan, male-dominated society, rejects them and keeps them out, which gives her pain. Immediately, these feelings of love turn into hate. Before the dance, Salomé's language reflects a love-repression-hate pattern. After the dance, repression-hate drops out and Salomé's language reflects love only. Below, I explain this point by quoting Salomé before and after the dance. When Salomé first saw Jokanaan, she says:

Jokanaan, I am amorous of thy body! Thy body is white like the lilies of a field that the mower hath never mowed ... Let me touch thy body.

When she tries to carry out her desires into reality by touching his body, Jokanaan rejects her saying: 'Back! Daughter of Babylon! By women came evil to the world. Speak not to me'. Immediately, Salomé hates the body and starts loving the hair:

Thy body is hideous. It is like the body of a leper. It is like a plastered wall where vipers have crawled; like a plastered wall where scorpions have made their nest. It is like a whitened sepulchre full of loathsome things... It is of thy hair that I am enamoured, Jokanaan, ... Let me touch thy hair.

She articulates words which denote repressive elements: (plastered wall, nest, sepulchre). But again, Jokanaan rejects her shouting: 'Back, daughter of Sodom! Touch me not'. Having had her desires rejected again, Salomé expresses hate:

Thy hair is horrible. It is covered with mire and dust ... it is like a knot of black serpents writhing round thy neck ... I love not thy hair ... It is thy mouth that I desire ... Let me kiss thy mouth.

Notice again the use of words that denote limits and repression (knot, round the neck). But her desires are rejected and repressed again when Jokanaan shouts back: 'Never, daughter of Babylon! Daughter of Sodom! Never'. At the end, when Jokanaan (her consciousness) is silenced, Salomé expresses continuous images of love:

... Jokanaan, I love thee only ... I am athirst for thy beauty; I am hungry for thy body; and neither wine nor fruits can appease my desire ... Neither the floods nor the great waters can quench my passion ...

Notice the words which refer to some sort of continuity (flood, water)

which come after removing the repressive element. This examination joins the assumption which I raised earlier that elements of boundaries appear in Wilde's language and prevent individuals from fulfilling the self. Removing the repressive elements here leads into self-satisfaction. But Herod, the established order, believes that she is 'monstrous' and that she has committed a 'a great crime' against the 'unknown God'.¹³ The 'unknown God' is Jokanaan, the consciousness, society, and all the establishments.

I have examined Salomé's language before and after the dance which gave a close description of her outward and inward reality. I have suggested that the dance is the focal point in the play, a non-verbal expression of transgressing the bounds of society and an act of self-unity. While language is the product of culture and society, the dance is the product of self and nature; while language verbally articulates society, the dance non-verbally articulates the self and silences society; while language reflects Salomé as weak and helpless, the dance reflects her as self-unified. I will now examine this antithesis between the dance and the language.

2.1.2. The Dance Of Salomé: Non-Verbal Expression Of Transgressing Boundaries Into Self-Unity

In "The Artist and the Dancer in Three Symbolist *Salomés*", Rodney Shewan states that the Dance in Mallarmé's *Hérodiade* (1871); Laforgue's

"Salomé" in *Moralites Legendaires* (1887); and Wilde's *Salomé* (1893), makes the dramatic climax. Shewan claims that for the symbolist generation, discomfited by Realism and the common everyday life, dance was the expression of unity and self-fulfilment:

Dance understandably offered an organic metaphor expressing the perfect fusion of creation with creator. In dance, the artist communes both with self and with medium: the distinction between technique and expression seem to disappear, ... spontaneous yet stylised, an individual act yet an expression of some of the most basic, collective human instincts, dance is at once concrete and symbolic, natural and highly sophisticated, particular and universal.

Dance gave the Symbolists a unity of creation and creator, self and medium, technique and expression, spontaneity and stylisation, individuality and collectiveness, nature and sophistication, particularity and universality. Dance, Frank Kermode claims, is 'the most discursive art, offering a pre-scientific image of life, an intuitive truth'.¹⁴ In dance, there is unity of opposites and perfection. The idea of unity is important for the Decadents who, as I maintained earlier, sought a reunification of the divided unity of creation and a pre-scientific image of life before the break-up of culture during the industrial revolution.

The subject of dance, connected to death, runs throughout the play. It comes in the first conversation in the play between the page of Herodias and the Young Syrian:

The Young Syrian: How beautiful is the Princess Salomé to-night!

The Page of Herodias: Look at the moon! How strange the moon seems!
She is like a woman rising from a tomb. She is like a dead woman. You

would fancy she was looking for dead things.

The Young Syrian: She has a strange look. She is like a little princess who wears a yellow veil, and whose feet are of silver. She is like a princess who has little white doves for feet. You would fancy she was dancing.

The Page of Herodias: She is like a woman who is dead. She moves very slowly.

In this passage there are words that denote unity (death), nature (moon), and words that refer to parts of the human body (strange look, yellow veil, feet of silver, doves for feet, dancing, moves). The parallel between Salomé and the moon remains till the end of the play. The above conversation foreshadows the dance (yellow veil, white silver feet, dancing) and predicts the death of Salomé. In the middle of the play, the subject of dance-moon-death appears again. Just before Salomé's actual dance, Herod describes the moon saying:

The moon has a strange look to-night. Has she not a strange look? She is like a mad woman, a mad woman who is seeking everywhere for lovers. She is naked, too. She is quite naked. The clouds are seeking to clothe her nakedness, but she will not let them. She shows herself naked in the sky. She reels through the clouds like a drunken woman ... I am sure she is looking for lovers.

Herod associates the moon with a mad, drunken and naked dancer who sways in all directions in search for lovers. In this passage, there are words that refer to nature (moon, clouds, sky), and words that refer to the body ('seeking lovers', 'nakedness' which denote sexuality). The verbs here denote states (she has, she is like, she is naked, she is quite naked) or dynamic situations which denote assertion and relate to the dance

(woman who is seeking, clouds are seeking, she shows herself, she reels, she is looking). The reference to the body and to nature resembles what I called in the previous chapter transgression (sexual freedom) and unity (nature). At the end of the play, Salomé dances, gets the lover she has been in search for, and kisses the mouth she has desired. The stage direction at the end indicates: 'A moonbeam falls on Salomé, covering her with light', and Herod says 'Kill that woman'.¹⁵ Salomé is finally dead. So, the dance gives a sense of unity to the play when it appears in the beginning, middle and end. It also links human beings with the moon achieving unity between earth and heaven and present and future.

Wilde's Salomé, Shewan continues, 'rejects parental and religious authority, ignores political ramifications, gives herself to the passion of the moment'.¹⁶ The act of dancing is a transgression of social and political. It is only when she takes the dress off and dances the dance of seven veils that her sexual desires are satisfied and her body given freedom. Dress in the 19th century had social and ideological dimensions. First, it was associated with morals: in 1862, Mrs Sarah Austin commented on the link that people drew between dress and morals saying: 'One difficulty is the necessity of being dressed with *decency* ... The English conclude if your dress is loose, that your morals are also'. Secondly, dress was made to limit woman's freedom. Fashion tied women up, limited her freedom

and even hidden her personality. Thirdly, dress reinforced women's position in society. The fashion of that period, for example, applied the use of crinoline, bodice, lace-tight corset which was, as Dr. C. Willett Cunnington, a women's fashion historian, described, 'a happy contrivance ... to inflame the passion of one sex while restraining those of the other'. In The Victorian Woman, Duncan Crow suggests the bustle of the 70s formed an integral curve and expressed an exaggeration of the sexual feature of the wearer. The bustle of the 80s did not project a curve but, by draping the front of the skirt, it gave the impression of semi-pregnancy.¹⁷ The dance of Salomé is then a non-verbal expression of transgressing the role of female, of mother and of all social values which are associated to them.

Wilde argued in favour of abolishing the submissive states of women. In 1887, he wrote to Thomas Wemyss Reid, general manager of the publishers of Cassell & Company (the firm which published *The Lady's World: A Magazine of Fashion and Society*) who asked Wilde to contribute:

It seems to me that at present it is (the magazine) too feminine, and not sufficiently womanly. No one appreciates more fully than I do the value and importance of Dress, in its relation to good taste and good health: indeed the subject is one that I have constantly lectured on before Institutes and Societies of various kinds ... we should take a wider range, as well as a high stand point, deal not merely with what women wear, but with what they think, and what they feel. The Lady's World should be made the recognised organ for the expression of woman's opinion on all subjects of literature, art and modern life, and yet it should be a magazine

that men could read with pleasure, and consider it a privilege to contribute to.¹⁸

Womanhood, as Wilde perceives, belongs to a larger field than femininity: it includes dress, feelings and thoughts. In the same long letter Wilde suggests that they should ask for the contribution of different women from different ranks. Under his list come Princess Louise and the Princess Christian, Mrs Julia Ward Howe of Boston 'as well as other cultured women of America', Lady Archibald Campbell, 'a charming writer', Lady Ardilaum with her 'Irish experience', Miss Olive Shreiner, the author of *South African Farm*, Miss Pater 'sister of the author of *Marius* and many others. He finally suggests: 'let dress have the end of the magazine; literature, art, travel and social attitudes the beginning'. Wilde was to be appointed as the editor of the magazine. He realised that many women disliked the title (*The Lady's World*) because of its class connotation. He asked to change it into *The Woman's World* arguing that the title (*The Lady's*) could only be applicable to the magazine at its present state; it cannot be applied to a magazine that aims to be the organ of 'women of intellect, culture and position'.

Wilde abolishes the submission states in any form of social discourse. Teleny or the Reverse of the Medal, a pornographic work which deals with the subject of homosexuality (edited by Wilde and published by Smithers in 1893), is regarded as an exception among the

Victorian homosexual pornographic works. The story is about the passionate love felt by Camille de Grioux for the pianist Rene Teleny. The two partners enjoy an equally pleasurable activity: 'our fingers hardly moved the skin of the penis, but our nerves were so strained, our excitement had reached such a pitch, and the seminal ducts were so full, that we felt them overflowing'. The narrator uses pronouns like 'our' and 'we', and describes the pleasure that they both arrived at, then '... a tremendous shock took place; a convulsion which annihilated both mind and matter, a quivering delight which everyone has felt, to a greater or lesser degree - often a thrill too intense to be pleasurable'. Beside physical pleasure, the sexual act also involves emotion and feelings: 'Teleny again put his arm round me and held me tight. I gazed at myself within his eyes, he saw himself in mine'.¹⁹ Peter Webb claims that Teleny is not written to be enjoyed at the expense of an inferior and dominated part. There is no rape or flagellation, no partnership of dominance and submission. Apart from this example, the rest of the works continued to reveal man's supremacy, man's pleasures and desires. In his famous defense of homosexuality, Wilde states:

The love that dares not speak its name in this century is such a great affection of an elder for a younger man as there was between David and Jonathan, such Plato made the very basis of his philosophy, and such as you find in the sonnets of Michelangelo and Shakespeare. It is that deep spiritual affection that is as pure as it is perfect ... It is beautiful, it is fine, it is the noblest form of affection. It is intellectual, and it repeatedly exists between an elder and a younger man, when the elder man has

intellect, the younger man has all the joy, hope, and glamour of life before him.²⁰

Wilde regards the homosexual act as the noblest form of relation: it involves a mutual relation between the partners; it discards submission and dominance; rejects positiveness and negativeness; abolishes selfishness and otherness; and contains a fusion of intellect and joy, of beauty and perfection. So, arguing in favour of women was part of Wilde's overall aim to abolish boundaries and distinctions.

The dance is also a non-verbal expression of transgressing what Shewan calls the 'political ramifications'. The dance, which offered Salomé the chance to satisfy her sexual desires, violates the Victorian social, economic and political stability. In the Victorian time, sex in general was suppressed and ignored and woman's sexuality was part of the general attitude against sex. The Victorians made the drawing room a 'citadel of respectability' and tamed the 'savagery of sex', so that it is no longer 'the cruel anarchist' that deviated from their rules of behaviour and speech. They banned sex as far as possible from every day life, refused to recognise its existence, removed all its traces from the household, and prohibited it from conversation as well as from sight. As far as sexual relations were concerned, women were supposed to be the sacrificial part that meant to enhance the pleasures of man. In Women of England (1839), Mrs Ellis claims that women are, strictly speaking, 'relative

creatures': 'In her intercourse with man, it is impossible but that woman should feel her own inferiority; and it is right that it should be so'. Woman's part in the intercourse, she continues, is to make sacrifices in order to enhance the mental and physical satisfaction of man; furthermore she should do that without any sign of pleasure.²¹

Pornographic novels that appeared in the 19th century carried the same conventional ideological structure of the period: the dominance-submission theme. Peter Webb presents a survey of the common themes in Victorian pornography which reveals a sexually repressed and totally male-dominated society. The two most common themes in Victorian pornography, he says, are raping and flagellation. Webb presents examples of pornographic novels such as Raped on the Railway (1894) and The Lustful Turk (1828). The author in the first novel presents the story from a totally male point of view and says: 'the sum of all human ambition is to rape a woman'. Under flagellation comes a wide range of novels where women are whipped before they are raped; and where, in some cases, men are whipped in order to increase their sexual pleasure. Even man's masochistic pleasures were to be enhanced at the expense of woman. In the anonymous novel My Secret Life (1890), the narrator visits a flagellation brothel where a man is flogged until he reaches orgasm. In Whippingham Papers (1887),

Swinburne says: 'One of the great charms of birching lies in the sentiment that the floggee is the powerless victim of the furious rage of a beautiful woman'.²²

So, the mediums of expression carried out by Wilde strip the play from the literary traditions of that period which regarded women as inferior or sexually attractive. The verbal expression articulates a cruel society and the non-verbal expression articulates a person who rejects and rebels against cruelty. Comparing Wilde's Salomé with its contemporaries will support my argument of Wilde's refusal to represent women in the light of the 19th century discourse. Unlike his contemporaries, Wilde, as I show below, tries to 'de-sex' Salomé, or in other words presents a human being regardless of the sex.

Huysmans' language reflects the archaic meaning of the character of Salomé and the traditional role of women in the 19th century. It reaffirms Salomé as a seductive virgin and woman as sexually attractive. In A Rebours, Des Esseintes examines Moreau's "The Apparition":

She is almost naked; in the heat of the dance the veils have fallen away and her brocade robes slipped to the floor, so that now she is clad only in wrought metals and translucent gems. A gorgerin grips her waist like a corselet, and like an outsized clasp a wondrous jewel sparkles and flashes in the cleft between her breasts; lower down a girdle, encircles her hips, hiding the upper part of her thighs, against which dangles a gigantic pendant glistening with rubies and emeralds; finally where the body shows bare between the gorgerin a girdle, the belly bulges, dimpled by a naval which resembles a graven real of onyx with its milky hues and its rosy finger-nail tints.²³

In the above description of Salomé, there is a stress on her nakedness (the veils have fallen away, the robes have slipped). There is a special reference to the naked parts of her body (waist, breast, hips, thighs, bare body, belly; rosy finger nails). The beauty of these naked parts is emphasised with the sparkling jewels over her naked body (brocade, gems, a wondrous jewel, pendant, rubies, emeralds). Salomé is described from a man's point of view: beautiful and sexually attractive. It was a man who painted her and now it is a man who is describing her giving her images that a man wants to find in every beautiful woman.

The language in Mallarmé's "Hérodiade" also reinforces the traditional image of the character of Salomé as a 'virgin whore' and reaffirms the 19th century concept of woman's 'abnormal' tendencies. Salomé is first portrayed as a narcissistic person who is ignorant of what lies outside herself. As she gazes at herself in the mirror, she murmurs:

The horror of my virginity
 Delights me, and I would envelope me
 In the terror of my tresses, that by night,
 Inviolable reptile, I might feel the white
 And glimmering radiance of thy frozen fire,
 Though thou art chaste and diest of desire,
 White night of ice and of the cruel snow!

Mallarmé's Salomé is given devilish qualities which some men at the turn of the century attributed to women: her virginity is 'horror'; her beauty is 'terror' and 'snake-like'; her chastity is lustful and her sexuality is cruel.

Salomé is portrayed as a virgin whore who is thirsty for blood. When the dance comes, Mallarmé notes: 'She bends to one side - to the other - revealing one breast - the other - a sort of terrifying sketch of a 'dance'.²⁴ Again, Salomé's dance is given sensuous images. Salomé in Mallarmé's "Hérodiade" is sick, narcissistic, beautiful, lustful, sensuous and criminal.

Wilde's Salomé presents the reverse of its contemporaries: it is a woman who is describing male's beauty by giving him sensuous images and desiring him. In the play there are excessive descriptions of a male's body, male's eyes, male's hair and mouth. Salomé's physical qualities are referred to only as 'beautiful' with 'silver feet', 'white hands' and 'pale face'. These qualities could be applied to men too. She is not described as sexually attractive nor is she given sensuous images. Salomé is presented as sexless with no reference to 'breasts' or 'thighs' or 'hips' or 'waist'. Besides, there is no seduction, no sign of any devilish characteristics, no cruel sexuality, or 'devouring' desires. In "Oscar Wilde, La Femme Fatale and the Salomé Myth", Rita Severi points out that Wilde's Salomé is a 'virginal', and 'lunar' person, and

... there is nothing particularly feminine about Salomé. She is La petite princesse, she has dainty, dovelike feet with which she dances, but we are not told if she has breasts or hips, as Flaubert tells us of the dancing daughter of Herodias. Wilde's Salomé is androgynous or sexless..²⁵

Rita Severi attributes this to Wilde's homosexuality and claims that Wilde appreciates in women the same qualities he appreciates in men: youth,

beauty, delicacy, innocence, slimness.

When, in 1890, he announced that he would write on the subject of *Salomé*, he had different kinds of images. He would portray her as a chaste, 'Her body, tall and pale, undulates like a lily ... There is nothing sensual in her beauty. The richest laces cover her svelte flesh ... In her pupils gleam the flames of faith'. Even while naked, Wilde's *Salomé* was beautiful but not as sexually attractive. Later he asked:

Don't you think she would be better naked? Yes, totally naked, but draped with heavy and ringing necklaces made of jewels of every colour, warm with fervor of her amber flesh. I don't conceive of her as unconscious, serving as mute instrument. No her lips in Leonardo's painting disclose the cruelty of her soul. Her lust must need be infinite, and her perversity without limits. Her pearls must expire on her flesh.²⁶

Wilde wanted to emphasise in his *Salomé* elements of infinity and limitlessness. He wanted her to be wild and naked, not to expose cruelty, or heartlessness or sensuality, but to express liberty and display limitless perversity.

The stylistic analysis have illuminated aspects of language, explored literary and social aspects of the dance and explained various points in the development on the character of *Salomé* (transgressing the various rules into self-unity). I will now examine aspects of language, concepts of transgression and unity in the whole play.

2.1.3. Verbal And Non-Verbal Expressions Of An Anti-Realist World:

The acts of transgression and unity do not only centre round the character of Salomé, but are major elements in the whole atmosphere of the play. The language of the play in general reflects acts of transgression and unity. Throughout the play, there is an attempt to penetrate from the known into the unknown, to link humans with stars, earth with heaven, to relate hostile terrains, to transgress the limits and abolish boundaries, and a continuous reference to the world of integrity. Wilde's tendency to deal with the 'non-existent' and the 'unreal', which is part of his aesthetic of Decadence, joins the anti-Realist tradition. Wilde, as the rich language of the play indicates, takes life as part of his art's rough materials (language, colour, music, characters, earth, space, social boundaries and sexual differences) in order to recreate the non-existent and ideal form. But could real life be recreated? and could a society be unified and integrated?

Wilde presents a world locked in a battle with intrusive irrational forces or hostile elements that threaten its survival. Herod says: 'Wherefore do I hear in the air this beating of wings? Ah! One might fancy a bird, a huge black bird that hovers over the terrace!'. The reference to the 'huge black bird' is an allusion to an alien figure that comes from another province of nature. It is a reference to the unknown and to the future. Herod also refers to the 'wind': 'There is a wind

blowing. Is there not a wind blowing? ... I tell you there is a wind that blows'.²⁷ The continuous reference to the 'wind' is also an allusion to another irrational force that comes from an alien place. Its vast blowing threatens to destroy the world. This reflects a desire to transgress the bounds of the world.

Rhetorical language relates Herod's feeling with the alien irrational forces and expresses some sort of unity: anadiplosis helps Herod to stress the word 'it' which refers to 'wind', a form of irrational forces: 'But I heard it. It was the blowing ...' In the figure of anadiplosis itself with the last word opening the second sentence, there is some sort of unity and a continuation. In the figure of anaphora, there is a link between sentences which also highlights the link of earth with this unknown forces: 'I hear nothing. I hear it no longer. But I heard it'. In place, different sentences are linked with the same word. This word stresses Wilde's sense of the unknown: 'There is a wind blowing. Is there not a wind blowing? No there is no wind. I tell you there is a wind that blows'.²⁸ Herod repeats later almost the same words just before Salomé performs her dance and asks for the head of Jokannan in return. Herod at that moment hears the wings beating again and the wind blowing vastly. The wings are those of the angel of death which beat violently causing a strong wind in the area. So, the reference to the unknown, enforced by

the use of the rhetorical figures, relates present events in the play with the future.

The use of rhetoric also draws a link between characters and space on the one hand, and events and the universe on the other. Wilde relates Salomé to the moon and to death; to heaven and to the underworld. In the conversation between the Young Syrian and the Page of Herodias, there is an important connection between the moon and the princess which is achieved again through the use of rhetorical figures: 'How beautiful the princess Salomé looks tonight. Look at the moon. She has a strange look' In this example, antanaclasis not only links Salomé to the moon, but links many sentences together by using the same word. The use of anaphora, 'She is like a woman rising from the tomb. She is like a dead woman. She is like a woman who is dead. She moves very slowly', isocolon 'You would fancy she was looking for dead things. You would fancy she was dancing', plocé '... and whose feet are of silver. She is like a little princess who has little white doves for feet', and syllepsis 'She (the moon) is like a dead woman. She (Salomé) has a strange look', have the same two functions. They draw a link between Salomé and the moon, the dance and the space on the one hand, and relate sentences to each other on the other hand.²⁹ Defining events and characters in terms of their global and universal place and relating them to space and time appear in

the anti-Realist art where the story is neither character nor plot but the world that the writer creates. It goes in contrast to the Realist art where the setting is a context for the portrayal of character.³⁰

Wilde describes the complexion and the movement of Salomé as corresponding to the movement of the moon: 'strange look', 'dead', 'dancing' and 'slow movement'. Salomé's motion is 'reflected' in space: 'The moon has a strange look to-night ... She is like a mad woman, a mad woman who is seeking everywhere for lovers. She is naked, too. The clouds are seeking to clothe her nakedness, but she will not let them ... She reels through the clouds like a drunken woman ...' The story of the play is told according to a spatial pattern. Before the death of Salomé, the stage direction states 'stars disappear' and 'great black cloud crosses the moon and conceals it completely. The stage becomes very dark.' Finally, 'A moonbeam falls on Salomé covering her with light'.³¹ Salomé is killed. Laying out events according to historical, geographical, and geometrical patterns is characteristic of anti-Realist writings. Christopher Nash believes that this tendency is because the temporal way of establishing order in things - through history - 'exercises its appeal but simultaneously finds its match or replacements in some spatial motif':

If human-centred history was, as Flaubert thought, a post theological 'nineteenth century discovery'- even if it were, as nineteenth century determinists themselves believed, the story of man being made in spite of himself- it called for a faith in some causal system.³²

Wilde's attempt to relate events and characters to space, to causal systems, to the unknown is one way of escaping the 19th century world.

In order to link the known with the unknown, Wilde also employs characters who appear as voyeurs and struggle to penetrate through the limit of the known into the unknown.³³ In Salomé, the Page of Herodias is the voyeur who invokes the possibility of transcending the bounds of the known. His comment on the moon: 'How strange the moon seems! She is like a woman rising from the tomb. She is like a dead woman. You would fancy she was looking for dead things', is in itself an attempt to penetrate through the limit of the apparent reality of the moon. Fearing the unknown, he keeps stopping the Young Syrian from looking at Salomé: 'You are always looking at her. You look at her too much. It is dangerous to look at people in such fashion. Something terrible might happen'; 'Do not look at her. I pray you not to look at her'.³⁴ But the Young Syrian keeps looking and the 'terrible' thing happens. When the Young Syrian dies, the Page of Herodias says:

I, too, foretold it, and it has happened. Well I knew that the moon was seeking a dead thing, but I knew not that it was he whom she sought. Ah! Why did I not hide him from the moon? If I had hidden him in a cavern she would not have seen him.³⁵

Wilde also employs symbols which link the known present with the unknown future. Herod slips in the blood of the Young Syrian: 'Ah! I have slipped! I have slipped in blood! It is an ill omen. It is a very ill

omen ...'³⁶ For Herod, who also fears the unknown, the blood of the Young Syrian is like objects that constitute a link between this world and an other, an earthly planet and extranatural forces. The voyeur parallels the anti-Realists' anti-heroic figures (a spy, a detective, etc,) who appear in the context of the unknown wilderness (a forest, labyrinth, wasteland) and transcend the bounds of the unknown. The spilled blood parallels the anti-Realists' instruments of magicians, visionaries, or the mediating objects that aim to gain a footing in two worlds and work as codes for the understanding and explaining of alien realities.³⁷

Expanding the bounds of the known is a step towards what looks to Wilde as an integral and unified world. In the following chapter, I will argue that Wilde followed the technique of the Pre-Raphaelites of departing from the existing culture and establishing a new world where, as Rosemary Jackson says of the 'hollow land' of William Morris: 'the protagonist seeks his hollow region as being a realm before time, before separation into self and other, before the establishment of distinct identities or genders, before the 'fall' into difference and consciousness of ego ... a realm of integration'.

The continuous attempt to integrate earth with heaven, human with planets, the visible and the known with invisible and unknown is part of

Wilde's symbolist tendency to transcend human knowledge. Wilde's experiment with language parallel the anti-Realist' tendency to examine the possibility or impossibility of the world having integrity, stability and coherence and its potentiality for progress. The following analysis of the language of both Salomé and Herod indicates Wilde's awareness of the world's integration/disintegration processes. Is it possible for the fragments in Salomé's mind and world to make a coherent entity? Is it possible for the fragments in Herod's mind and world to integrate into a stabilised progressive whole?

Salomé's discourse is limited because it is centred round one topical subject; sexuality:

Thy mouth is like a band of scarlet on the tower of ivory. It is like a pomegranate cut with a knife of ivory. The pomegranate flowers that blossom in the garden of Tyre, and are redder than roses, are not so red. The red blasts of trumpets, that herald the approach of kings, and make afraid the enemies, are not so red. Thy mouth is redder than the feet of those who tread the wine in the wine-press. Thy mouth is redder than the feet of the doves who haunt the temples and are fed by the priests. It is redder than the feet of him who cometh from a forest where he hath slain a lion, and seen gilded tigers. Thy mouth is like a branch of coral that fishers have found in the twilight of the sea, the coral that they keep for the kings ... ! It is like the vermilion that the Moabites find in the mines of Moab, the vermilion that the kings take from them. It is like the bow of the Kings of the Persians, that is painted with vermilion, and is tipped with coral. There is nothing in the world so red as thy mouth ... Let me kiss thy mouth ...³⁸

In order to explore the possibility or impossibility of Salomé's integration and progression, we should examine many points in this passage. First,

she uses just one type of sentence: statements: 'Thy mouth is', 'It is like', 'The pomegranate ... are not'. She uses the same type of sentence throughout the whole text apart from one alternative order at the end ('let me kiss ...'). Secondly, she repeats the word 'red': '... and are redder than roses are not so red', 'The red blasts ... are not so red', 'Thy mouth is redder ...'. Thirdly, She never stops in the middle of the sentence or negates an already said statement (like the case in Herod's speech below), but compiles instead long sentences one after the other. Fourthly, she produces one kind of sentence structure in almost all her phrases:

Thy mouth	is	like ...
NP	V	AP

Fifthly, she centres her speech round one topic: the beautiful mouth.

This text looks complete and well structured: complete sentence structure, unified topic, no disjunctions and no contradiction. But does this mean that its speaker is integrated and stabilised with a potentiality for progression?

The speaker falls apart, is unable to build her fragmented self and finally she disintegrates. It is impossible for the parts in Salomé's mind and world to integrate into some sort of wholeness. Salomé becomes obsessed with the mouth and looks for ways of expressing her inward desires. All the elements that make up her consciousness are concrete,

they belong to one-sided area in life, (scarlet, pomegranate, knife of ivory, gardens of Tyre, blasts of trumpets, Kings, enemies, wines, doves, temples and priests, forests, lions, tigers, sea, vermillions, mines, corals). Salomé cannot fuse opposites. Similarly, her inner reality (sexual attraction to the mouth), is concerned with one part of her interior subject: sexuality. Salomé describes the body in the same way:

Thy body is white like the lilies of a field that the mower hath never mowed. Thy body is like the snows that lie on the mountains, like the white snows that lie on the mountains of Judaea, and come down into the valleys. The roses in the garden of the Queen of Arabia are not so white as thy body. Neither the roses in the garden of the Queen of Arabia, nor the feet of the dawn when they light on the leaves, nor the breast of the moon when she lies on the breast of the sea ... There is nothing in the world so white as thy body. Let me touch thy body.³⁹

Salomé describes everything in the world in terms of her sexual attraction to a man's body. While rhetorical figures earlier highlighted unity, they reflect here disunity in both Salomé's consciousness and inner world. Anadiplosis (first word of the clause or sentence begin the next), for example, reflects Salomé's emphasis on the body of Jokanaan (sexual desire): 'I am amorous of thy body! Thy body is white ...'. Anaphora (first word beginning a sequence of clauses or sentences), reflects Salomé's stress on the body of Jokanaan: 'Thy body is white like the lilies ... Thy body is white like the snows'. Isocolon (repetition of clause structure), reflects Salomé's inability to fuse opposites together. She links the body with earthly subjects like the lilies and the snows: 'Thy body is

white like the snows that lie on the mountains, like the snows that lie on the mountains of Judaea and come down into the valleys'. Ploce (repeating the same word within a line or sequence) also reflects Salomé's inability to link opposites. She links the body with the roses, the garden of the queen of Arabia and keeps repeating this linkage: 'The roses in the garden of the Queen of Arabia are not so white as thy body. Neither the roses in the garden of the Queen of Arabia, the perfumed garden of spices of the Queen of Arabia'. Rhetorical figures, though relate sentences to each other by using the same word, indicate disunity by stressing the fact that Salomé draws on one side of her outer and inner world. They focus on her continuous sexual attraction to the body and reflect her inability to reconcile opposites. Salomé links Jokanaan's white body to earthly and sensuous objects: the lilies, the snow, the roses in the garden, the body of a leper, plastered wall and a whitened sepulchre. She links earth with earth, sensuous objects with sensuous objects. Salomé remains solitary from beginning to end and disintegrates.

Herod's language reveals the possibility of integration and the unity of opposites:

Will she not be fair as a queen? Ah! It is cold here! There is an icy wind, and I hear ... wherefore do I hear in the air this beating of wings? Ah! one might fancy a bird, a huge black bird that hovers over the terrace. Why can I not see it, this bird? The beat of its wings is terrible. The breath of the wind of its wings is terrible. It is a chill wind. Nay, but it is not cold, it is hot. I am choking. Pour water on my hands. Give me snow to eat. Loosen my mantle. Quick! quick! Loosen my mantle. Nay,

but leave it. It is my garland that hurts me, my garland of roses. The flowers are like fire. They have burned my forehead. Ah! I can breathe now. How red those petals are! They are like stains of blood on the cloth. That does not matter. You must not find symbols in everything you see. It makes life impossible. It were better to say that stains of blood are as lovely as rose petals. It were better far to say that ... But we will not speak of this. Now I am happy, I am passing happy. Have not I the right to be happy?⁴⁰

Herod says this in a moment of self-realisation, the centre of the self has already been broken and its pieces have scattered everywhere. However, in order to examine the possibility of Herod's integration and self unity, we should examine many points in this passage: first, he uses all types of sentences: question: 'Will she not be fair as a queen? ... Have I not the right to be happy?'; exclamation: 'Ah! It is cold here!'; statement: 'Nay, but it is not cold, it is hot ... There is an icy wind'; and order: 'Pour water on my hands. Give me snow to eat'. Secondly, Herod proposes something but soon changes his mind and negates the statement he has already said: 'It is a chill wind. Nay, but it is not cold, it is hot'; 'Loosen my mantle. Nay but leave it'. Thirdly, his speeches lack completion at some points: 'There is an icy wind, and I hear ... wherefore do I hear'; 'It were better far to say ... But we will not speak of this'. Fourthly, he repeats words, phrases and sometimes ideas: 'The beat of its wings is terrible. The breath of the wind of its wings is terrible'; 'It is my garland that hurts me, my garland of roses'; 'One might fancy a bird, a huge black bird'; 'Why can I not see this bird?'. Fifthly, most of his

sentences are short in length but complete in structure:

It is a chill wind.

NP V NP

The beat of its wings is terrible.

NP V AP

They have burned my forehead.

NP Aux V NP

The above text looks fragmented. When hesitation, non-completion and repetition plus the use of questions, exclamations and orders all appear in one passage; they can indicate a sign of fragmentation in the mind of the character. But this, however, does not indicate a fragmentation in the part of the speaker.

Herod here is trying to put these fragments together in an attempt to seek integration and completion. Herod is building a self that has been shattered, yet not fully destroyed. It is possible for the fragments in Herod's mind and consciousness to form an integrated entity. In Herod's consciousness (Queen, cold, ice, wind, birds, hot, water, snow, mantles, roses, fire, air, blood), there is a coexistence of opposites: hot and cold; snow and fire; beauty and the horrid; roses and blood; and flowers and fire. In his inner reality (feeling of fear and anxiety, claim of happiness and references to the human senses), there is also a coexistence of

opposites: his expression of fear and anxiety at the beginning is opposed to the claim of happiness at the end; there is a reference to five human senses: 'and I hear ...'; 'Give me snow to eat'; 'Why can I not see it?'; 'It is my garland that hurts me'; and 'flowers' and 'roses' refer to the sense of smell. One could add to this the sixth sense: Herod's anticipation of dangerous mishaps when he refers to the existence of 'a huge black bird'. There is also a reference to air, fire and water, the three essences in human life. Herod survives because he fuses opposites for the sake of evolution into a state of perfection.

The idea of unity and disunity does not only centre round the character of Salomé and Herod, but also dominates the whole atmosphere of the play. As a descendent of Symbolism, Wilde wrote with allusion to specific colours and music. Anti-Realists adopted such language in order to show that the more precise the visual reference (the very stuff of Realism), the more empty it is.⁴¹ The colours he chooses are the colours of death. In death and in music, as I discuss later in chapter four, there is unity.

Wilde refers in the play to three colours: black, white and red. Christopher Nassaar believes that these colours refer to death and sterility. Salomé is attracted to Jokanaan's body because it is white, but white, Nassaar indicates, suggests a cold lifelessness. Salomé is also attracted to

Jokanaan's black hair, but black is the colour of death. Finally Salomé becomes attached to the red mouth, another death-like quality in Jokanaan. But again, red is the colour of blood and is clearly identified with blood. Nassaar, however, claims that Salomé is presented as a symbol of human nature, entirely evil because she is uninhibited and unmodified by any restriction.

Wilde also wrote with allusion to music. Nassaar claims later that the play's style shows the influence of Baudelaire's theory of "correspondences" which stresses the relationship between painting and music on the one hand and poetry on the other, and Pater's idea that all art strives towards the condition of music, for in music alone there is a complete unity between form and content:

The rhythmic movement of the play's sentences, the subtle monotony of the repetitions, the haunting, suggestive symbolism, and the pronounced biblical flavour create a sense of the unearthly and the mysterious. As the play progresses, the style becomes a Black Mass that fuses perfectly with the religion of evil presented in Salomé, reinforcing it while being reinforced by it.⁴²

So, the allusion to colour and music in the play, beside its transcendental symbolism which describes the 'unearthly' and the 'mysterious', is part of the same tendency to make a unity. Hence, the verbal and the non-verbal expression of the anti-Realist world do not contradict each other as they do in the social world. The silent acts and symbols here (the blood, the bird, the wind, colour and music) work towards the same end which

language articulates: the making of a unified world.

Finally, it might be worth mentioning that the evocative nature of Salomé, the attempts to transcend and unify were appreciated only by the French writers. Mallarmé described everything in the play as 'expressed in constant, dazzling strokes' and believed that on each page arises 'the unutterable and the Dream'. He saw the 'innumerable and precise jewels' as 'an accompaniment to the gown for the supernatural gesture of that young princess' whom Wilde evoked. Pierre Loti admired the play's mysterious unknown which looked like 'a chapter of the Apocalypse'. Maurice Maeterlinck appreciated its 'mysterious, strange and admirable' effects.⁴³

When the play was banned, Wilde could not understand why painters, and sculptors in England could depict whatever subject they wanted and that poets and playwrights should be silenced. It probably did not occur to him that, as Rita Severi states, through drama, 'the artist could display his talent with different media: language, cynetics, prossmics, and obtain what no other genre could give him: a live audience and an immediate response to his work'.⁴⁴ With his several mediums of expression, including language, silent acts and symbols, Wilde displayed his talent and was able to convey a message and portrays a unified world. The English saw in Wilde's Salomé a deviation from their literary cliches

and all their social and political rules and values. Below, I will explore aspects of transgression and unity in other plays by Oscar Wilde which, although they contain a similar message, were performed and welcomed in Victorian England.

2.2. Verbal And Non-Verbal Expressions In Other Plays:

In the light of Burton's method of analysis, I will now examine the voice of the Duchess of Padua, Mrs. Arbuthnot and Mrs. Erlynne in The Duchess Of Padua, A Woman Of No Importance, and Lady Windermere's Fan. Although these plays do not have the evocative nature of Salomé, they nevertheless present acts of transgression and unity through verbal and non-verbal means. The passages below refer to each character confessing of the turning point in her life and describing her relation to the world before and after.

2.2.1. The Duchess Of Padua

The turning point in the Duchess' life is when she loved Guido. Her non-verbal acts of rebellion against the existing world is when she killed the Duke. She tells Guido how she tried to break the barrier of marriage:

Our hearts are two caged birds, trying to kiss
Across their cages' bars:⁴⁵

The Duchess expresses a language that denotes limits (caged, across cages' bars). Having killed her husband, the Duchess says: 'There is no barrier between us now'. The Duchess continues to express images of prisons and barriers and speaks of non-verbal acts of stepping beyond these barriers (murder) saying:

You will not kiss me now? - Well, you will kiss me
When I have told you how I killed the Duke.
After you left me with such bitter words.
Feeling my life went lame without your love,
I had resolved to kill myself to-night.
About an hour ago I waked from sleep,
And took my dagger from beneath my pillow,
Where I hidden it to serve my need,
And drew it from the sheath, and felt the edge,
And thought of you, and how I loved you Guido,
And turned to fall upon it, when I marked
The old man sleeping, full of years and sin;
There lay he muttering curses in his sleep.
And as I looked upon his evil face
Suddenly like a flame there flashed across me,
There is the barrier which Guido spoke of:

Her actions at this point are all material action intention (I had resolved, I took a dagger, I hidden it, drew it, turned to fall, etc.). She says finally 'I killed the Duke'. This type of process takes place after she had met Guido and fallen in love with him. The Duchess murders the barrier that stands between her and the fulfilment of herself. This act resembles Salomé's act of decapitating the barrier that stands between her and the fulfilment of her sexual desires. When confronted with rejection from the side of Guido, she tells him of her past before she met him and after:

Better for me (1) I had not seen your face
 O think it was for you (2) I killed this man.
 Nay, Guido listen for a while:
 Until (3) you came to Padua (4) I lived
Wretched indeed, but with no murderous thought,
 (5) Very submissive to a cruel Lord,
 (6) Very obedient to unjust commands,
 (7) As pure I think as any (8) gentle girl
Who now would turn in horror from my hands-
 (9) You came: ah! Guido, the first kindly words
 (10) I ever heard since I had come from France
 Were from your lips: well, well, that is no matter,
 (11) You came, and in the passion of your eyes
 (12) I read love's meaning, (13) everything you said
Touched my dumb soul to music, and you seemed
 Fair as that young Saint Michael on the wall
 In Santa Croce, (14) where we go and pray
 (15) I wonder will I ever pray again?
 Well, (16) you were fair, and in your boyish face
 (17) The morning seemed to lighten, so (18) I loved you,
 And yet (19) I did not tell you of my love.
 (20) 'Twas you who sought me out, (21) knelt at my feet
 As (22) I kneel now at yours, and with sweet vows,
 Whose music seems to linger in my ears
 (23) Swore that you loved me, and (24) I trusted you,
 (25) I think there are many women in the world
 (26) Who had they been unto this vile Duke mated,
 (27) Chained to his side, as the poor galley slave
 Is to a leper chained, -ay! many women
 (28) Who would have tempted you to kill the man
 (29) I did not.
 (30) I know that had I done so,
 (31) I had not been thus humbled in the dust.
 But (32) you have loved me very beautifully
 (33) I don't think you understand me, Guido:
 It was for your sake that (34) I wrought this deed
 Whose (35) horror now chills my young blood to ice
 For your sake only
 (36) Will you not speak to me?
 (37) Love me a little: in my girlish life
 (38) I have been starved for love, and (39) kindliness
Has passed me by.⁴⁶

Analysis I:

1. Persona had seen = mental-internalised-perception
2. persona killed this man = material-action-intention
3. Guido came = material action intention
4. persona lived = relational process
5. persona is submissive = relational process
6. persona is obedient = relational process
7. persona is pure = relational process
8. girl would turn = material action intention
9. Guido came = material action intention
10. persona heard = mental internalised perception
11. Guido came = material action intention
12. persona read = material action intention
13. Guido's words touched persona's soul = material action intention
14. persona and others go and pray = material action intention
15. persona wonders = mental internalised cognition
16. Guido was fair = relational
17. The morning seems to lighten = material action intention
18. persona loved = mental internalised reaction
19. persona did not tell = mental externalised
20. Guido sought persona = material action intention
21. Guido knelt = material action intention
22. persona kneels = material action intention
23. Guido swore = mental externalised
24. persona trusted = material action intention
25. persona thinks = mental internalised cognition
26. Duke mated women = material action intention
27. women are chained = relational
28. women would have tempted Guido = material action intention
29. persona did not tempt = material action intention
30. persona knows = mental internalised cognition
31. persona had not been = relational
32. Guido loved = mental internalised reaction
33. Guido does not understand = mental internalised cognition

34. persona wrought this deed = material action intention
35. horror chills = material action intention
36. Guido speaks = mental externalised
37. Guido loves = mental internalised reaction
38. persona has been starved = relational
39. kindness has passed = material action intention.

The material action intention clauses that relate to the persona (2, 12, 22, 24, 29, 34) centre round the same movement: the persona's act of killing for the sake of love. No. 2 and 34, which relate to the murder of the Duke, are the only actions that take place in the actual world. No. 12, 22, 24, refer to the persona's relation to Guido (she reads, she kneels, she trusted). No. 29 is a negation of the material action (she did not tempt him). There are a good number of relational processes: no. 4, 5, 6, 7, 31, 38 (she read, she is submissive, obedient to a cruel Duke, she is pure, she has been humbled, she has been starved). The rest of the sentences which relate to the persona are either mental internalised perception (1, 10), mental internalised cognition (15, 25, 30) or mental internalised reaction (18), or mental externalised (19) all of which constitute part of the speaker's mind but do not take place in the real world (she sees, she hears, wonders, loves, does not tell, thinks, knows). All these internalised or relational actions take place before she commits the crime.

Other participants in the world around her have different types of actions: Guido performs material action intention processes (3, 9, 11, 13,

20, 21) which takes place in the real world (he came, his words touched persona's soul, he sought the persona, he knelt). He also produces relational clauses (16), mental externalised (23, 36) (he swore and speaks) and mental internalised reaction (32, 37), mental internalised cognition (33). The second type of analysis would further explain the persona's perception herself and her position in the world.

Analysis II

1. persona affects O by perception process
2. persona affects man by intention process
3. Guido affects O by intention process
4. persona affects O by relational process
8. girl affects persona by intention process
10. Persona affects O by perception process
13. Guido's words affects persona by intention process
15. persona affects O by cognition process
17. the morning affects O by intention process
19. persona affects O by externalised process
20. Guido affects persona by intention process
28. women affects Guido by intention process
35. horror affects persona by intention process
39. kindness affects persona by intention process.

The Duchess thinks that she has removed the barriers. She says later:

You said there was a barrier between us;
That barrier lies now i' the upper chamber
Upset, overthrown, beaten, and battered down,
And will not part us ever.

But the Duchess is mistaken. Life is full of barriers of all sorts. Guido says:

No, you mistook:

Sin was the barrier, you have raised it up;
Crime was the barrier, you have set it there.
The barrier was murder, and your hand
Has builded it so high it shuts out heaven,
It shuts out God.⁴⁷

The act of crossing over barriers is in itself, according to Guido, a barrier. Confronted with rejection from his side, the Duchess accuses him of the murder. Realising that he was ready to die for her, she tries to save him. Finally she poisons herself and says; 'I have sinned', referring to the murder of her husband, and 'yet perchance my sin will be forgiven me. I have loved much'. Like Salomé, the play ends with the death of the women and the man she desires. In death, however, there is a unity.

Guido says:

When Love and Death are both our cup-bearers;
We love and die together.⁴⁸

But unity, which is achieved in tragedies, is denied in comedies. In Wilde's social comedies, the position of women, as I explain below, seems darker. Women who made silent acts of transgression face a world full of boundaries.

2.2.2. A Woman Of No Importance

This text is said by Mrs. Arbuthnot to her son Gerald who wants to work with Lord Illingworth. (Gerald does not yet know that Lord Illingworth is his father). Mrs. Arbuthnot speaks of her past and reveals

her act of crossing over the boundaries for the sake of love. Following the same stylistic analysis, the analysis below reflects Mrs. Arbuthnot's perception of and relation to the world.

Gerald, there was a girl once, (1) she was very young, she was little over 18 at that time. George Harford - that was Lord Illingworth name than - (2) George Harford met her. (3) She knew nothing about life. (4) He knew everything. (5) He made this girl love him. (6) He made her love so much that (7) she left her father's house with him one morning. (8) She loved him so much and (9) he had promised to marry her! He had solemnly promised to marry her, and (10) she had believed him. (11) She was very young, and- and ignorant of what life really is. But (12) he put the marriage off from week to week, and month to month. -She trusted in him all the while. (13) She loved him. -Before her child was born - (14) for she had a child - (15) she implored him for the child's sake to marry her, that the child might have a name, that the sins might not be visited on the child, who was innocent. (16) He refused. After the child was born (17) she left him, taking the child away, (18) and her life was ruined, and her soul ruined, and all what was sweet, and good, and pure in her ruined also. (19) She suffered terribly - she suffers now. (20) She will always suffer. For her there is no joy, no peace, no atonement. (21) She is a woman who drags a chain like a guilty thing. (22) She is a woman who wears a mask, like a thing that is a leper. (23) The fire cannot purify her. (24) The water cannot quench her anguish. (25) Nothing can heal her! (26) No anodyne can give her sleep. (27) No poppies forgetfulness! (28) She is lost! (29) She is a lost soul!⁴⁹

Analysis I

1. persona was = relational
2. George met persona = material event
3. persona knew = mental internalised cognition
4. George knew = mental internalised cognition
5. George made persona love = material action intention
6. George made persona love = material action intention
7. persona left father's house = material action intention
8. persona loved = mental internalised reaction
9. he promised = mental externalised
10. persona believed = mental internalised cognition
11. persona was = relational

12. he put marriage off = material action intention
13. persona loved = mental internalised reaction
14. persona had a child = relational
15. persona implored him = mental externalised
16. George refused = material action intention
17. persona left him = material action intention
18. George ruined persona's life = material action intention
- 18a. George ruined persona's soul = material action intention
19. persona suffered = mental internalised cognition
20. persona will always suffer = mental internalised cognition
21. she is a woman = relational
22. she is a woman = relational
23. fire cannot purify persona = material action intention
24. waters cannot quench persona's = material action intention
25. nothing can heal persona = material action intention
26. no anodyne can give = material action intention
27. no poppies can give forgetfulness = material action intention
28. persona is = relational
29. persona is = relational

Analysis II

1. persona affect O by relational process
2. George affects persona by event process
3. George affects O by cognition
4. George affects O by cognition process
5. George affects persona by intention process
6. George affects persona by intention process
7. Persona affects fathers house by intention process
8. Persona affects him by reaction precess
9. George affects persona by intention process
10. persona affects O by cognition process
11. persona affects O by relational process
12. George affects marriage by intention process
13. persona affects George by reaction process
14. persona affects child by relational process
15. persona affects George by mental internalised process

16. George affects O by intention process
17. persona affects George by intention process
18. George affects persona by intention process
- 18a. George affects persona by intention process
19. Persona affects O by internal cognition process
20. Persona affects O by internal cognition process
21. persona affects O by relational process
22. persona affects O by relational process
23. fire affects persona by intention process
24. waters affects persona by intention process
25. nothing affects persona by intention process
26. no anodyne affects persona by intention process
27. no poppies affects persona by intention process
28. persona affects O by intention process
29. persona affects O by intention process

Most of George's actions (5, 6, 9, 12, 16, 18, 18a) are material action intention processes. No. 4 is mental cognition and no. 2 is material event.

Most of his actions constitute part of the world which the persona describes. Most of his actions affect her by intention process. Other participants in the persona's world also perform actions that take place in reality (no. 23, 24, 35, 26, 27) and affects the world or persona by intention process. In the persona's actions (1, 3, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 28, 29), there are only two material action intention processes: no. 7 when persona leaves her father's house and no. 17 when she leaves George. The rest of the actions are either relational processes (facts that she accepts) or mental internalised which have not taken place in reality or mental externalised which reflect action that remain at the

level of words and were not transmitted into reality. In analysis II, we notice that she affects nobody (except in the above two examples: 7, 17). George and other participants in the world either affect her or take external actions.

So, this play, it though differs in nature from the above two plays, carries the same models of transgression and unity revealed through the medium of sentences. The turning point in Mrs. Arbuthnot's life is when she left her father's house (when she performed a material action intention process). She stepped beyond the borders of parental rules. But the world she stepped into was full of constraints (she lived out of the social world). The woman character in the next social comedy, as I explain below, also transgresses, unifies with the self, but remains in a repressive world.

2.2.3. Lady Windermere's Fan:

In the following analysis, we find that the turning point in Mrs. Erlynne's life is when she ran away from her husband (when she made material action intention process). This turning point is the act of transgressing the bounds of marriage and society. But the world beyond the bounds of marriage was also full of limits and boundaries which she was unable to transgress for the rest of her life.

You don't know what is to (1) fall into the pit, (2) to be despised, (3)

mocked, (4) abandoned, (5) sneered at, (6) to be an outcast! (7) To find the door shut against one, (8) to have to creep in by hideous byways, (9) afraid every moment lest the (10) mask should be stripped from one's face, and all the while (11) to hear the laughter, the horrible laughter of the world; a thing more tragic than all the fears the world has ever shed. (12) You don't know what it is. (13) One pays for one's own sin, and then one pays again, and all one's life one pays. (14) You must never know that. - As for me, if (15) suffering be an expiation, then at this moment (16) I have expiated all my faults, whatever they have been; for to-night (17) you have made a heart in one who had it not, made it and broken it. - But let that pass. (18) I may have wrecked my own life, but I will not let you wreck yours.⁵⁰

Analysis I:

1. persona falls = material action supervention
2. persona is despised = relational process
3. persona is mocked = relational
4. persona is abandoned = relational
5. persona is sneered at = relational
6. persona is an outcast = relational
7. persona found doors = material event.
8. persona had to creep = material action supervention
9. persona is afraid = relational
10. mask should be stripped = relational
11. persona hears = mental internalised perception
12. Lady Windermere doesn't know = mental internalised cognition
13. One (persona) pays = material action supervention
14. Lady Windermere must never know = mental internalised cognition
15. Suffering is = relational
16. persona have expiated = mental internalised cognition
17. Lady Windermere made a heart = material action intention
18. persona may have wrecked her life = material action intention.

Mrs. Erlynne says this passage in a moment of confession to her daughter who is on the edge of repeating the same act by running away from her husband's house. This passage reflects a grim picture of the social world

as Mrs. Erlynne herself perceives it. It describes the world after her non-verbal act of breaking the barrier. The world behind the barrier was worse. The only sentence that reflects a material action intention process is no. 18 which relates to her runaway. The rest are either relational (no. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9) which describe situations which the persona has to accept, or material action supervision (1, 8, 13) which relate to events that happen unwillingly, or material event (7) which refers to the same thing or mental internalised perception or cognition (11, 14, 16) which do not take place in the real world. The second type of analysis leads to the same conclusion:

Analysis II

1. persona affects O by supervision process
2. persona affects O by relational process
16. persona affects O by cognition process
18. persona affects her life by intention process

Notice that if we turn sentences no. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 into the active voice we have the following process: the world despised, mocked, sneered at persona by intention process. So, this play, as the above analysis showed, also carries a pattern of transgression and unity which appeared in other works.

The contrast between verbal and non-verbal expressions in the above plays leads to the conclusion that Salomé's and the Duchess' language constructs them as weak and helpless participants in the world. Their

non-verbal expression breaks the barriers imposed on them by the world and that stand between them and the fulfilments of their desires. These non-verbal acts which silence the world lead them to death in which they find unity with the self, with lovers, and with nature. They both die with the man they desire. In the social comedies, the position of women and her relation to the world looks dark and gloomy. Both Mrs. Arbuthnot and Mrs. Erlynne's languages construct them as 'weak', 'despised' and 'outcasts' in the real world.

Throughout the chapter, I have argued that Women's language articulates their weak position in the social world. I argued that by doing that Oscar Wilde does not support the oppressive dominant ideology which formulates the attitude towards women; rather, he challenges it. The desire to transgress the constraints of social world and articulate freedom was a pattern that was presented throughout most of his works and was given different expressions and models. Salomé represents one of Wilde's models. The whole atmosphere of the play, and the language of all characters, reflect images of limits, breaking of limits and unity. The next chapter examines the language of both men and women in Wilde's plays which also reflect desires of transgressing the bounds of the social world but celebrates them as strong.

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22. Webb, p. 119 and 105.
23. Quoted by Meltzer, p. 25.
24. Quoted by Dijkstra, p. 385.
25. Severi, Rita, "Oscar Wilde, La Femme Fatale And The Salomé Theme", in *Proceedings Of The Xth Congress Of The International Comparative Literature Association*, Vol. 1, 1982, New York, p. 459.
26. Ellmann, p. 323 and 320-1.
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28. Anadiplosis: last word(s) of one clause or sentence begin the next.
Anaphora: same words beginning a sequence of clauses or sentences. Anthypophora: balancing question and answer form. Ploce: repeating same word within a line or sequence.
29. Antanaclasis: repeating a word, while shifting from one sense to another. Isocolon: repetition of clause structure. Syllepsis: using one word, but suggesting two senses. These definitions are taken from Brian Vickers' Classical Rhetoric In English Poetry, Macmillan, London, 1970.

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CHAPTER THREE

DEFAMILIARISATION:

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

AND AN IDEAL HUSBAND

3.0. Introduction:

This chapter explores the role of form in Wilde's deconstruction of social, political and literary standards. It falls into two main parts: the first part focuses on Wilde's display of a large number of details of the social world and suggests that power has a style and that the upper classes maintain power through this style. The second part focuses on Wilde's revolt against culture and suggests that rebellion has a style too and that the dispossessed in society change their position through their rhetorical and communicational styles. The Chapter presents Wilde's general engagement in form and enforces my argument in the previous chapter that language constructs characters as real in the world. The same themes (display of social references, language as constructive of reality) are explored later in Wilde's An Ideal Husband which leads us to the conclusion that Wilde is not engaged in themes; rather, in the way these themes are produced.

The argument starts by suggesting that Wilde aims in The Importance of Being Earnest to revolutionise literature not by revolutionising content, but by revolutionising the techniques of literary production. While my examination of the language of women in the

previous chapter celebrated women as helpless, the examination of the language of both men and women in this play and the literary technique in general celebrate these characters as triumphant over the world:

The chapter presents Wilde as a political figure in relation to his literary style and agrees with critical works that regard Wilde as a literary-political writer. In Saint Oscar, Terry Eagleton believes that Wilde is political in ways that 'far outstrip the impoverished categories of parliamentary democracy'. Wilde, Eagleton continues, wrote about socialism, Irish republicanism, 'displayed throughout his life a tenderness and compassion towards the dispossessed', was 'a remorseless debunker of the high-toned gravitas of Bourgeois Victorian England', took nothing seriously and cared only for form, pleasure and appearances. Such a man, Eagleton concludes, did not need a homosexual affair with the son of the Marquess of Queensberry to become an enemy of the country.¹

The chapter refutes arguments which regard Wilde's display of an upper class culture on stage as a reinforcement of the upper class's ideals, dreams and stereotypes. In "Stages of Desire: Oscar Wilde's Comedies and The Consumer", Regina Gagnier argues that by introducing a mimesis or a mirror image of the audience, which includes presenting material images, poses, objects and clichés of the upper class, Wilde reinforces the status quo of the audience. Gagnier argues that the mimeses of the

audience which, according to her, leads to the reinforcement of the norm, is presented in various ways. First, it presents a society for whom all wishes are fulfilled: e.g. the sick brother and the invalid Bunbury. These theatrical devices include either fetishised poses or fetishised things and ideals which Wilde allows to come true on stage. Secondly, it presents static images of the upper classes within which characters operate and which Gagnier regards as a 'tableau': e.g. the tea-time and the garden. Thirdly, it produces constant attempt of characters to reinforce their poses so that no room is left for individual or internal life. Fourthly, it presents the mimeses of the audience through the inversion of Victorian Platitudes. Inversion of a platitude, Gagnier believes, does not only state the opposites of what the audience expects but the opposites of the inversion. Such a discourse, Gagnier claims, leaves no room for interference or input from others, 'the expected lines are assumed in the unexpected, and their interplay is self-generating, breaching all interference from the outside, that is from other speakers'.² Gagnier believes that since power depends on the maintenance of its symbols, these poses and fetishes in the play symbolise power even when their presentation prevents progress. 'As there could be no development but the repetitions of clichéd forms in *Earnest*, Wilde felt that there could be no progress for the powerful ruling classes', but the ruling class, Gagnier continues, would not be disturbed,

for it was content where it was:

While the 1890s gave rise to consolidated reaction against all major labour unions, including the Engineers', Miners', Dockers' and Seamen's, and Woodworkers', Wilde's conservative images and his characters' witty disparagement of lower classes (who were not present in the theatre) served as positive reinforcement of the old way.³

My argument claims the opposites of what Gagnier proposes: Wilde's mirror image on stage, including poses, objects, types, status quo, norms and clichés of the upper classes, conceals its own law. The fetishised poses or the fetishised things and ideals are part of the strategy of displaying culture and subverting the social and ideological norm of the mentioned class, the static frames of references are there to be disturbed, the clichés of the upper class through which they perceive the world are there to be disorganised and inversion is meant to bring up the opposite of the social norm and challenge what was thought of as 'ideal' social structure.

The display of culture in the play, the revolt against it can be seen as coming from Wilde's interests in Pre-Raphaelite art. 'Pre-Raphaelitism', which formally began in 1848 and ended in 1853, remained influential even into the 20th century.⁴ In the 1860's a parallel movement went in opposition to Pre-Raphaelitism: it was the classical movement. In the 1860's, a period of intense artistic and intellectual activities, both the classical and the Pre-Raphaelite movements became elements of a larger

movement which shaped the course of the English art for the rest of the century; this was the Aesthetic movement.⁵ Hence, Wilde's interest in Pre-Raphaelitism was in this respect part of his more general aesthetic approach.

The Pre-Raphaelites' artistic approach might have attracted Wilde's attention in many ways. This was first in their symbolist tendencies. The Pre-Raphaelites, as John Ruskin comments, strove after the 'Unity of feeling' and regarded it as the basis of life and 'the first principle of Good taste'.⁶ Every aspect of life was seen to have a dual meaning: a spiritual and an earthly significance, and every object was a symbol that suggested a moral and allegorical message.⁷ Secondly, in their artistic techniques which include: the use of details which point at different levels of reality (the good picture was the picture that conveyed a large number of ideas); the revolt against the contemporary culture of imposed rules (including the rules of painting); the departure from what was thought to be the false modern systems of thought (the Pre-Raphaelites departed from their culture and drew scenes from the medieval time, scenes from Shakespeare and Dante, and alluded to lists of immortals and heroes such as Christ, Homer, etc.); and presentation of a futuristic vision (their sole code of operation was fidelity to nature).⁸

In his first lecture in New York in January 1882, Wilde lectured on the subject of Pre-Raphaelitism as part of Aestheticism. He expressed a desire and a passion for physical beauty, the attention to form rather than content, the search for new forms of art, for new intellectual and imaginative enjoyment. The lecture included the art of the English Renaissance which, Wilde claimed, celebrated form at the expense of content. It was the discovery of Parian marble, not new ideas or old moral values, that made Greek sculptures possible; it was the discovery of oil pigments that made possible the Venetian School; and it was new instruments that allowed the development of modern music. Pre-Raphaelitism showed a reaction against 'empty conventional workmanship'. It was their capacity to make that brought their art into being. Wilde said that the Pre-Raphaelites' protest was against the domination of the facts of physical life which art respected after the French Revolution. He then mocked English education for its refusal to accept these artists: 'To know nothing about these great men is one of the necessary elements of English education'. Wilde added that the fact that these artists were subject to satire did not underestimate their worth.⁹

3.1. Wilde's Concept Of Form:

The early tendency to search for new forms of Art, new intellectual and imaginative enjoyment, to celebrate form, to look for new instruments, and the desire to make which came under the influence of the Pre-Raphaelite Art, were developed later and intensified by Wilde. Wilde used literature to promote the shock effects of recognition. His main concern was to defamiliarise the familiar forms of perception and, as Tony Bennett suggests, to induce 'a new perception of reality by modifying the forms through which it was customarily perceived'. In Formalism and Marxism, Bennett relates the Russian Formalist school, who also sought to revolutionise literature, to a form of 'art for art's sake' and quotes Sklovsky as saying:

The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthete end in itself and must be prolonged.¹⁰

Wilde celebrates the power of form in art and life. Form, he states, is 'the beginning of things' and the 'secret of life':

Find expression for a joy, and you intensify its ecstasy. Do you wish to love? Use Love's Litany, and the words will create the yearning from which the world fancies that they spring. Have you a grief that corrodes your heart? Steep yourself into the language of grief, learn its utterance from Prince Hamlet or Queen Constance, and you will find that mere expression is a mode of consolation, and that Form, which is the birth of passion, is also the death of pain.¹¹

Form, according to Wilde, makes and unmakes feelings; it is the beginning and the end of both pleasure and pain in life.

Earnest is all about form: form is presented as the 'beginning of things' and the 'secret of life'; life is portrayed as coming from fictional forms; and conflicts as taking place between different types of forms. In "Earning Liberties: *Travesties* And *The Importance Of Being Earnest*"; Neil Sammells describes the interaction between life and form in what he calls the 'fictional' world of the play. Each of the main characters, Sammells claims, is associated with a document by which s/he is identified. Lane's relationship to Algy is defined by Lane's book in which he keeps the household which contains false accounts. Cecily has two sets of fiction: the love letters and her diary which also contains lies. 'You see', she tells Algy, 'it is simply a very young girl's record of her own thoughts and impressions and consequently meant for publication. When it appears in volume form I hope you will order a copy'. However, her own thoughts and impressions are transformed later into actual events. Thus real life imitates art and the world starts at the level of form. Having become real, form is changed into another form: the announcement of Cecily's engagement will appear in their little 'county newspaper'. But Gwendolen's engagement will appear in the '*Morning Post* on Saturday at the latest'. Form then challenges another form: Gwendolen produces her diary; and asks Cecily to check her information, 'I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the

train'. Lady Bracknell always carries her list of eligible young men, and Jack is to be placed somewhere in that list. Jack has to go to the Army lists in search of his parents. Dr. Chasuble's unpublished sermons, Sammells argues, are 'all form, content is obliterated; far from revealing the truth, these fictions enact whatever distortions are deemed suitable'.¹² Dr. Chasuble says: 'My sermon on the meaning of the manna in the wilderness can be adapted to almost any occasion'. The important point in the play is that Miss Prism's attempt to write a novel remains unsuccessful. She had confused art for life and placed the unfinished three volume novel in the pram. Thus the plot in Earnest is an argument of forms. It is form that determines social realities.

Form, then, according to Wilde, gives rise to concepts and feelings. He describes later the defamiliarisation effects of arts on our perception of life:

People tell us that Art makes us love Nature more than we loved her before; that it reveals her secrets to us; and that after a careful study of Corot and Constable we see things in her that had escaped our observation. ...At present, people see fogs, not because there are fogs, but because poets and painters have taught them the mystical loveliness of such effects. There may have been fogs for centuries in London...They did not exist till Art had invented them.¹³

In "The Critic As Artist" (1890), Wilde explains how catharsis works in Greek Tragedy. He claims that Aristotle took Tragedy and investigated its language, its subject-matter, action, theatrical presentation, plot and the

aesthetic appeal realised through the passions of pity and awe. All these devices, Wilde indicates, present spiritualisation and purification on the part of the audience. Catharsis, therefore, as Wilde views it, is the result of art's defamiliarisation because it awakes in the audience feelings that they had never experienced before:

The mimic spectacle of life that Tragedy affords cleanses the bosom of much "perilous stuff", and by presenting high and worthy objects for the exercise of the emotions purifies and spiritualises the man; nay, not merely does it spiritualise him, but it initiates him also into noble feelings of which he might else have known nothing...¹⁴

'initiating' noble feeling in man is one way of defamiliarising the habitualised images of life. This effect is, however, due to the whole coherent work of art where form and meaning blend together to produce the defamiliarising effects. So, Wilde treated art in general as a way of breaking down the automatism in perception.

In art, Wilde works on the defamiliarisation process by deploying images from the literary past and transferring elements from one place into another. In "Parody In Dramatic Comedy", Ian Donaldson claims that behind Wilde's play 'stretch long, ever receding, echoing corridors of theatrical history, parodies of imitations of well-known theatrical situation'. The play, he continues, is built on clichés of speech and sentiment, clichés of dramatic situation and 'then proceeds to play quite unpredictable variations upon these familiar elements'. Donaldson relates the play to

older comic traditions. First, the notion of brotherhood or two brothers, one is good, the other is bad (Jack pretends to have a wicked brother) appears in Shakespeare's As You Like It; Fielding's The Temple Beau; Richard Cumberland's The Brothers; and Sheridan's The School For Scandal. Secondly, the idea of parentage revealed in the final act, and the extraordinary hand-bag of black leather has comic antecedents that reach back to Plautus's The Casket Comedy where a young girl is identified with a casket which is brought to stage. Thirdly, The blocking agent of comic action (Lady Bracknell, a traditional figure of comedy, who stands in the face of young lovers but whose authority is removed at the end), relates back to Plixenes or Shylock. Fourthly, the rivalry between two young girls (Cecily Cardew and Gwendolen Fairfax) over the same person (or what they take to be the same person) goes back to John Gay's The Beggars Opera, where Polly and Lucy, both in love with Macheath, confront each other. Gay's play, Donaldson suggests, parodies real-life rivalries of the day, and echoes the confrontation of Cleopatra and Octavia in Dryden's All For Love which in itself is an imitation of Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra. Donaldson claims that literary composition requires no originality, that it is all a matter of 'translating or transcribing or transferring or transversing or transplanting the dramatic elements from one place into another, in a process of free and mindless literary exchange'.

On Wilde's play, Donaldson comments:

The familiar dramatic patterns, like the familiar patterns of speech and logic which Wilde also seizes upon, form the basic structural elements of the play, giving it a formal elegance which Wilde may then wittily and unpredictably vary, this way and that.¹⁵

Wilde does not create new images in Earnest; rather, he deploys literary images from the past and elaborates the verbal material plus other kinds of dramatic elements. It was How authors produce their works that interested Wilde more than what they produced. Referring to Browning, Wilde comments:

But it was not thought that fascinated him, but rather the processes by which thought moves. It was the machine he loved, not what the machine makes. The method by which the fool arrives at his folly was as dear to him as the ultimate wisdom of the wise. So much, indeed, did the subtle mechanism of mind fascinate him that he despised language, or looked upon it as incomplete instrument of expression.¹⁶

The 'process': the 'machine', the 'method' and 'the mechanism of mind' are revolutionary concepts which acquired special importance in the ideology of the school of Russian Formalism and later in Russia itself.

The above quotation is reminiscent of the following statement by Sklovskij:

In theory of literature I am concerned with the study of internal laws of literature. To a parallel with industry, I am neither interested in the situation in the world cotton market, nor in the policy of trusts, but only in the kinds of yarn and methods of weaving.

So, Wilde's interest in the method parallels Sklovskij's 'internal laws of literature' and 'the kinds of yarns' which in turn parallels one of the main

important political metaphors in Russia. Peter Steiner examines the concept of the machine in the school of Russian Formalism and believes that Sklovskij's mechanistic view, had a political stance in Russia:

It was related to the leftist intelligentsia's yearning for a radical transformation of Russian society. The mastery of technology was often seen as the ultimate means to this end. Lenin's famous equation - "Socialism= The Soviet government + electrification" - was an expression of this belief.¹⁷

It was not the wisdom or the folly that directed Wilde's attention, but the processes by which thought moves. It was not the end that interested him, but the method or the means which led to this end. In Earnest, there is a particular emphasis on the methods which lead to certain ends. Gwendolen, for example, searches for a husband whose name is Ernest, Lady Bracknell looks for a suitable son-in-law in a list of promising young men, Dr. Chasuble's sermons can be produced on many occasions, the black suit is meant to produce mourning even though the brother is not dead, Cecily breaks the engagement even if she was not engaged. These kinds of processes, which consist of artistic forms (the name, the list, the sermons, the black suit, the love letters), are the real motivations of the characters. Hence the real motivation in the play is form and not life.

The tendency to concentrate on the method correlates with Wilde's theory of art. In "The Critic As Artist", Wilde advises critics and artists

to avoid going to life for their source material, and claims that life is a failure from the artistic point of view:

Life! Life! Don't let us go to life for our fulfilment or our experience. It is a thing narrowed by circumstances, incoherent in its utterance and without that fine correspondence of form and spirit which is the only thing that can satisfy the artistic and critical temperament.

Ernest: Must we go then to Art for everything?

For everything because Art does not hurt us. The tears that we shed at a play are a type of the exquisite sterile emotions that is the function of Art to awaken. We weep but we are not wounded. We grieve, but our grief is not bitter.....It is through Art, and through Art only, that we can realise our perfection; through Art, and through Art only, that we can shield ourselves from the perils of actual experience.¹⁸

Art which offers various devices, forms, styles, types and clichés, can, according to Wilde, be our medium which leads to perfection. In art, Wilde indicates, we weep and grieve for the sake of weeping and without necessarily being wounded.

The plot in the play is not structured on thematic devices, it is not the story of Jack finding out his origin; nor Algy's love to Cecily; nor Gwendolen's disobedience towards her mother; nor the traditional marriages at the end, which are all archaic images and types borrowed from past literary traditions. The plot is structured on the formal device of parallelism: parallelism between country and city (with characters moving from one place into another); between powerful superior and weak inferior (with characters interchanging positions across the boundaries); and

between lies and truth (characters confuse the two); etc. Parallelism is the way in which Wilde conveys his thought.

So, art, according to Wilde, defamiliarises our usual perception. In Earnest, I suggested, the importance is shifted from the dramatic images, the meaning and the end of the play to the way these dramatic images are deployed, the method of thoughts and the processes which lead to these ends. All these concepts were celebrated later in post-revolutionary Russia by the Futurists and the Formalists who also sought to revolutionise consciousness and celebrate man as triumphant over the world. They revolutionised literature not through content but through revolutionising the techniques of literary production. Their works, G. M. Hyde claims, which were themselves shaped by the revolution, played a part in shaping the revolution.¹⁹

The Formalists developed the concept of 'defamiliarisation' and the idea that art is in general one way of breaking down the automatism in perception. They believed that the purpose of the poetic image is 'not making meaning more accessible for our comprehension, but bringing a special perception of a thing, bringing about the "seeing" and not just the "recognising" of it'. They made form stand alone as something dynamic and concrete by itself. They rejected the symbolist concept of Poetry as 'thinking in images', and the correlation between form and content which

suggests that form is an outer cover of content. In "Art As Device", Sklovskij argues that imageries are continuously handed from one poet into another throughout the centuries. 'All that the work of poetic schools amounts to', he said, 'is the acquisition and demonstration of new devices for developing and elaborating verbal material; in particular, it amounts much more to deploying images than creating them'.²⁰ They regarded language as a self-sufficient entity, directed their attention to the process of thought and shifted the importance from the concept to the word. In "The Theory Of The Formal Method", E.M. Exjenbaum describes one aim of the Russian Formalists as follows: 'The object of study in literary science is not literature but "literariness", that is what makes the given work a literary work'. Pretec expresses the same idea claiming that 'one must always bear in mind that in literary history the object of investigation is not What authors are saying but How they are saying'.²¹ The Formalists also stressed the structural devices in the novel and made it the source of motivation (in reaction to the neglect of form against content by previous writers and critics). The devices of plot formation such as serial construction, parallelism, framing, concatenation and others drew the Formalists' attention to the difference between the elements of a work's construction and the elements of the materials it uses (story stuff, choice of motifs, of protagonists, of themes). In "Plot Unfolding" and "Sterne's

Tristram Shandy and the Theory of the Novel", Sklovskij claims that Don Quixote, for example, was not viewed as story collection but a single-hero novel, structured on the device of sequences, with a journey serving as motivation.²²

All these Formalist elements that appear in the play centre round one idea: breaking down the mechanisation of thought and celebrating man as triumphant over the world which is central to Wilde's works. I will now examine Wilde's attempt to break down the mechanisation of thought through language in Earnest and An Ideal Husband.

3.2. The Importance Of Being Earnest:

3.2.1. 'Familiarisation' And 'Defamiliarisation':

In The Importance of Being Earnest, Wilde produces a detailed image of his society which may serve as a process of familiarisation. The Pre-Raphaelites, I claimed, used details in their paintings in order to elevate moral and intellectual qualities, e.g. Millais' work which presents Carlyle's social philosophy and exhibits all classes in society. Ruskin reviews their use of details:

Nothing is more notable than the way in which even the most trivial objects force themselves upon the attention of the mind which has been fevered by violent and distressful excitement. They thrust themselves forwards with a ghastly and unendurable distinctness, as if they would compel the sufferer to count, or measure, or learn them by heart. Even to the mere spectator a strange interest exalts the accessories of a scene in

which he bears witness to human sorrow.²³

However, Wilde's use of details in this play, is not only meant to make the mind recognise them and realise the human sorrow behind them, but serves both the process of familiarisation and defamiliarisation.

Wilde, as I explain below, displays here a certain culture which has an elevated position and a power to dominate, authorise and legitimate. The secret of this culture's power, as the play indicates, lies in form. Wilde counters this form of culture with a form of anarchy. 'Anarchy', as Patrick Brantlinger suggests, 'was many-tongued; "culture" spoke with one voice'.²⁴ Having displayed a one-voiced culture, Wilde reacts against it in many ways. His anarchy breaks the bar of the superior and elevated dominant version of authority in this culture and goes beyond the lines of its authorisation. Anarchy has a style too: women rebel through changing their dress and their language; children rebel through inverting their parents' cultural forms; silenced people make counter forms of the forms that culture gives them. Wilde provides lists of cultural references and inverts some of them from their usual forms; he articulates the supposed to be silent, inferior or 'other'. He finally draws a world of no boundaries.

In Structuralist Poetics, Jonathan Culler examines the function of the use of details in literary works. He regards detail in a work of art, such

as cultural reference and stereotype which are accepted within the culture, as *vraisemblance*. He defines *vraisemblable* as follows:

one can speak of the *vraisemblance* of a work in so far as it attempts to make us believe that it conforms to reality and not to its own laws. In other words, the *vraisemblable* is the mask which conceals the text's own laws and which we are supposed to take for a relation with reality.²⁵

Vraisemblance, as Culler regards it, looks like reality, makes us believe that it is reality while concealing its own law. Gerard Genette defines *Vraisemblance* as an ideology, 'a body of maxims and prejudices which constitute both a vision of the world and a system of values'; and Todorov regards it as the 'relation of a particular text to another general and diffuse text which might be called "public opinion"'. Culler distinguishes between five levels of the *vraisemblable*: five ways in which a text may be brought into contact with and defined in relation to other texts: 1) socially given text, that which is taken as the 'real world', 2) a general cultural text: shared knowledge which would be recognised by participants as part of culture and hence subject to correction or modification but which nonetheless serve as a kind of 'nature', 3) conventional texts, or a specific literary and artificial *vraisemblance*, 4) natural attitude to the artificial, where the text explicitly cites and exposes *vraisemblance* from the third kind in order to enforce its own authority, 5) the complex *vraisemblance* of specific intertextualities, where one work makes another its basis.

Because my argument focuses on Wilde's relation to culture, I will concentrate at this point on the cultural *vraisemblable*. Most elements of the cultural text, Culler continues, function in this way:

One is aware of them as generalisations or cultural categories which may oversimplify but which at least make the world initially intelligible and consequently serve as a target language in the process of naturalisation.

Elements in a general cultural texts are cultural codes. In L'ancienne rhétorique, Barthes notes that Rhetoric is essentially a codification of general social language, 'with all the maxims and *topoi* which contribute to an approximate logic of human actions and enable the orator, for example, to argue from action to motive or from appearance to reality'. Barthes argues that in Balzac's Le Cid, the author has at his disposal seven or eight school manuals which contain the knowledge that constitutes the popular bourgeois culture:

a handbook of practical medicine (with notions of various illnesses and conditions), a rudimentary psychological treatise (generally accepted propositions about love, hatred, fear, etc.), a compendium of christian and stoic ethics, a logic, an anthology of proverbs and maxims in life, death, suffering, women, etc, and histories of literature and of art which provide both a set of cultural references and repertoire of types (characters) which may serve as *exempla*.

Referencing cultural and social discourse in a work of art, says Culler, is 'a way of grounding a work in reality, of establishing a relationship between words and world which serves as guarantee of intelligibility'.²⁶

The following analysis shows that cultural references in Wilde's play (received categories of thoughts and ideology) are the mask which conceals the subcultural references (inversion of received ideological forms). Wilde cites a fund of social and cultural knowledge and makes us believe that the work conforms to reality. These cultural references serve to make the world intelligible and 'natural', but, on the other hand (and as I explain later), hide the text's own law of inversion.

Like Balzac, Wilde, in this play, seems to have at his disposal manuals which contain the knowledge that constitutes popular bourgeois culture. It is worthwhile exploring his reference to cultural details:

1. Medicine, illnesses:

Jack: Lots of people die of apoplexy, quite suddenly, don't they?

Algy: Yes, but it's hereditary, my dear fellow. It is a sort of thing that runs in families. You had much better say a severe chill.

Throughout the play there is a continuous reference to Mr Bunbury as an invalid creature and Lord Bracknell as a sick man.

2. Psychological treatise or a generally accepted propositions about love, hatred, fear, etc.

Love:

Jack: You really love me Gwendolen?

Gwendolen: Passionately!.

Hatred:

Jack: Her mother is perfectly unbearable. never met such a Gorgon.

Fears and worries:

Gwendolen: Earnest, we may never be married. From the expression on Mamma's face I fear we never shall.

3. Politics:

Jack: I am a Liberal Unionist.

Lady Bracknell: Oh, They count as Tories.

4. Music:

Algy: Only relatives, or creditors, ever ring in that Wagnerian manner.

You see, if one plays good music, people don't listen, and if one plays bad music people don't talk.

5. Food:

Algy: I believe it is customary in good society to take some light refreshment at five o'clock.

There are also references to muffins, tea-cakes, cucumbers, bread and butter, etc.

6. Education:

Lady Bracknell: The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever.

Cecily: Horrid Political Economy! Horrid Geography! Horrid, horrid German!

Wilde lists the received cultural forms: love, engagement, break of engagements, proposals, marriage, birth, death, mourning, christening, novel-writing, social receptions, fashions, butlers and maids, parenthood, brotherhood, flowers, country, social classes, revolutions, etc.²⁷

Inversion (the text's internal law) is the verbal expression of the

process of defamiliarisation which Wilde is employing here:

A girl with a simple, unspoiled nature, like Gwendolen, could hardly be expected to reside in the country.

I would strongly advise you, Mr. Worthing, to try and acquire some relations..., and to make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over.

It is awfully hard work doing nothing.

The old-fashioned respect for the young is fast dying out.

I hope you have not been leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time, that would be hypocrisy.

Once a man begins to neglect his domestic duties he becomes painfully effeminate.

Sugar is not fashionable any more...Cake is rarely seen at the best houses.

One has a right to Bunbury anywhere one chooses.

I have not been christened for years.

How absurd to talk of the equality of sexes! Where questions of self-sacrifice are concerned, men are infinitely beyond us.

I have never undeceived him on any question.

There are distinct social possibilities in your profile. Style largely depends on the way the chin is worn.²⁸

Inversion in the above sentences works on many levels: on the social level (man with 'domestic duties', men as 'self-sacrificial'...); on maxims in life (doing nothing is 'hardwork'); on the semantic level (missing the appointment 'anywhere but in London', leading 'double life' in pretending to be 'wicked' while being 'good'); and on received linguistic, ideological

and religious forms (acquiring 'relations' and producing 'parents', wearing the 'chin', having 'social possibilities' in a 'profile', 'christening' every now and then). Besides, Wilde produces *invraisemblance*, an action which deviates from the accepted logic of human action. A central example is: 'Bunbury', a name and a verb, that has no signified in that culture at all.

Wilde displays a culture by employing a cultural text which produces cultural codes and references (shared knowledge which would be recognised by participants as part of culture and which serves as a kind of 'nature'). Following Culler, I called the elements of this kind of text *vraisemblance*, and I referred to the text's internal law as inversion of cultural codes. Inversion, which constitutes part of Wilde's strategy of subversion, works on many cultural forms such as the ideological, the social, the linguistic and the religious, as the examples above indicate. I will now explore the upper classes' language which continues the process of familiarisation, yet conceals important issues.

3.2.2. The Language Of The Dominant Class:

My examination below of Lady Bracknell's language shows that she changes the usual style and produces sentences that refer to plural and general statements. Through her peculiar rhetorical style, Lady Bracknell

dominates:

An engagement should come on a young girl as a surprise.

A man should always have an occupation of some kind.

Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone.
The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound.

In land, or in investments?

What are your politics?

He was evidently a man of some wealth. Was he born in what the Radical papers call the purple of commerce, or did he rise from the ranks of the aristocracy?

Hesitation of any kind is a sign of mental decay, in the young, of physical weakness in the old...

Ah! A life crowded with incident...

Never speak disrespectfully of Society...²⁹

Lady Bracknell refers to general maxims and beliefs in life such as occupation, ignorance, modern education, politics, wealth, society, investments, lands, aristocracy, physical weakness, etc. These words are titles of wide and general subjects, and they refer to both singular and plural things. The word 'man', for example, may evoke several ways of understanding it. It may evoke patriarchy which suggests women's subjection to man's rules, or concepts of oppression or inferiority. It may evoke the concept of man as a sex, a biological state, man as power, man as human being, and man as a social individual. The listener can locate

the meaning of this word in relation to his/her position or in relation to the speaker. Similarly, the word 'politics' may range into different types of understanding it. It may mean the politics of the upper classes, their rules, and oppression. Alternatively, it may mean the politics of the lower classes or the people. Hence, the word 'politics' may either evoke concepts of totalitarianism or refer to democracy. In Critical Practice, Catherine Belsey examines words with plurality of meaning such as 'democracy' and 'civilisation' and claims that the apparent from them is the extent to which language is a social fact:

The meaning of the sentence may vary from political discourse to another (conservative, socialist, liberationist, etc.) and to the extent that the hearer participates in these political discourses, he or she finds in the sentence one or more of the possible readings. In other words the meaning of this sentence is *plural*.³⁰

Lady Bracknell rarely refers to specific incidents or individual feelings. She does not speak like an ordinary woman, nor like an ordinary man. She seems to have entered a new territory into which nobody else is allowed. She seems to be alone but armoured. It is also noticeable that her sentences carry verbs such as 'to be' (ignorance is, education is, hesitation is), or the modal auxiliary 'should' (an engagement 'should', a man 'should'), or the imperative (never speak). These kinds of verbs reflect a speaker who wants to assert her/his position forcefully.

This kind of language also has the defamiliarising effects. It transforms received categories of thoughts and expression. It does not 'organise the world conceptually'; rather, it 'disorganises the forms through which the world is customarily perceived opening up a kind of chink through which the world displays new and unexpected aspects'.³¹ In her rhetorical style, Lady Bracknell produces strange and unexpected subversion of ancient platitudes. Her announcements that to lose both parents 'looks like carelessness' and that 'the chin is worn high', are subversions of the received pattern of thought which is imposed on reality by the categories of ordinary language, dominant ideological forms and the codes of previous literary works which indicate that to lose parents is 'misfortune', or treat the chin as a facial complexion. Lady Bracknell makes this pattern of thought strange and, in doing so, she distances it from reality. She disorganises the ways through which we perceive the world, including established patterns of thoughts and received cultural forms of language. Lady Bracknell dominates through certain forms of language which she applies in order to suit her interests. So the upper classes initially defamiliarise various conceptions and make them look familiar in order to maintain power and interest.

It is necessary to explore how Lady Bracknell dominates through certain language forms which imply a certain reality. Her discourse,

which implies the discourse of her class is based on a strategy of power and subjection, inclusion and exclusion, the voiced and the silenced. This strategy went against Wilde's concept of unity, and his dream of a world of unified opposites. Wilde here presents the power of culture to dominate through form. The first sentence she utters in the play gives the first clue to such discourse:

Good-afternoon, dear Algernon, I hope you are behaving very well.

I am feeling very well Aunt Augusta.

But behaviour according to her comes first: behaviour according to a set of rules is part of 'respectable' conventional society, and so it should never be disturbed, whereas feeling is an individual quality that should have no great importance. Lady Bracknell elevates traditions and silences the human interior.

The strategy of inclusion and exclusion continues throughout the play. Her appreciation of music, for example, is behaviour oriented; she tells Algy:

French songs I cannot possibly allow. People always seem to think that they are improper, and either look shocked, which is vulgar, or laugh, which is worse. But German sounds a thoroughly respectable language, and indeed, I believe is so.

'French songs', sudden human reactions such as a shock or a laughter, are excluded. But 'German' and 'respectability' are included. Besides, it is the way people react to music in her receptions that is most important to

her. All the reasons that might stop Lady Bracknell's social receptions, and consequently disturb her social pattern, should be abolished:

Well, I must say, Algernon, that I think it is high time that Mr Bunbury made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die. This shilly-shallying with the question is absurd...But I would be much obliged if you would ask Mr. Bunbury, from me, to be kind enough not to have a relapse on Saturday, for I rely on you to arrange my music for me. It is my last reception, and one wants something that will encourage conversation, particularly at the end of the season when everyone has particularly said whatever they had to say, which, in most cases, was probably not much.

Again, 'music', 'reception', and 'conversation' are allowed, but human illnesses or 'relapse' are rejected. More examples of her language would further illustrate my point on the discourse of inclusion and exclusion:

Health is the primary duty of life.

Hesitation of any kind is a sign of mental decay in the young, of physical weakness in the old.

The number of engagements that go on seems to me considerably above the proper average that statistics have laid down for our guidance.

To lose one parent may be regarded as a misfortune...to lose both seems like carelessness.

I would strongly advise you, Mr Worthing, to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible, and to make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over.

There are distinct social possibilities in your profile. The two weak points in our age are its want of principle and its want of profile. The chin a little higher, dear. Style largely depends on the way the chin is worn.³²

As I said, Lady Bracknell gives individual and human elements different definitions. Thus 'health' is 'duty', 'relations' are 'acquired', 'parents' are 'produced' at certain seasons, 'profiles' have social possibilities and 'chin' is 'worn'. The following analysis of the above examples shows more clearly her coherent but limited discourse. Column A contains individual aspects, column B contains social aspects:

A	B
Hesitation	Physical weakness (appearance)
Health	Duty
Engagements	Statistics
Death of parents	Carelessness
Relations	Acquisition
Parents	Production
Profiles	Social possibilities
Chin	Worn

Each sentence has elements from both sides, but Lady Bracknell negates individual needs in favour of social necessities. Lady Bracknell fully supports the sole existence of the latter and nothing else. All the categories in column B fit together and constitute parts of the strategy of

the bourgeois culture. If one belongs to Lady Bracknell's class, one follows its unbalanced rules. One can only be concerned with money, investments, social receptions, production, acquisition, statistics, duty, appearances and so on. One cannot replace or alternate any category with emotions or sympathy or individual quality. It is one-way traffic. Wilde's wish, on the other hand, is a subversion of her coherent discourse. In his subversive discourse, the traffic works both ways: a person can have money, productions together with simplicity and human emotions; can have good taste but does not necessarily wear expensive clothes; can have so many vases, and yet appreciate a beautiful flower in nature; and can have duties plus desires and individual pleasures.

In the same discourse, Lady Bracknell reveals her contempt and perhaps a hidden fear of the 'other' who might lead to anarchy. Because she hates and fears the potential chaos that 'Others' display, she distances the 'Other' from her culture. In his description of the meta-language of the bourgeois mythology, Roland Barthes describes the petit-bourgeois as a person '... unable to imagine the Other ... the Other is a scandal which threatens his existence'. Barthes suggests two basic strategies for dealing with this threat: a) the Other can be trivialised, naturalised, and domesticated ('Otherness is reduced into sameness' and the difference is denied), b) the Other can be transformed into 'meaningless exotica', a

'pure object, a spectacle, a clown'.³³

Lady Bracknell transforms the Other into a meaningless object, places him/her beyond the 'common decencies' and classifies him/her as an outsider, a threat to the family structure. She tells Jack:

You can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter - a girl brought up with the utmost care - to marry into a cloak-room, and form an alliance with a parcel.

Jack, who represents the Other to Lady Bracknell, is transformed into objects like a cloak-room and a parcel. He is regarded as an alien and 'scandalous' person who threatens her family structure:

To be born, or at any rate bred, in a hand-bag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that reminds one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. And I presume you know what that unfortunate movement led to?

Bunbury, Algy's alleged friend, is also regarded as another alien person, and is in turn connected with diseases and reduced to an invalid creature:

may I ask if it is in this house that your invalid friend Mr. Bunbury resides?

Bunbury at the end is transformed into a bomb and is 'exploded':

Exploded! was he the victim of a revolutionary outrage? I was not aware that Mr. Bunbury was interested in social legislation. If so, he is well punished for his morbidity.³⁴

Like Jack, Bunbury is connected to unpleasant events that threatens the bourgeois's very existence: revolutionary acts.

I will now examine how Lady Bracknell's conventional cultural

forms, which are imposed by means of certain linguistic forms, are disrupted by many others who rebelled not only against the concept of 'Otherness', but against the rest of her bourgeois culture. These 'others' constitute a subculture which takes the form of an anarchy. The language of 'dissenters' continues the process of familiarisation, yet conceals important issues.

3.2.3. The Language Of 'Dissenters':

Wilde expresses in several occasions his desire to rebel against fixed forms of power. In "The Soul of Man Under Socialism", Wilde claims that the first step to progress is rebellion and disobedience. 'Disobedience, in the eyes of anyone who has read history, is man's original virtue. It is through disobedience that progress has been made, through disobedience and through rebellion'. This desire for rebellion and disobedience, Wilde explains, should find expression through art: it is the artist's duty to rebel against 'The monotony of type, slavery of custom, tyranny of habits'.³⁵ Wilde advocates in the essay a radically new society which could guarantee happiness to all individuals, and progress to society as a whole. In order to rebel, Wilde uses subcultural bricoleurs who subvert the monotony, the slavery, and the tyranny of the fixed forms of culture. The following section explores the possibilities of disobeying one's own culture

through style.

In Subculture: The Meaning of Style, Dick Hebdige describes subculture as 'interference with the orderly sequence' and a metaphor for 'potential anarchy':

Violation of authorised codes through which the social world is organised and experienced have considerable power to provoke and disturb. They are generally condemned, in Mary Douglas' words as 'contrary to holiness'.

Hebdige argues that subcultural styles may begin by issuing symbolic challenges, but must inevitably end by establishing new sets of conventions which substitute for the old ones. On political deviance, Stuart Hall writes:

New ... developments which are both dramatic and 'meaningless' within the consensually validated norms, pose a challenge to the normative world. They render problematic not only how the ... world is defined, but how it ought to be, They breach our 'expectancies'...

In the same way, Wilde creates a subcultural style which breaks the 'natural' law of the bourgeois culture, transgresses its ideology, relocates its conventional categories and invents new codes which substitute the old ones. His anarchy, as I show later, is not complete chaos, but rather ordered and unified. He gives rise to the 'Other', inferior, and highlights the injustice and inequality inflicted upon them by the bourgeois society. Women, children, slaves, country people and all the 'other' 'lower' parts in the play represent what John Clarke calls the subcultural *bricoleurs* who

subvert the prominent forms of discourse:

Together, object and meaning constitute a sign, and, within any one culture, such signs are assembled, repeatedly, into characteristic forms of discourse. However, when the bricoleur relocates the significant object in a different position within that discourse, using the same overall repertoire of signs, or when that object is placed within a different total ensemble, a new discourse is constituted, a different message conveyed.³⁶

Hence, the bricoleur disturbs culture by relocating the significant object in different position and, by doing so, abolishes the original meaning of the object and conveys a different discourse.

I have suggested that inversion and defamiliarisation in general are part of Wilde's strategy of rebellion. I will show now how inversion sometimes works towards dislocation of objects and helps individuals to pervert the norm. I will explain how transgression here is carried by bricoleurs through their communicational and rhetorical styles. They relocate ideological categories in different positions constituting new discourses and messages.

Women change position. I have suggested that Lady Bracknell asserts herself as a powerful person in a hierarchical society. On her family level, she reverses the male dominant situation and the convention of the male-female relation. She replaces Lord Bracknell who is sick at home. When Gwendolen introduces herself to Cecily, she says:

My father is Lord Bracknell. You have never met Papa, I suppose?...Outside the family circle, Papa, I am glad to say, is entirely unknown. I think that is quite as it should be. The home seems to me to be the proper sphere for the man. And certainly once a man begins to

neglect his domestic duties, he becomes painfully effeminate, does he not? And I don't like that. It makes men so very attractive.³⁷

In everyday form of discourse, women stay at home, have domestic duties and are always effeminate and attractive. In the same discourse, man works outside the house, can do anything but domestic duties and can be anything but attractive or effeminate. Gwendolen 'relocates' the ideological forms and places them in a 'different position within that discourse', using the same 'overall repertoire of types'. Man can be placed at home; can have domestic duties and can be effeminate. This dislocation of the sexes' position in society expresses their position in the real world: man's dominance and woman's unjust treatment. It is not only Lady Bracknell who is dominating in the play; both Cecily and Gwendolen are the leaders in their relations with their partners.

'Other' classes also change position through disorganising the habitualised thoughts. Jack tells Lady Bracknell the story of his origin: he was found by the late Mr Thomas Cardew in a black 'hand-bag' in the 'cloak-room' at Victoria station. Here, objects are dislocated and placed within different ensembles: Jack's origin is Victoria station instead of the family; a baby was placed in a hand-bag instead of a pram (we find out later that a novel was put in the pram); the hand-bag was placed into the cloak-room and was given to the wrong person.

Jack places the 'natural' forms in a symbolic ensemble which serves

to subvert their original meanings. The story of Jack's origin displays sexual freedom (a baby does not have to be always an outcome of the bourgeois family unit). This story, as far as Lady Bracknell is concerned, displays 'a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that reminds one of the most excesses of the French revolution'. It represents 'social indiscretion' and 'it could hardly be regarded as an assured basis for a recognised position in a good society'.³⁸ It is, in Mary Douglas' sense, 'contrary to holiness', for holiness is the bourgeois' family unit, social and political order which necessitate sexual restraints, legitimate children, safe and moral pleasure.

Hence, Jack goes against the 'natural' and 'normalised' codes of his culture. Hebdige believes that subcultures display their own codes. They go against the grain of the mainstream culture whose defining characteristic, according to Barthes, is a tendency to 'masquerade as nature, to substitute "normalised" for historical forms, to translate the reality of the world into an image of the world which in turn presents itself as if composed according to the evident laws of the natural order'. The subcultural stylist gives the lie to what Althusser has called 'the false obviousness of everyday practice; and opens up a world of objects to new and conversely oppositional readings'.³⁹

Children rebel through disorganising their parents' forms of conception. One interesting point in the play is the disappearance of the father figure in that hierarchical society: Gwendolen's father, Lord Bracknell, is sick; Jack's parents are unknown (found out later to be dead); Algy's parents are never mentioned (actually dead because he is found out to be Jack's brother); and Cecily's are dead. The disappearance of the father figure highlights a desire for freedom from old patriarchal discourses.

Violation of the codes through which the social world is organised continues. Gwendolen tells her mother, who was shocked at the sight of her daughter flirting with Jack: 'I must beg you to retire. This is no place for you'. Annoyed by her mother's reaction towards Jack, Gwendolen says:

Few parents nowadays pay any regard to what their children say to them. The old-fashioned respect for the young is fast dying out. Whatever influence I ever had on my mother, I lost at the age of three.

Gwendolen reverses the characteristic form of discourse: parents should pay regards to what their children say to them; the old should respect the young; and children should have influence on their parents. Again, Wilde relocates power relationships in an attempt to subvert their original form.

Lower classes rebel in the same way. The first dialogue in the play between Algy and his butler is a prelude to the theme in the play: the

reshuffling of class structure and power position. This dialogue leads to the subject of marriage on which Algy comments :

Lane's views on marriage seem somewhat lax. Really, if the lower order don't set us a good example, what on earth is the use of them? They seem, as a class, to have absolutely no sense of moral responsibility.

Algy reverses the usual wisdom which necessitates that common people should draw their habits, actions and characters from the ruling class.

Algy reverses the sources of 'holiness'. The structure of the 'discourse' remains, but the original relation is subverted. In other words, there will always be somebody who sets example for somebody else, but it does not have to be the upper class.

Algy wonders 'Why is it at a bachelor establishment the servants invariably drink the Champagne?' Lane attributes it to the superior quality of the wine. A little later, Lane supports Algy against Lady Bracknell when she asks about the cucumber sandwiches, her favourite. Algy who ate them himself, asks the butler in pretended horror about them, but 'there is no cucumber in the market', says Lane, 'not even for ready money'. The butler deceives the master, and the youth deceives the old: they both prevent the ruling class from fulfilling their wishes. Here, there is a dislocation of objects: the champagne goes to the butler instead of the master, and the cucumbers, Lady Bracknell's speciality, go to Algy. The cucumber has another meaning: it serves as a phallic symbol. To deny

Lady Bracknell the cucumber is to prevent her from producing another 'bourgeois' person. The phallic symbol goes to the 'other' where development of existing conditions could be made possible.

Country people subvert the city people's ideological forms. Gwendolen claims that 'sugar is not fashionable any more' and that 'cake is rarely seen at the best houses nowadays' and that she prefers bread and butter to it. She locates sugar in the fashionable world and associates cake with respectability. However, when Gwendolen imposes her values on Cecily, the latter puts a large slice of cake in the plate and four lumps of sugar in tea. The conflict here takes place between two subcultural bricoleurs. The first, Gwendolen subverts the original meaning of food by placing it in a totally different ensemble. The other, Cecily, a country girl, subverts the city girl's wishes through a dislocation of objects. The bread and butter, Gwendolen's preferred items, are ignored, and the 'unfashionable' cake and sugar are brought instead. By doing so, Cecily subverts the original meanings of the city girl's ideological forms. Finally the two girls collaborate against the two young men. Thus, women stand against men, but when the four achieve reunion and reconciliation, they all stand against Lady Bracknell.⁴⁰

I have claimed above that Wilde wants to pervert the overall structure of his culture. However, he does not, like the Pre-Raphaelites,

escape from the tyranny of the culture into nature; rather, he revolutionises the social consciousness through form. Subverting and changing the mechanisation of thoughts and the habitualisation of forms of perception, which according to him, shape consciousness, will eventually change the existing consciousness. The act of revolutionising the social consciousness celebrates man as triumphant over the world. I have shown how characters in the play are victorious over their consciousness through disorganising the habitualised ways of perceptions which they have received from their culture. I have also explained that their rhetorical form, and sometimes their behavioural style, are the tools of rebellion: Lady Bracknell subverts the usual concept of being a woman; Gwendolen disorganises the concept of being a daughter; Cecily disrupts the concept of being a country person; Jack breaks down the concept of 'Other' class through belonging to both classes; Algy disorganises the concept of the upper class through his escape from it. Having disorganised the forms of perceptions through which they view consciousness, characters change their consciousness.

Wilde's anarchy which articulates transgression signifies chaos almost at every level, but this chaos makes a coherent and meaningful whole which articulates unity. Levi-Stauss called this paradox a

homology.⁴¹ The homological paradox fits in Wilde's context where culture is disrupted and yet the disruption works towards order, and where the disrupters of culture express similar desires and work towards similar aims. In Wilde's play, which I based on the device of parallelism, opposites blend together, meet in harmony, and interchange places.

The boundaries between imagination and reality are removed when the two merge together. Both Gwendolen and Cecily invent imaginary husbands for themselves. Gwendolen's ideal 'has always been to love someone of the name of Ernest' because there is something in it that 'inspires absolute confidence'. She falls in love with Jack, Algy's friend whose name was 'Ernest', the moment she hears of his name. Cecily falls in love with Algy, Jack's wicked brother whose name was 'Ernest', the moment she hears about him. Cecily goes far in her imagination and fixes the date of her engagement to 'Ernest' (14th Feb last), buys a ring for herself, and writes letters addressed by him. She even breaks the engagement (22nd last March) because 'it would hardly have been a really serious engagement if it hadn't been broken off at least once'.⁴² But this imagination fuses later with reality when both couples become engaged to be married. Similarly, the boundaries between lying and truth also disappear when they both fuse together. In order to escape his duties, Jack flies from country to town pretending to have a brother there called

Earnest, and in town he is known by the name, Earnest. Algy, his friend, flies from town to country distinguishing himself as Earnest, Jack's alleged brother. The game starts with a lie, but the lie turns to be true: it comes out that Jack's real name is Earnest and that Algy is his real brother. 'Lying' according to Wilde has a fascinating role in life and art. In "The Decay of Lying", he says that 'art is really a form of exaggeration; selection which is the very spirit of art, is nothing more than an intensified mode of over-emphasis'. He explains that art is a mode of lying and that the failure of the contemporary literature lies in 'the decay of Lying as an art, a science, and a social pleasure'. Wilde explains that life should imitate art, gain from its production and reproduce its materials. Wilde considers 'the cultured and fascinating liar as the basis and the leader of civilised societies:

Nor will he be welcomed by society alone. Art, breaking from the prison-house of realism, will run to greet him, and will kiss his false, beautiful lips, knowing that he alone is in possession of the great secret of all her manifestations, the secret that Truth is entirely and absolutely a matter of style; while Life -poor, probable, uninteresting human life - tired of repeating herself for the benefit of Mr Herbert Spencer, scientific historians, and the compilers of statistics in general, will follow meekly after him, and try to reproduce, in her own simple and untutored way, some of the marvels of which he talks.

The ideal world, according to Wilde, is that which has 'beautiful miracles. Art, whose object is 'not truth, but complex beauty', can create and reproduce these miracles. It is art then that possesses the ability to build

the ideal world by following the liar.⁴³ Hence, the fusion of imagination and reality, lying and truth, is also part of Wilde's reaction against contemporary form of art which imitates life and neglects the individual imagination.

Boundaries, at some points in the play, do not constitute barriers between opposites. I have mentioned that Lane, the butler, and Algy, the master stand next to each other against Lady Bracknell. Cecily, a country girl, and Gwendolen, a city girl, collaborate against the two men. Finally the four couples, men and women, stand against Lady Bracknell. The power position in the play is shifted when the servant tricks the master, and children rebel against their parents, or when country people and 'other' classes pervert the bourgeois culture.

Thus, to return to Levi-Stauss' notion of homology, Wilde's anarchy works towards a unified and a coherent whole. His use of cultural vraisemblance serves to signal the oppressive effects of the social structure, and each member of his subculture rebel against his/her opposite and oppressor. Dissenters in this are organically related to each other. They all express oppression, negation and subjection and they all communicate the desire for freedom and equality. Having freed themselves from the constraints of their cultural ideology (Algy frees himself from the upper class; Gwendolen from parents; Jack from society;

etc), they all fulfil the desires which culture denied them. All characters realise their wishes except Lady Bracknell who remains outside Wilde's vision of the future.

Below, I will examine how Wilde's An Ideal Husband works on the strategy of familiarisation in its use of language.

3.3. An Ideal Husband

In "Fallen Women, Lost Children: Wilde and the Theatre of the Nineties", Wendell Stacy Johnson considers Wilde's A Woman of No Importance, Lady Windermere's Fan and An Ideal Husband as 'problem plays' which present a stage with drawing room, furniture, and a family problem as part of the social dilemma and groups them with other plays in the late Victorian stage which increased with the impact of Ibsen's realism. These plays present socially and morally complex problems which 'reverberate here as they do in the poems of Browning and Tennyson, and the novels of Meredith, of Dickens, of Hardy. One may think of Esther Summerson and Lady Dedlock as well as of the lives and letters of George Eliot, John Stuart Mill, Harriet Taylor'.⁴⁴

My examination of An Ideal Husband aims to show that Wilde does not, as Johnson claims, present moral and social problems, a corrupted world, women contemplating the breaches of the seventh commandment,

sins, errors, social disgrace, or public affairs and visits to Downing Street. My examination of the language of different characters in the play shows that the emphasis should be redirected from what sorts of themes Wilde presents in the play to how he presents these themes and images. The Cultural details are repeated here which serve to familiarise the audience. While cultural references are inverted in Earnest which serve to defamiliarise, cultural references here are linked to forms of fashion (when the text hides its own laws). What I explored in the language of Lady Bracknell above (language of power, defamiliarisation, the tendency to exclude and include) is repeated in the language of Sir Robert Chiltern, Mrs. Cheveley and Lady Chiltern.

3.3.1. 'Familiarisation' And 'Defamiliarisation':

In An Ideal Husband, Wilde produces a detailed image of his society which may serve as a process of familiarisation. The play presents cultural references, received categories of thoughts and ideologies which serve to mask and conceal the subcultural reference. I will explore his reference to this detailed image:

1. Marriage:

Lady Markby: Ah, nowadays people marry as often as they can, don't they? It is most fashionable.

2. Illnesses:

Lady Markby: Dear Duchess, and how is the Duke? Brain still weak, I suppose.

3. Love:

Lord Goring: Mabel, I have told you that I love you. Can't you love me a little in return?

4. Ambitions, power and money:

Sir Robert Chiltern: Wealth has given me enormous power. It gave me at the very outset of my life freedom, and freedom is everything. You have never been poor, and never known what ambition is.

5. Blackmailing and bribing:

Sir Robert: I offered her the sum she wanted. She refused.

6. Fear:

Sir Robert: Arthur, I feel that public disgrace is in store for me. I feel certain of it.

7. Music:

Lord Goring: Not if there is any music going, Miss Mabel.

Mabel Chiltern: (severely) The music is in German. You would not understand it.

8. Politics:

Mrs. Cheveley: I want to talk to you about a great political and financial scheme, about this Argentine Canal Company, in fact.

Lord Caversham: Decline a seat in the Cabinet, and retire from public life? Never heard such a damned nonsense in the whole course of my existence.⁴⁵

Wilde lists again received cultural forms which continues the process of familiarisation: politics, engagements, enterprises, fashions, buttonholes,

past, present, future, swindles, career, education, Factory Acts, Female Inspectors, the Eight Hours' Bill, the Parliamentary Franchise, etc.

The process of defamiliarisation in the play is contained in the internal law of the language of the play which equates social attitudes - cultural references - with forms of fashions. Marriage, for example, is linked to fashion: Lady Markby suggests that 'nowadays, people may marry as often as they can. It is most fashionable', and Lord Caversham, who always brings up the subject of marriage, declares that 'Bachelors are not fashionable any more'.⁴⁶ Religion is also linked to a form of fashion when Sir Robert Chiltern asks:

But may I ask, at heart, are you an optimist or a pessimist? Those seem to be the only two fashionable religions left to us nowadays.

And Mrs. Cheveley relates them to poses:

Oh, I'm neither. Optimism begins in a broad grin, and pessimism ends with blue spectacles. Besides, they are both of them merely poses.

Mrs. Cheveley claims later that the natural pose -the uncultural- is 'such a very difficult pose to keep up'. Love affairs are linked to frocks. Sir Robert wonders if Mrs. Cheveley is a woman with a past, and Lord Goring answers:

Most pretty women do. But there is a fashion in pasts as there is a fashion in frocks. Perhaps Mrs. Cheveley's past is merely slightly *décolleté* one, and they are excessively popular nowadays.

Mrs. Cheveley herself comments on Mabel Chiltern's affair with Lord Goring saying:

I thought your frock so charming, last night, Miss Chiltern. So simple and suitable.

Moral laws are linked with the size of gloves. Mrs. Cheveley comments on Gertrude Chiltern's strict puritanism saying:

A woman whose size in gloves is seven and three quarters never knows much about anything. You know Gertrude has always worn seven and three quarters? That is one of the reasons why there was never any moral sympathy between us ...

Lady Caversham's politics is linked with her bonnets. Lord Caversham says:

Never go anywhere now. Sick of London society. Shouldn't mind being introduced to my own tailor; he always votes on the right side. But object strongly to being sent down to dinner with my wife's milliner. Never could stand Lady Caversham's bonnets.

Mabel asks him later if Lady Caversham's bonnets any better, he answers:

They have had a serious relapse, I am sorry to say.

Mabel: I hope an operation will not be necessary.

Lord Caversham: If it is, we shall have to give Lady Caversham a narcotic, otherwise she would never consent to have a feather touched.

Individuals' conduct is linked to dress. Mrs. Cheveley's attitude is directly linked to dress:

Sir Robert: And Women represent the irrational.

Mrs. Cheveley: Well-dressed women do.

Lord Goring: Have you Got it with you?

Mrs Cheveley: Oh, no! A well-made dress has no pockets.

Lord Goring: For so-well dressed a woman, Mrs. Cheveley, you have

moments of admirable common sense.⁴⁷

Self-education, which deviates from social and cultural rules, is linked to buttonholes. Lord Goring, a dandy who is described at the beginning of the play as 'good at nothing' and later as 'unemployed', is the central character who represents Wilde's model of self-educated and self-preserved person (transgressor of social rules). Lord Goring tells his butler:

Rather distinguished thing, Phipps. I am the only person of the smallest importance in London at present who wears a buttonhole.

... You see, Phipps, Fashion is what one wears oneself. What is unfashionable is what other people wear.

... Just as vulgarity is simply the conduct of other people.

... And falsehoods the truths of other people.

... Other people are quite dreadful. The only possible society is one-self.

... To love oneself is the beginning of lifelong romance, Phipps.

... Don't think I quite like this buttonhole, Phipps. Makes me look a little too old. Makes me almost in the prime of life, eh Phipps.⁴⁸

When his father, Lord Caversham, asks him to get married because he is thirty four years of age, Lord Goring tells him:

Yes father, But I only admit to thirty-two thirty-one and a half when I have a really good buttonhole. This buttonhole is not ... trivial enough.⁴⁹

The link that Wilde draws between fashion and social and cultural vraisemblance points on the one hand at the ugliness of these vraisemblances and on the other hand on the possibility of changing them.

Wilde described fashion as 'merely a form of ugliness so unbearable that we are compelled to alter it every six months'.⁵⁰ ('change' is a key concept in Wilde's principle of moving towards a utopian society). Fashions and the change of fashions also refer to the artist's creative mind and productive imagination. In "The Artist", a poem in prose, Wilde talks of an artist who wants to 'fashion' an image of pleasure:

One evening there came into his soul the desire to fashion an image of *The Pleasure that abideth for a Moment*. And he went forth into the world to look for bronze. For he could only think in bronze.

But this artist could not find in the whole world the bronze which suits his interests except the bronze of the image of *'The Sorrow that endureth for Ever'*:

Now this image he had himself, and with his own hands, fashioned, and had set it on the tomb of the one thing he had loved in life. On the tomb of the dead thing he had most loved had he set this image of his own fashioning that it might serve as a sign of the love of man that dieth not,....

And he took the image he had fashioned, and set it in a great furnace, and gave it to the fire.

And out of the bronze of the image of *The Sorrow that endureth for Ever* he fashioned the image of *The Pleasure that abideth for a Moment*.⁵¹

The word 'fashion' here correlates to the concepts of change and refers to the artist's dynamic and powerful mind who created an image, not of the world's materials, but out of his own imagination (it is part of the image of Christ the artist).

Hence, Lady Markby's remark that people may marry as often as they can because 'it is most fashionable' and Lord Caversham's comments that bachelors are not 'fashionable' any more, both refer to individuals' desire to change their present conditions. The claim that religion is 'fashionable' also expresses similar desires to change the existing forms of culture. The link between love affairs and frocks and the description of Mrs. Cheveley's past as *décolleté* express acts and desires for transgressing the existing social constraints. Mrs. Cheveley's rejection of the fixed size of gloves (seven and three quarters) which implies strict social and puritan rules and necessitates women's ignorance is also another expression of transgression. Her remark later that well-dressed women represent 'the irrational' refers to the link between dress and freedom. Lord Caversham rejects his wife's milliner because she contradicts his own political taste (he prefers his tailor). When Mabel asked if Lady Caversham's bonnets need to be operated on, he refers to the horror which she might face at the idea of change, saying: 'she would never consent to leave a feather touched' (he hints at the fixed political rules). Lord Caversham also expresses his desire to transgress the fixed political rules.

Lord Goring's 'fashion' of the self represents a transgression of all social and cultural rules and a desire for freedom. Lord Goring rejects the 'vulgarity', 'falsehood', 'dreadful' taste of other people and admires the

fashions of himself. The buttonholes is a reference to nature which Wilde refers to in "Phrases And Philosophies For The Use Of The Young" saying: 'A really well-made buttonhole is the only link between Art and Nature'.⁵² Lord Goring represents the future which combines self-education, art and nature and implies a transgression of society and self-preservation.

3.3.2. Language In An Ideal Husband

The dominant and powerful class in the play speaks a language which reflects their power. Sir Robert Chiltern's language consists of general statements through which he dominates. (It is similar to Lady Bracknell's language). Here he is talking about how he rose to power:

One night after dinner at Lord Radley's the Baron began talking about success in modern life as something that one could reduce to an absolutely definite science. With that wonderfully fascinating quiet voice of his he expounded to us the most terrible of all philosophies, the philosophy of power, preached to us the most marvellous of gospels, the gospel of gold..., and then told me that luxury was nothing but a background, a painted scene in a play, and that power, power over other men, power over the world, was the one thing worth having, the one supreme pleasure worth knowing, the one joy one never tired of....⁵³.

Sir Robert talks of how he learned the philosophy of power and refers to general beliefs such as success, modern life, definite science, the gospel of Gold, power, pleasure, joy. These words are titles of wide and general subjects and refer to both singular and plural nouns. Words like 'success'

in 'modern life' evoke several ways of understanding them: they may evoke individual success which relates to the self; political or social success which relates to society; economic success which may relate to both. The listener can locate the meaning of this sentence in relation to his/her position in society or in relation to the speaker. Words like 'power' and 'wealth', for example, which the Baron used, have a plurality of meaning: they may refer to individual's power over others, to physical power, political power, the power of the people, of the working class, power of money, etc. The listener here (Sir Robert) interprets these words in relation to his own position. Sir Roberts who was young and poor but full of ambition used money, which came through dishonest ways, in order to climb into political and social power and success. Other listeners might have interpreted wealth as a mean to survive, or related it to concepts of honesty and dishonesty (like Lady Chiltern). Sir Robert was manipulated by the Baron who, like Lady Bracknell, employed certain language forms which enabled him to enter into a territory of power and persuaded Sir Robert to do what he wanted. Later, Sir Robert himself speaks with a plural style and talks of his own feeling and attitude towards life:

Weak! Do you really think Arthur, that it is weakness that yields to temptation. I tell you that there are terrible temptations that it requires strength, strength and courage, to yield to. To stake one's life on a single moment, to risk everything on one throw, whether for the sake of power or pleasure, I care not - there is no weakness in that. There is a horrible, terrible courage. I had that courage.

Sir Robert talks about power, weakness, temptation, strength, courage, life, pleasure - titles which cover wide range of subjects - neglecting specific incidents. This form of language enables Sir Robert to make a new consciousness. However, the self-educated listener, Lord Goring, believes that all this is a 'thoroughly shallow creed'.

Mrs. Cheveley's language represents the tendency to defamiliarise received thoughts:

Certainly, more women grow old nowadays through the faithfulness of their admirers than anything else!

Optimism begins in a broad grin, and pessimism ends with blue spectacles.⁵⁴

Mrs. Cheveley's style resembles Lady Bracknell's. She displays the unexpected and the strange which reflect a subversion of ancient platitudes and have the defamiliarising effects. Her remarks that 'women grow old through the faithfulness of their admirers' is a subversion of the received thoughts which are imposed on reality by the categories of ordinary language, dominant ideological forms and codes of previous literary works and which formulate how women grow old. Her announcement that 'optimism begins in a broad grin and pessimism ends with blue spectacles' is a departure from the normal definition of pessimism. Mrs. Cheveley does not organise the world conceptually; rather, she disorganises the

forms through which the world is customarily received and opens up new unexpected aspects.

Lady Chiltern's discourse which reflects the discourse of her class is based on a strategy of power and subjection, exclusion and inclusion which prevents progress and unity:

Circumstances should never alter principles.

It can never be necessary to do what is not honourable ... And money that comes from a stained source is a degradation.

All your life you have stood apart from others. You have never let the world soil you. To the world, as to myself, you have been an ideal always. Oh! be that ideal still. That great inheritance throw not away - that tower of ivory do not destroy.

.... and that you are not a man to do anything base, underhand or dishonourable. Robert, Love gives one an instinct into things ... I don't think you realise sufficiently, Robert that you have brought into the practical life of our time a nobler atmosphere, a finer attitude towards life, a freer air of purer aims and higher ideals.⁵⁵

Lady Chiltern gives ideal principles the priority in life. She fully supports their existence and nothing else. All the elements that make up her world fit together: honour, cleanliness, great inheritance, tower of ivory, high, noble, free and fine principles, etc. Anything outside her world is an element of degradation, soil, base, dishonour and disgrace which has to be removed. Her coherent discourse is finally subverted: her husband comes out to be ideal, noble, high-class; yet his money came from soiled sources

and through dishonourable and disgraceful means. Lady Chiltern's ideals are shaken by her husband who disturbs her pattern of thought. When she finds out the truth, she tells her husband:

Your voice wakes terrible memories - memories of things that made me love you - memories of words that made me love you - memories that now are horrible to me. And how I worshipped you! You were to me something apart from common life, a thing pure, noble, honest, without stain. The world seemed to me purer because you were in it, and goodness more real because you lived. And now - oh, when I think that I made of a man like you my ideals! the ideal of my life!⁵⁶

Her language continues to articulate her tendency to include and exclude. In her language, Lady Chiltern also reveals the potential chaos that 'others' might display. While Lady Bracknell distances the other, who is a scandal which threatens her existence, from her culture by turning it into an object, Lady Chiltern domesticates and naturalises it. The other is anyone who represents the opposites of her standards: honour / dishonour, honest / dishonest, high / degraded, etc. In her language, otherness is modified by sameness yet the difference is not denied.

While Lady Bracknell was removed from Wilde's vision of the future in Earnest, Sir Robert Chiltern remains in power and Lord Caversham tells him:

I congratulate you sir. If the country doesn't go to the dogs or the radicals, we shall have you Prime Minister, some day.⁵⁷

Sir Robert is a transgressor, a powerful person who disturbs existing standards of his class (honesty, ideal inheritance, tower of ivory), remakes his consciousness out of his own fashioning, and is supported by Lord Goring who represents self-culture, nature and art, and Lord Caversham who expresses continuous desires for change and transgression. Sir Robert is a ruling class and a bricoleur. He reunited with Lady Chiltern whose well-structured rules of how the world should be constructed were disturbed. Mabel who represents freedom and purity and is directly linked to art and nature unites with Lord Goring who also represents art and nature. Mabel is described at the beginning of the play as 'the apple-blossom type' who has all 'the fragrance and the freedom of a flower', who has sunlight ripples in her hair and a child mouth, associated to 'tyranny of youth', 'courage of innocence' and a 'reminiscent of any work of Art'.⁵⁸ Future in An Ideal Husband is a disturbance of the present conditions and a fusion of art and nature.

In summary, Wilde displays, through style, a large number of cultural references, disorganises them, through verbal style, and finally departs into a new world. Wilde's display of the social world exhibits a large number of social references, i.e, categories that confirm to the

present realities. His revolt against the social forms exhibits subcultural bricoleurs who disobey, disorganise, pervert, violate, relocate the cultural codes and disorganise the existing system of power for the sake of change and progress. All these elements make Wilde a literary political writer. Furthermore, his engagement in form, his concept of defamiliarisation, his concept of literariness, and his concept of artistic motivation could not have reinforced the upper class ideals. In these plays, characters change their consciousness through experimenting with different kinds of forms: they changed social realities by changing and perverting the existing mechanisation of thought. Wilde departs into a future world which removes the existing boundaries, divisions and disparities and which attains to the perfection of art and nature.

To conclude, the late Victorians did not take Wilde's play and art in general as reinforcement of the upper class' images and stereotypes as some critics might claim; rather, they read the work as Wilde himself wanted them to read: transgression for the sake of change till the world progresses towards utopia. Although it remained at the level of form and did not move to social reality, Wilde's attempt to disorganise the social world was enough to destroy him. Levi-Strauss notes that the mispronunciation of words and the misuse of language, in certain primitive

myths, were classified along with incest as horrendous aberrations capable of 'unleashing storm and tempest'.⁵⁹

Notes:

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CHAPTER FOUR

TRANSGRESSION AND UNITY IN WILDE'S PROSE
WRITINGS: DE PROFUNDIS AND SHORT STORIES

4.0. Introduction:

In a letter to R.B. Cunninghame Graham in 1898, a writer and a socialist campaigner, who had described his prison experiences in "Sursum Corda", published in the *Saturday Review* in 19th June, 1897, Wilde spoke of the many prisons of life:

I read with great interest your article in the *Saturday* last June, and wish we could meet to talk over the many prisons of life - prisons of stone, prisons of passion, prisons of intellect, prisons of morality, and the rest. All limitations, external or internal, are prison-walls, and life is a limitation.¹

The image of a prison, which parallels the image of bars and boundaries and reflects continuous attempts to escape from all external and internal limitations, has been of a central importance to my discussion of Oscar Wilde's work. In this chapter, I will examine, under the light of the principle of dialectic which dominated certain aspects in the 19th century thoughts, the mechanism and the implications of Wilde's attempts to transgress the bounds of the social world.

One subject to which Wilde returned again and again was the conflict between Progress and authority. Wilde supported dissenters: 'to Dissenters we owe in England Robinson Crusoe, Pilgrim's Progress; Milton: Mathew Arnold is unjust to them because "not to confirm to what is established" is merely a synonym for Progress'. He believed that

Progress is 'the 'assertion of individualism against authority ... the instinct of self-preservation in humanity, the desire to affirm one's own essence'. He concludes: 'mankind has been continually entering the prisons of puritanism, philistinism, sensualism, Fanaticism, and turning the key of its own spirit: But after a time there is an enormous desire for higher freedom - for self-preservation'.² Dissenters, then, are those who break the barriers that stand between them and the fulfilment of their self-preservation. He describes disobedients in the same way saying: 'Disobedience, in the eyes of any one who has read history, is man's original virtue. It is through disobedience that progress has been made, through disobedience and through rebellion'. Wilde says later that 'progress is the realisation of Utopias' and that Humanity is leading towards Utopia.³ So, disobedients and dissenters are essential characters for the realisation of utopia: they abolish what is established and formulate progress which leads to utopia. Wilde looked for an ideal world based on socialism where all conflicts are solved, all contradictions are dissolved. The first step of achieving an ideal and perfect world is challenging the forms of modern life -thesis- (usually carried out by the character like dissenters and disobedients) by their opposites -antithesis- which end, not with the victory of one side or the other, but with the combination of the two -synthesis. In time the new synthesis becomes a thesis and is a gain

challenged by another antithesis.

Hegel, and later Marx, believed that the social conflicts would finally produce a synthesis where no conflicts were left.⁴ Hegel believed that the German society of his time, which combined an organic community and individual freedom, was the ideal synthesis which brought the dialectic movement of history to an end.⁵ Hegel talked of 'absolute idealism' which starts by a concept and leads by dialectical necessity to other concepts which will require other 'more adequate concepts' till we finally reach the 'absolute idea'. Hegel describes the absolute idea as follows:

Everything else is error and gloom, opinion, caprice and transitoriness; the absolute idea alone is being, imperishable life, self-knowing truth, and the whole truth.¹⁹

Hegel believes that the absolute idea 'contains every determinateness' and includes every determinate distinct thing: every human being, every tree, every star, every mountain. Nature and mind are different forms of the absolute idea; Art and religion are different ways of understanding it.

Marx's theories, based on the Hegelian dialectic, assumed that men and women behave as their social positions determined they should: the rich and powerful would always behave like the rich and the powerful; the poor would always behave like the poor; ultimately the people of a utopia will always behave in a utopian way.⁶ In The Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels speak of the critical Utopian literature which attacks all

aspects of society and moves towards a utopia:

They attack every principle of existing society. Hence they are full of the most valuable materials for the enlightenment of the working class. The practical measures proposed in them - such as the abolition of the distinction between town and country, of the family, of the carrying on of industries for the account of private individuals, and of the wage system, the proclamation of social harmony, the conversion of the function of the State into a mere superintendence of production, all these proposals point solely to the disappearance of class antagonisms which were, at that time, only just cropping up, and which, in these publications, are recognised in their earliest distinct and undefined forms only. These proposals, therefore, are of a purely Utopian character.⁷

Wilde's characters perform acts that moves forwards towards progress and upwards towards a utopia. The androgynous characters in the Decadents' work, the witty servant, the smart country girl, the disobedient daughter, the dominant woman (dissenters) are all different expressions of the same idea: a continuous dialectical movement, change and progress till the world reaches a utopia. Wilde continuously attacked every principle of existing society and argued in favour of an organic society. In "The Soul Of Man Under Socialism", Wilde claims that the socialist society is the ideal utopian state where boundaries are abolished, and social, political and economic contraries are reconciled. Socialism, he suggests, 'will restore society to its proper condition of a thoroughly healthy organism ... It is exactly the existing conditions that one objects to; and any scheme that could accept these conditions is wrong and foolish'.⁸

This chapter examines Wilde's dialectical thought in De Profundis and focuses on his utopian models. In this long letter, the acts of transgressing the bounds of the existing world are expressed on the level of both form and content. Wilde reacts against the existing forms of morality, reasons, arts, religions -thesis- and challenges them by their opposites -antithesis. The dialectical unity of all these opposites can reach a utopian end only in Art. On the formal level, Wilde uses the traditional rhetorical language which was out of use in the 19th century and which provided him with a pattern for his dialectical thought. I suggest that the allusion to the character of Christ does not represent a change in Wilde's literary or personal position; rather, it is a manifestation of his model. Christ and children in the letter are models which embody Wilde's continuous struggle to transgress the imposed bounds into self-unity. The argument concludes by demonstrating the same idea in Wilde's short stories. While the rich rhetorical language in De Profundis provides Wilde with a dialectical pattern and models of complex integrity, the simple language in The Happy Prince, The Nightingale and the Rose, The Fisherman and His Soul, and The Birthday of The Infanta provides him with patterns that define boundaries and state universal truth. The utopian mode of existence which is embodied in the model of Christ is repeated later in the model of the statue, the Nightingale, the fisherman and the

dwarf.

4.1. De Profundis: Transgression And Unity At The Level Of Content:

Opposition to 'what is established' is an essential part of Wilde's theory. It generates change which, according to him, is the only thing one knows about human nature:

Change is the only quality we can predicate of it. The systems that failed are those that rely on the permanency of human nature, and not on its growth and development. The error of Louis XIV was that he thought human nature would always be the same. The result of this error was the French Revolution. It was an admirable result. All the results of the mistakes of governments are quite admirable.⁹

Wilde, therefore, challenges culture and rejects its existing forms: all its ideological, political, social, artistic and religious values and institutions. He describes the existing forms of morality and reason as useless and the current systems of power and law as unjust:

Morality does not help me. I am born antinomian. I am one of those who are made for exceptions, not for laws ... Reason does not help me. It tells me that the laws under which I am convicted are wrong and unjust laws, and the system under which I have suffered a wrong and unjust system.

Wilde substitutes morality and laws - theses - with antinomy and exceptions - antitheses - which opposed and rejected law. However, he claims later that he does not reject these unjust laws and systems, but fully absorbs them and fuses them into his own experience for the sake of his 'ethical evolution'.

Wilde expresses his discontent with the arts that his culture produces:

I was a man who stood in a symbolic relations to the art and culture of my age ... Byron was a symbolic figure, but his relations were to the passion of his age and its weariness of passion. Mine were to something more noble, more permanent, of more vital issue, of larger scope.¹⁰

Art should be distanced from the age as well as from life. Wilde substitutes the arts of the age which involve producing issues of the age with an art that he regards as 'larger' in scope, 'nobler' and 'more vital':

I treated Art as the supreme reality, and life as a mere mode of fiction: I awoke the imagination of the century so that it created myth and legend around me: I summed up all systems in a phrase, and all existence in an epigram.¹¹

While life, in contemporary art, is made supreme and art a form of fiction; life, in Wilde's works, is the fiction and art the supreme reality (this idea was explained in *Earnest*). Earlier, in an interview published in *St. James's Gazette* (January, 1895), Wilde explained the role of art as he conceived it:

The aim of art is no more to give pleasure than to give pain. The aim of art is to be art ... The work of art is to dominate the spectator - the spectator is not to dominate art.¹²

Wilde explained his artistic relation to life in a letter he wrote to Arthur Canon Doyle in 1891:

Between me and life there is a mist of words always. I throw probability out of the window for the sake of a phrase, and the chance of an epigram makes me desert truth ... My difficulty was to keep the inherent moral subordinate to the artistic and dramatic effect, and it still seems to me that the moral is too obvious.¹³

Wilde replaces truth with an epigram, probability with a phrase and the moral with the artistic. He created a myth, summed up all systems and all existence through a phrase, an epigram and the use of imagination. Art in his works shows superiority and supremacy to life. I explained in Chapter Two that the Decadents reacted against the prevailing modes of art such as Realism, Naturalism and the Parnassians.

Wilde then expresses his discontent with religious institutions:

Religion does not help me. The faith that others give to what is unseen, I give to what one can touch, and look at. My Gods dwell in temples made with hands, and within the circle of actual experience is my creed made perfect and complete: too complete it may be, for like many or all of those who have placed their Heaven in this earth, I have found in it not merely the beauty of Heaven, but the horror of Hell also.

He substitutes the unseen with the heard and the touched, the unknown Gods with actual experiences. While religion enslaved others, it became enslaved by him. Whether it is 'faith' or 'agnosticism', he says, 'it must be nothing external to me. Its symbols must be of my own creating ... If I may not find its secret within myself, I shall never find it. If I have not got it already, it will never come to me'. Wilde escapes the contemporary spiritual prison of religion into a faith of his own creation.¹⁴ Wilde rejects the abstract transcendentalism and metaphysics emphasised by religious institutions that appeared in the 19th century. Both abstract transcendentalism and metaphysics should, according to Wilde, be excluded from any religious reform for two reasons: they are inartistic, and they are

separated from physics and concrete realities - their opposites. Religion, according to Wilde, should not be separated from individuals and every day life but should be part of them:

The challenge of the forms of culture (morality, reason, law, art and religion) -thesis- by their opposites (antinomy, exceptions, supreme art, larger religion) -antithesis- leads to the exploration of ideal forms which result from the dialectical unity of all the thesis and antithesis. Wilde talks of his 'ethical evolution' which is a movement towards a perfect world where the reconciliation between the just with the unjust, law with exceptions, morality with antinomy is achieved. The way to this kind of unity -to utopia- is art. In an art-based society, ideology, morality, law, and all forms of culture are not supreme, but mere segments of society that should reconcile for the sake of perfection. Christ, for example, built an ideal world on the basis of art: his morality 'is all sympathy, just what morality should be', and his justice 'is all poetical justice, exactly what justice should be'. The perfect form of art which Wilde seeks in this letter, also personified by the character of Christ, includes life, the universe, the whole history, all of humanity. Christ, the artist, cared, not only for his people or his country alone, but for the entire human race. His 'intense and flamelike imagination' escaped the limitations of this small world and found freedom in the limitless universe.¹⁵

4.2. Transgression And Unity At The Level Of Form:

Wilde, I suggested, used the traditional rhetoric which, as I shall show later, intensified the principle of dialectic. Rhetoric, however, was out of use in the 19th century context. In In Defence of Rhetoric, Brian Vickers defines two breakdowns in the use of rhetoric: the first breakdown, in the Middle Ages, was followed by a long process of rebuilding and rediscovery in the Renaissance. The second breakdown started in the early 19th century and has persisted until our time although, Vickers adds, 'we may now be seeing the beginning of a second Renaissance in rhetoric'. The medieval rhetoricians fragmented rhetoric because they were concerned more with parts than with the whole 'which discouraged formulation of a coherent and consistent cosmology'.¹⁶ In Classical Rhetoric in English Poetry, Vickers attributes the decline of rhetoric in the 19th century to the literary demands of that period. He claims that rhetoric declined soon after 1800 with the appearance of Romanticism. The romantics dismissed rhetoric because they saw its rules as restricting to their spontaneous style and used instead the lyric or the Ode as their form of literary writing and the introspective emotions of the poet or the individual state of mind as their subject matter. Rhetoric had no place in their work since it dealt with generalised emotions and addressed a large public. Post-romantic writers, to whom Wilde belongs,

also objected to rhetoric, accusing it of providing rigid, mechanical or sterile rules and systems which kill the imagination. Modern writers have attacked it and dismissed its figures for their technicalities regarding it as concerned more 'with the husks than with the kernels of style'.¹⁷

Despite all these claims, Wilde departed from the prevailing modes of writings into what was termed 'mechanical', 'rigid' and 'sterile' rules which kill the imagination. Rhetorical figures of meaning and structure, as the examination below shows, provide him with patterns through which he articulated his dialectical thought. In this letter, Wilde articulates introspective as well as general feelings, and although it is addressed to Lord Alfred Douglas, it speaks to the whole world about the whole world.

4.2.1. Rhetorical Devices Of Structure:

In rhetorical theory, there are three types of oratory (judicial, deliberative, and epideictic), three styles of oratory (grand, middle and simple), and four stages of composition: Invention, arrangement, style and memory. I will concentrate on the stages of composition in De Profundis, and particularly on the device of invention. The elements that make up the device of invention, as we shall see, help Wilde to practice his principle of dialectic on the level of form.

Invention according to Aristotle is the essential and complex step, 'It is finding the art of exploring the material to discover all the argument which may be brought to bear in support of a proposition, and in refutation of opposing argument'.¹⁸ Invention, the material which the rhetorician chooses and to which Aristotle gives three main elements, is, in this case, the relationship between Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas, its nature and its consequences. He arranges this invention carefully and passes through all its three elements: pathos, ethos and logos.

Pathos - emotional appeal - is his starting point. Through the pathos, Wilde expresses his introspective emotions, his relation to Alfred Douglas and his individual state of mind.

If there be in it any single passage that brings tears to your eyes, weep as we weep in prison where the day no less than the night is set apart for tears ...

I will begin by telling you that I blame myself terribly. As I sit here in this dark cell in convict clothes, a disgraced and ruined man, I blame myself. In the perturbed and fitful nights of anguish, in the long monotonous days of pain, it is myself I blame.

Pathos, I believe, reflects Wilde's emotions, deep sorrow, self reproachment and his love for his friend. Through pathos, Wilde gives to himself the image of pain and sorrow which he describes later as the image of absolute unity in both life and art.

Ethos - convincing or arguing by moral purpose - follows the pathos. Through the use of ethos, Wilde asserts his definition of love,

wisdom, goodness, and nobility:

Love is fed by imagination, by which we become wiser than we know, better than we feel, nobler than we are: by which we can see Life as a whole: by which, and by which alone, we can understand others' sin, in their real as in their ideal relations. Only what is fine, and finely conceived, can feed Love. But anything can feed Hate.

With the ethos, Wilde challenges the existing wisdoms by wiser ones, the good feelings by better ones, the noble states by nobler ones. He also highlights the possibility of progress towards a total wholeness: the possibility of combining the 'real' as well as the 'ideal' part of life. Love, the essential point in Wilde's ethos or moral argument, advocates the force of imagination which is antithetical to the forces of existing society.

Logos - appeal to reason by logical argument - takes up the largest part of Wilde's letter. Under the Logos which includes Topoi or topic, Aristotle builds up his art of rhetoric. Cicero, who developed rhetoric later, distinguishes 16 topics: definition, division, conjugates, genus, species, similarity, differences, contraries, consequents, causes, effects, comparison, adjuncts, antecedents, names, incompatibilities.

Wilde uses almost all the topics that go under the logos which enable him to express the idea of complex integrity. He dialectically reconstructs the world by unifying its fragments and opposites. In the topics themselves, there is unity and disunity. In Divisions, for example,

there is a split between opposites, contraries and dissimilarities as in the following examples:

In you Hate was always stronger than Love.

Tired of being on the heights, I deliberately went to the depth in search for new sensations.

Pain, unlike pleasure, wears no masks.

Pleasure for the beautiful body, but pain for the beautiful soul.

In Names, there is a reference to separate entities as Wilde mentions names of different artists from different nationalities and from different periods of history: French, English, Italian, German, Greek and Roman artists from classical, medieval, romantic and contemporary periods are all brought up in the argument. Wilde refers to Hugo, Dante, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Tannhauser, Michael Angelo, Wordsworth, Keats, Goethe ... etc. In Genus, there is a reference to different kinds of people and things: Wilde equates great personalities that appeared in history at different times and belonged to different ranks. He refers to Christ, Shelley and Sophocles as poets. 'I have said of him that he ranks with poets. That is true. Shelley and Sophocles are of his company'. Similarities, expresses disunity when Wilde links different things with each other. He draws similarities between persons or between things that belongs to different categories in life such as Christ and poets, or art and prophecy. In Difference, there is a separation between things or people. Wilde devotes

a large part of the letter to telling Lord Alfred Douglas about the differences between them both. In Antecedents, there is a separation in time. Wilde regards Christ as an antecedent of Art. '...but the very basis of his nature was the same as that of the nature of the artist, an intense and flamelike imagination'. In Causes and Consequences, there is also separation in time. Having said that Christ imagines that he could bear on his shoulders the burden of the entire world, Wilde recalls the consequences of such imagination;

... and not merely imagining this but actually achieving it, so that at the present moment all who come in contact with his personality, even though they may neither bow to his altar nor kneel before his priest, yet somehow find that the ugliness of their sins is taken away and the beauty of their sorrow revealed to them.¹⁹

The above topics, which indicate separation and disunity, also imply unity and continuation. The device of divisions, for example, acknowledges the separation between opposites in life (love-hate, heights-depth, pain-pleasure, body-soul), yet states them in one phrase. Like divisions, differences unite different and separated sides in a sentence. The device of names refers to separation of things and people in body, place, time, but unites them in one argument. Genus links different kinds of people and gives them equal footings. The devices of antecedents and causes and consequences both refer to separation in body but continuation in time.

In definition, comes a clear cut statement; an enforcement of a unified wholeness:

The supreme vice is shallowness.

Hate blinds people.

The poor are wiser, more charitable, more kind, more sensitive than we are.

Christ is the most supreme of Individualists. Humility is merely a mode of manifestation.

This new life, ... is, of course, no new life at all, but simply the continuance, by means of development, and evolution, of my former life.²⁰

Under the use of definition comes the use of aphorism, brief statements of a truth or a principle. Aphorism in the above examples comes in Wilde's definition of Christ: 'Christ is the most supreme..', and his definition of hate: 'Hate blinds people'. Sandra Siegel claims that aphorisms are statements 'which mark off or define boundary, provide rules according to which the good from the bad, the true from the false, and the right from the wrong can be readily recognised, are equally true, equally instructional, and equally good'. In "Wilde's Use and Abuse of Aphorism", Siegel describes aphorism in general:

Aphorisms are yet one other mode of distillation of this imagined repository of universal truth. They are statements that represent a closed form, a formulaic paradigm, a concentrate of truth that does not admit of ambiguity; never waver in the face of experience; represent a voice detached from all that is personal; convey a message that has neither a beginning, middle, or end yet are authoritative beyond all doubt.²¹

In the aphorism 'Christ is the most supreme of individualists', Wilde accepts a universal truth that refuses boundaries. But Siegel concentrates also on Wilde's inversion or, in her term, abuse, of some aphorisms and attributes them to the 'unstable', 'unpredictable', and 'indeterminate' life at the turn of the century:

So, there is a double-think in the general use of topics: a belief in separation yet in continuation at the same time; a belief in a thing and in its opposites, in its unity and disunity. The character of Wilde says in Eagleton's dramatised criticism:

We are, moreover, a people characterised by what I might venture to call a dialectical habit of thought- the unity of opposites. Unlike the English, we tend to believe that one thing is true, but also its antithesis.²²

In all the above topics, there is a belief in difference, disparities and disunity between people, things, nations, historical epochs, and yet in the possibility of their unification, closeness similarities and continuation. For Wilde, the disunity between pain and pleasure, body and soul, height and depth, England and France and Germany, the Romans and the Greeks and the Medievals, between various artists in different centuries - all referred to in the art of rhetoric -, is apparent. Yet, their unity is also apparent at least at the level of language.

4.2.2. Rhetorical Devices Of Meaning:

Wilde employs Tropes, one of the main rhetorical devices of meaning. The use of tropes, which work on the conceptual level and include metaphor, metonymy, allegories, irony, litotes, synecdoche, hyperbole, enforces his dialectical thought. Wilde's use of metaphor, for example, combines abstract and concrete ideas together: he imagines Christ as a shepherd, as 'a bridegroom' and as 'a singer trying to build out of music the walls of the city of God' or as 'a lover for whose love the whole world was too small'. This metaphor links God with man and earth with heaven.

Wilde also uses Figures, devices of meaning. Figures work on the physical level of the word, the shape or the structure of language such as: variation of syntax (changes of word order, inversion), modes of iteration (repetition, resumption), balance and antithesis (parison, isocolon, etc) and word-play, (puns, changed forms, etc). In the figures, which may mention different elements from different times and places, there are elements of completion, continuation and sameness. In Anadiplosis (last words of one clause or sentence begin the next), for example, there is often a word in common or a link between different sentences: '... it is myself I blame. I blame myself ...'. The same kind of link exists in Anaphora (same words beginning a sequence of clauses or sentences): 'You had been idle ... You

did not realise ... You admired my work ...'. In Anthypophora (balancing of questions and answer forms), there is an element of completion in a question/answer form: 'Do you think that would have satisfied your father? You know it would not'. In Asydeton, (piling up of words and phrases), there is an element of sameness and continuation of phrases:

The sins of Nero, of Caesar Borgia, of Alexander VI., and of him who ...

'I had lost my name, my position, my happiness, my freedom, my wealth ...

The same element of sameness and continuation exists in the figure of Auxesis (words arranged in ascending order or importance):

I had genius, ... , I made art a philosophy, ... , I altered the minds of men..., I took the drama, ... , I widened its range ...

In Isocolon (repetition of clause structure): 'The Mystical in Art, the Mystical in Life, the Mystical in Nature ...', and Parison (corresponding structure in a sequence of clauses (form of isocolon)): 'the little supper with his companions, ... : the anguish in the quiet moonlit ... : the false friend coming close ...', there is a structure in common among different sentences.

Wilde uses other kinds of figures: Apostrophe (shifting into direct address):

and yet know but too well why Baudelaire cried to God:

O seigneur, donnez-moi la force et le courage

De contempler mon corps et mon coeur sans dégoût

and Polysyndeton (accumulation of conjunctions): 'Nor is it merely ... ,

but the very basis ...'²³

In the examples which I have drawn above, there is some kind of unity and continuation between several separated and different entities. The elements of unity, sameness and continuation are drawn through language. In some figures, there is also a 'double-think' as Vickers names it: Vickers believes that in the figure of Synoeciosis (fusion of opposites in one sentence, e.g. frozen fire or war is peace) there is a 'double-think', 'perversion' and transformation of values into their opposites. Vickers describes 'double-think' by quoting Winston Smith, a character in George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty Four:

To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them, to use logic against logic, ...²⁴

When Wilde unifies divided and opposing elements - body and soul, pleasure and pain, and heaven and earth - using the rhetorical devices of meaning and structure, he is aware of the 'constructed lies'. He holds simultaneously two opinions: their separation and their union. He is aware of their contradiction, but nevertheless he believes in both of them. It is the combination - synthesis - of these opposites that he is after, the outcome of their conflict. This synthesis will one day evolve till the world reaches a utopian Christ-like model. So, the rhetorical devices of meaning and structure in De Profundis follow the pattern which is brought

in the argument: a dialectical unity of opposites. Through these devices, language brings divided worlds together, gives similarities to dissimilar places and epochs, unity to division, and sameness to differences.

De Profundis also celebrates the tendency to break the boundaries between art and life. The systematisation of real life was part of the 19th century art and was developed later in the 20th century. Rupert Hart-Davis refers to the confessional modes that influenced Wilde in *Prison*: St. Augustine's *Confessions* and *De Civitate Dei*, Pascal's *Provincial Letters*, Pater's *The Renaissance and Imaginary Portraits*, and Newman's *Pro Vita Sua*.⁵⁹ Jan B Gordon claims that the stylisation of genuine Victorian religious crisis is visible throughout the nineties:

in George Moore's conversion of a single life into three artistic confessions- *Resorgum*, *Hail And Farewell*, and *Confessions Of A Young Man*; in Arthur Symons' mental illness that occurred in real life long after the events of fictional *Spiritual Adventures*; in Dowson's polarisation of life's choices into the careers of bedlamite or nun; and lastly Pater's conversion of biography into the aesthetic harmonies of a new genre, *The Imaginary Portraits*, each of which is completed by a ritual conversion.

This tendency to stylise personal crisis is found mainly in the Decadents' writings: Moore, Symons, Dowson and Pater. Gordon also links the apologia, the approach of life to a life of forms which Wilde and Pater excelled in, with the imagist and the Vorticist traditions in the 20th century.²⁵

Wilde, I claimed earlier, wants to bestow on the world the artistic model he has created out of his imagination. He wants to master the world through the power of art and language. But does rhetoric facilitate the act of domination? The art of rhetoric in general, had always had a close relation to life. In "De oratore", Cicero describes rhetoric as a powerful tool which gives those who master it the power to 'get hold on assemblies of men':

In every free nation, and most of all in communities which had attained the enjoyment of peace and tranquillity, this one art has always flourished over the rest and ever reigned supreme ... What function is so kingly, so worthy of the free, so generous as to bring help to the suppliant, to raise up those who are cast down, to bestow security, to set free from peril, to maintain men in their civil rights? ... The wise control of the complete orator is that which chiefly upholds not only his own dignity, but the safety of countless individuals and the entire state.²⁶

So, rhetoric has the power to change life: to bring up those who are cast down, the underdog, to secure rights and freedom. It has the power to provoke people and enable them to cross over the bounds of their conditions. Vartianus Capella comments on the 'power of eloquence' saying:

For as a queen in control of all things, she has shown power to move men whither she pleased, or whence, to bow them to tears, to incite them to rage, to transform the mien and feelings as well as, embattled armies and all the hosts of the people.²⁷

Hence, the rhetorical style in De Profundis celebrates the supremacy of Art over life. Wilde had recognised the supremacy of art in many occasions.

In a letter to Bernard Beere, written from Kansas City, Missouri, (1882), he speaks of how he manipulated a group of miners:

I spoke to them of the early Florentines, and they slept as though no crime had ever stained the ravines of their mountain home. I described to them the pictures of Botticelli, and the name, which seemed to them like a new drink, roused them from their dreams, but when I told them in my boyish eloquence of the "secret of Botticelli" the strong men wept like children. Their sympathy touched me and I approached modern art and had almost won them over to a real reverence for what is beautiful when unluckily I described one of Jimmy Whistler's "nocturnes in blue and gold". Then they leaped to their feet and in their grand simple way swore that such things should not be. Some of the younger ones pulled their revolvers out and left hurriedly to see if Jimmy was "prowling about the saloons" or "wrestling a hash" at any eating shop. Had he been there I fear he would have been killed, their feeling was so bitter. Their enthusiasm satisfied me and I ended my lecture there.²⁸

The latter reflects the power of the language and the orator, the domination by the artist through words, and the supremacy of art over life. However, it was impossible for life in the 19th century to have achieved the dialectical unity of opposites and consequently transformed into a utopia.

From what have been said, we can infer that De Profundis's rich language gives Wilde's forms many expressions and manifestations. It expresses Wilde's concepts of transgressing the various limits which are imposed by the social world. It describes his dialectical thought. It abolishes the boundaries between opposites and between life and art. It finally articulates the supremacy of art over life. All these artistic forms have been continuously displayed in Wilde's works. Below, I explain

Wilde's models of the ideal mode of existence as they appear in De Profundis. These models embody concepts of transgression and unity and the supremacy of art in their very essence.

4.3. Wilde's Models Of Transgression And Unity:

One central model for this type of existence is Christ. Another model is the child. I will examine both of these models and explain how they constitute the same structure which the letter explores in form and content. In other words, both of these models have elements of disobeying social rules and, by dialectical necessity, achieving total unity.

4.3.1. Christ:

Some existing critical works on De Profundis attribute the work to Wilde's personal and literary developments. In "De Profundis- Wilde's Letter to the World", Meredith Cary claims that De Profundis presents a christian metaphor: the theme of love, betrayal and forgiveness (relationship with Douglas) parallels the life of Christ.²⁹ Cary claims that De Profundis offers a contrast between the incompleteness of one's own life and the intensity and completion of Christ's life and that Wilde has reformed his artistic position from that of a Decadent to that of a Christ-like artist. Wilde characterises himself as 'a neo-Christ capable of

appreciating sorrow as well as pleasure'.³⁰ In "Oscar Wilde As Theorist: The Case Of De Profundis", Bruce Bashford believes that Wilde constructs a theory of self-realisation in De Profundis which differs from his previous literary positions. Bashford attributes what he describes as 'a new literary position to Wilde's own situation:

In De Profundis Wilde is obviously presenting a theory of self-development applicable to his own situation, and the nature of that situation explains why he would feel that his earlier principle would no longer serve him.³¹

Other critical works interpret the allusion to the personality of Christ as part of Wilde's basic paradox which is central to his world view. In "A Comparative Examination of Oscar Wilde's and Hofmannsthal's Basic World Views", R. Breugelmans interprets the Basic Paradox as follows: the world-spirit or Mind is achieved in matter or the body, the macrocosm rendered in the microcosm (man), and in religious-theological terms, the 'divine' is revealed or embodied in the 'earthly'. Breugelmans suggests that both writers envisaged the utopian ideal state in which the artist or art is to shape and save the world by the model of his condensed artistic re-creation, his reconciliation of opposites as in the basic paradox.³² What Carry and Bashford explore in Wilde's De Profundis are all equally true, but the assumption that De Profundis reflects Wilde's reformed position from a Decadent to that of a Christ-like artist, or Wilde's new theory of self-development that differs from his previous theories and applies to his

new position should be refuted. 'The assumption' that the allusion to the character of Christ is part of his basic paradox contributes to my argument that Christ is part of Wilde's models of his condensed artistic recreation.'

De Profundis, therefore, does not signal a change in Wilde's literary positions; rather, it continues his previous literary stand. Wilde told Thomas Hutchison in a letter (1888) that there is always a model in his work which he gives meaning. He describes the student in "The Nightingale and The Rose" as a shallow young man and almost as bad as the girl he thinks he loves and claims that if there is a true lover in the tale, it is the Nightingale:

So, at least, it seems to me, but I like to fancy that there may be many meanings in the tale, for in writing it, and the others, I did not start with an idea and clothe it in form, but began with a form and strove to make it beautiful enough to have many secrets, and many answers.³³

So Wilde's attempt to distance himself from modern life and search for a utopian existence is a general pattern through out his work. Wilde always denied the idea that his works differ from each other. In an interview with *St. James's Gazette* (18th of January, 1895), he was asked if An Ideal Husband is the best of his plays: 'Have you forgotten my classical expression - that only mediocrities improve? My three plays are to each other, as a wonderful young poet has beautifully said,

_ as one white rose
On one green stalk, to another one'

Wilde had previously told the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1894 that 'only mediocrities progress. An artist revolves in a cycle of masterpieces'.³⁴ Wilde's works, though they differ in structure, genre, and medium of expression, follow the same literary strategies.

Christ here represents a self-unified personality who fought against the limitations of the social world and human nature. Society, Wilde perceives, damages the human soul. Most people, he claims, are not themselves: 'their thoughts are someone else's opinion, their life a mimicry; their passion a quotation'. But Christ was entirely himself:

I take a keen pleasure in the reflection that long before Sorrow had made my days her own and bound me to her wheel I had written in *The Soul Of Man* that he who would lead a Christ-like life must be entirely and absolutely himself.

Christ wanted to free people from the prison of life and save man's soul which life had damaged. Wilde quotes Christ as saying 'Forgive your enemies' and explains that this was not for the sake of the enemies but for the sake of the forgiver himself. It is because Christ wanted to save the soul from the prison of hatred, revenge, anger and all the passions that destroy individuals. Christ said 'Sell all that thou hast and give it to the poor', not for the poor's sake but for the young man's soul which wealth has damaged. It is because Christ wanted to save the human soul from the prison of materialism. He forgave a woman who had committed adultery because her sin came as a result of love, and addressed the

people who asked him to use the law in order to sentence another sinner saying: 'Let him of you who has never sinned be the first to throw the stone at her'. It is because Christ, Wilde continues, wanted to help the human soul to free itself from the contemporary prison of morality, law and justice which he regarded as incomplete and imperfect.

Christ fought against philistines who stereotyped life and channelled it into cultural forms. Christ, Wilde continues, attacked the philistines with their:

heavy inaccessibility to ideas, their dull respectability, their tedious orthodoxy, their worship of vulgar success, their entire preoccupation with the gross materialistic side of life, and their ridiculous estimate of themselves and their importance.

Wilde associates the Jews of Jerusalem in Christ's days with the British Philistines in his time who gave rules, facts and money a great importance. Christ, Wilde comments, felt that it is impossible to change life into fixed forms: 'He felt that life was changeful, fluid, active, and that to allow it to be stereotyped into any form was death'. Wilde says:

Christ had no patience with the dull lifeless mechanical systems that treat people as if they were things, and so treat everybody alike: as if anybody, or anything for that matter, was like aught else in the world.³⁵

Christ had no laws, he had exceptions only.

The personality of Christ which has no elements of limits and barriers within it contains the utopian and ideal existence (the final stage of the dialectical unity of opposites). Wilde perceives Christ as having a

unified existence where 'the outer is expressive of the inner'. This is because Christ is the image of Sorrow and Beauty. Sorrow is 'the ultimate type both in life and art'. Sorrow has only sorrow behind it, reveals itself, is unified with itself, and it expresses its inward reality through its outward expression. Sorrow is a sign of perfection:

Other things may be illusions of the eye or the appetite, made to blind the one and cloy the other, but out of sorrow has the world been built and at the birth of a child or a star there is pain.

Sorrow expresses itself. Wilde believes that all artists should seek Christ's unified type of existence in which 'soul and body are one and indivisible: in which the outward is expressive of the inward: in which Form reveals'. But unity of personality was not the only reason behind the power of Christ:

Nor is it merely that we can discern in Christ that close union of personality with perfection which forms the real distinction between classical and romantic Art and makes Christ the true precursor of the romantic movement in life, but the very bases of his nature was the same as that of the nature of the artist, an intense and flamelike imagination.

The utopian existence which Christ embodies is based on art. Christ had an artistic nature and an 'imaginative sympathy' which 'in the sphere of Art is the sole secret of creation'. Wilde claims that Christ's 'whole conception of Humanity sprang right out of the imagination and can only be realised by it'.³⁶ Hence, the utopian existence which reaches total unity and perfection comes as a result of Christ's artistic nature and imagination.

In his imagination, Christ assimilated the experiences of the entire world throughout history into his own experience, all the fragments of life and history into his personality.

There is still something to me almost incredible in the idea of a young Galilean peasant imagining that he could bear on his own shoulders the burden of the entire world: all that had been already done and suffered, and all that was yet to be done and suffered: the sins of Nero, of Caesar Borgia, of Alexander VI., and of him who was Emperor of Rome and priest of the Sun: the suffering of those whose name is Legion and whose dwelling is among the tombs, oppressed nationalities, factory children, thieves, people in prison, outcasts, those who are dumb under oppression and whose silence is heard by God: and not only merely imagining this but actually achieving it, ...³⁷

We can interpret this as saying that Christ's personality contains the whole world, past, present and future with all its burdens, sins, and sufferings.

Christ had an image of the world without boundaries:

He was the first to conceive the divided races as a unity. Before his time there had been gods and men. He alone saw that on the hills of life there were but God and Man, and, feeling through the mysticism of sympathy that in himself each had been made incarnate, he calls himself the Son of the One or the son of the other, according to his mood.³⁸

Christ is the bridge between God and man, perfection and imperfection, heavenly and earthly, divine and human, ideal unity and divided races. Christ is the embodiment of the fusion between all opposites in life.

Christ's model, then, represents a world of no boundaries, of total unity and of a supreme art. I will now explore the child's model which carries the same qualities.

4.3.2. The Child:

Again, critical works attribute Wilde's literary position to his personal development. In "Alienation, The Destiny Of Modern Literature? Oscar Wilde and Stefan George", Rene Breugelmans assumes that Wilde works at a certain level of childhood. Using a depth-psychology model, Breugelmans identifies three levels of awareness of the world and claims that Wilde works in the second level: the pre-logical level of experience where the *You* is perceived in terms of archetypes. In this level, the ego and the *You* are experienced as clearly distinct with some awareness of their interdependence. The *I* views the *You* in terms of basic erotic-religious relationships with the persons of its immediate surroundings. Breugelmans argues that the two writers have been incorrectly valued and unjustly condemned, first

because of their philosophic idealism concomitant with their mythopoetic mode of experience which regards the world as consciousness a form of *esse est percipi*; second because of the literary counterpart of this idealism, in French criticism called bovarism, that incorporates moods, wishdreams, masks and attitude (including those bearing on evil, decay and death) into a sequence which is the world. The world thus is forced into Being magically, into our 'Truth'.

Breugelmans believes that both Wilde and George, who work on the second level of the *You* experience, want to make the world (the *you*), to master it by the magic of language.³⁹ Breugelmans's argument implies that Wilde wants to be, and is actually being, child-like. His relation to

the world is based on a child-like experience: mastering the world. Again, my argument refutes such claims by suggesting that the child-like type is just another manifestation of the model which he continuously presents. This model embodies an alienation from the social world, which implies a break down of its values, limits and barriers. It represents self-unity and a utopian existence based on art and imagination.

Wilde regards the child as an embodiment of the 'uncultured' soul which resembles Christ's act of saving the human soul from culture: 'One only realises one's soul by getting rid of all alien passions, all acquired culture, and all external possessions be they good or evil'. And when one comes in contact with one's soul, after getting rid of all passions and possessions that are acquired by culture, Wilde continues, one becomes 'simple as a child, as Christ said one should be'.⁴⁰

The child model represents the closest type to God, to perfection: 'Far off', Wilde says, 'like a perfect pearl, one can see the city of God. It is so wonderful that it seems as if a child could reach it in a summer's day. And so a child could'.

He took children as the type of what people should try to become. He held them as examples to their elders, which I myself have always thought the chief use of children, if what is perfect should have a use. Dante describes the soul of a man as coming from the hand of God "weeping and laughing like a little child," and Christ also saw that the soul of each one should be "a guisa di fanciulla, che piangendo e ridendo pargoleggia".⁴¹

Wilde refers to examples which embody perfection and unity in Art. These examples are, youth and the arts preoccupied with youth, modern landscape art with its 'suggestion of spirit dwelling in external things', music where the subject is 'absorbed in expression'. Sorrow represents the ultimate type of unity in both life and art.

The child model, then, implies a distance from culture and society. The child does not imitate life, nature or culture; rather, it makes and unmakes the world through language, 'images', 'dreams', and 'mythos'. The child model also implies the principle of dialectic: the child rejects modern culture - thesis - and finds its replacement - antithesis - in art, language and images. The child embodies total unity: it makes the whole world and unites with it by mastering it which resembles the Absolute idea of Hegel, 'the self-knowing truth' and the 'whole truth'.

The child model or the idea that the child is the closest to God and to perfection was by no means new. Indeed dreamers and poets had described it for many years. It starts in the 18th century with Rousseau's Emile which greatly influenced the interest towards the child and created the climate in which Blake, Wordsworth, Lamb, Southey, and Coleridge later wrote. Peter Coveney claims that a long tradition of Hebrew and Christian literature postulated the uncorrupted nature of the child. But it was Rousseau who gave expression to 'the new sensibility and directed its

interest towards childhood as a period of life when man most closely approximated the "State of Nature". Rousseau believed that 'Childhood has ways of seeing, thinking, and feeling peculiar to itself; nothing can be more foolish than to substitute our ways for them'.⁴² William Blake was the most notable influence of Rousseau in England. Blake emphasised the artistic nature of the child and linked imagination to childhood: 'Natural objects always did and do weaken, deaden and obliterate imagination in me'. His Songs of Innocence represent the human mind in a state of innocence and imagination unspoiled by the stains of worldliness. In "The Little Boy Lost", Blake presents a child, or the human spirit, seeking God:

Father, father, where are you going
 O do not walk so fast.
 Speak father, speak to your little boy
 Or else I shall be lost,⁴³

The Father, which means God here, is lost later in the mire of the material world as the child grows older. The Experience poems represent the soul which converts to society and life. In "London", Blake writes of the material world full of limits:

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
 Near where the charter'd Thames does flow
 And mark in every face I meet
 Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every man,
 In every Infants cry of fear,
 In every voice; in every ban,
 The mind-forg'd manacles I hear

How the Chimney-sweepers cry
 Every blackening church appalls
 And the hopeless soldiers sigh
 Runs in blood down palace walls

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
 How the youthful Harlots curse
 Blasts the new-born Infants tear
 And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.⁴⁴

The unity and the perfection of God which appeared earlier is replaced here by social boundaries: chartered streets, chartered Thames, ban walls. The purity and innocence are replaced by social evils: the evil of the church, the business world, the crimes of political systems and social injustice. (Wilde admired Blake's works and kept one of his drawings in his room and announced that 'In modern times Dante and Durer, Keats and Blake are the best representative of the Greek spirit').⁴⁵

Wordsworth expressed similar themes and described childhood as the 'seed-time' of the 'soul'. His Ode on "Intimations of Immortality from recollection of Early Childhood" conveys his awareness of childhood and the connection between the soul of the child and God, and the soul of the child and nature. He realised that later in society the child is going to confront barriers of all kinds and his soul is going to be lost. He pessimistically says:

Shades of the prison-house begin to close
 Upon the Growing Boy,⁴⁶

Coleridge saw intuitive and imaginative qualities in the soul of the

child and believed that the feelings of childhood - feelings of freshness, wonder, and spontaneous joy in existence - should be carried into 'the powers of manhood'.⁴⁷ By the early decades of the 19th century, the symbol of the romantic child was established. The child was a symbol of Innocence and the life of the imagination, an expression of nostalgia, and insecurity. The image of the child's soul as a sign of unity and perfection which later faces the bounds of the social world appears in the image of the dwarf in The Birthday Of The Infanta which I will discuss later.

The models which Wilde employs here (Christ and the children) embody a world which brought the dialectical unity of opposites to an end where no conflicts were left. These models or worlds -synthesis- contained the organic wholeness which Wilde was constantly in search for. I explore below other models in Wilde's work which seek total unity and examine how unity and transgression work on the level of both form and content.

4.4. Models Of Transgression And Unity In Wilde's Short Stories:

In "The Marvellous Rose: Christ and The Meaning of Art in "The Nightingale and the Rose"", Guy Willoughby regards Christ as an ideal model which Wilde based all his other models on. Willoughby claims

that in Wilde's short stories, 'the pattern of references establishes Jesus as a compelling ethical ideal for the central characters, as they battle to win community in a sadly divided and fractious world' and that 'only those characters who imitate Jesus' unconditional love, can attain a genuine self-completion'. He quotes Wilde as saying at the time of publishing the stories that the stories are 'an attempt to mirror modern life in a form remote from reality - to deal with modern problems in a mode that is ideal and not imitative'.⁴⁸ I will examine the language of the models in Wilde's short stories which parallel the model of Christ in De Profundis. The examination will show that the concepts of transgression and unity in De Profundis, which were expressed in a rich and sophisticated language, are repeated in the short stories and conveyed through a simple use of language.

4.4.1. The Happy Prince:

The model which Wilde employs here is the statue of the prince; a work of art. It is the statue that speaks, feels and absorbs the experiences of all the world in its own personality (like the personality of Christ). The statue stands above the social world and rejects all its conflicts and contradictions. The passage below is said by the statue of the prince and relates to his life as a human being (when he was alive). The next

passage is said by the prince after he was transformed into a form of art. Here is the statue of the prince telling the little swallow how he lived when he was alive:

I did not know what tears were, for I lived in the palace of Sans-Souci, where sorrow is not allowed to enter. In the day time I played with my companions in the garden, and in the evening I led the dance in the Great Hall. Raound the garden ran a very lofty wall, but I never cared to ask what lay beyond adopt, every thing about me was so beautiful. My courtiers called me the Happy Prince, and happy indeed I was, if pleasure be happiness. So I lived and so I died. And now that I am dead they have set me up here so high that I can see all the ugliness and all the misery of my city, and though my heart is made of lead yet I cannot chose but weep.⁴⁹

The speaker in this passage employs the first person pronoun (I) from beginning to end which reflects a subjective point of view (I did not, I played, I led, I never cared, I was, I lived, I died, I am, I can). This passage reflects one-sidedness in the part of the speaker. However, the last three pronouns I (I am dead, I can see the ugliness and misery, I cannot bu weep) relate to the process of transgression from one side into another. Later, as the next passage shows, the pronoun I is replaced by verb to be. This replacement comes when the speaker moves from life to death, from pleasure to palaces and and richness into sorrow, slums and misery. Death and sorrow are, according to Wilde, forms of unity (the sorrow and the death of Christ, the death of Salomé and the Duchess). The passage below relates to this state of unity:

Far a way in a little street there is a poor house. One of the windows is open, and through it I can see a woman seated at the table. Her face is

thin and worn, and she has coarse, red hands, all pricked by the needle, for she is a seamstress. She is embroidering passion-flowers on a satin gown for the loveliest of the Queen's maid-of-honour to wear at the next court ball. In a bed in the corner of the room her little boy is lying ill. He has a fever, and is asking for oranges. His mother has nothing to give him but river water, and he is crying.⁵⁰

The focus here moves from individual to state, the I dissolves into the be and the isolated subject is replaced by existence and state of affairs. The repetition of the I which occurred in the first text is replaced by a repetition of be here (there is, the window is, her face is, she is, boy is lying, she is asking, boy is crying). Besides, the ruby and later the sapphire and the gold (non-verbal elements) makes a transgressional move from the rich into the poor. The Prince, as the passage below shows, continues to refer to state of affairs which continues to reflect the dissolution of the self into the world:

Far away across the city I see a young man in a garret. He is leaning over a desk covered with papers, and in a tumbler by his side there is a bunch of withered violets. His hair is brown and crisp, and his lips are red as a pomegranate, and he has large and dreamy eyes. He is trying to finish a play for the Director of the theatre, but he is too cold to write any more. There is no fire in the grate, and hunger has made him faint.⁵¹

In the square below, there stands a little match-girl. She has let her matches fall in the gutter, and they are all spoiled. Her father will beat her if she does not bring home some money, and she is crying. She has no shoes or stockings, and her little head is bare.⁵¹

The repetition of the I which appeared in the first passage is again replaced by the repetition of verb to be, by processes which describes states of affairs (he is leaning, there is a bunch, his hair is, his lips are, he is

trying, he is too cold, there is no fire).

So, the dialectical thought, which was expressed earlier in De Profundis through a rich and rhetorical language, is articulated here on the level of both content (when the Prince moves from life -thesis- into death -antithesis- and when the gold goes from the rich to the poor) and form (when the pronoun I shifts into verb to be). Wilde aims at a combination of the self and the world, the isolated subject with the object. The statue of the Prince represents this transgression and unity.

4.4.2. The Nightingale And The Rose:

The concept of the dialectical unity is manifested here through the Nightingale. The Nightingale embodies Wilde's concept of one and unified world and represents the model which absorbs the feelings and the experiences of the whole world into its own personality. The passages below relate to the Nightingale's conception of the world.

Here at least is a true lover. Night after night have I sung of him, though I knew him not; night after night have I told his stories to the stars and now I see him. His hair is dark as the hyacinth-blossom, and his lips are red as the rose of his desire; but passion has made his face like pale ivory, and sorrow has set her seal upon his brow.⁵²

The Nightingale's language combines pronoun I which relates to the individual (I sung, I knew, I told, I see) and verb to be which relates to the world (his hair is dark, his lips are). The model of the Nightingale

does not represent a transgression from the self into the world, or division between the self and the world; rather, it represents a synthesis of the two.

Her language continues to reveal this fusion:

Here, indeed, is the true lover. What I sing of, he suffers: what is joy to me, to him is pain. Surely love is a wonderful thing. It is more precious than emeralds, and dearer than fine opals. Pears and pomegranates cannot buy it, nor is it set forth in the market-place. It may not be purchased of the merchants, nor can it be weighed out in the balance for gold.⁵³

Unity comes at the level of content when the Nightingale refers to love as combining both pleasure and pain, and at the level of form when language combines both the pronoun I and verb to be. Besides, her language contains imperative forms (eg. Be happy, be happy, you shall have ...) and affirmative statements (eg. I will build ... Love is wiser than philosophy ... and mightier than power). Her language later expresses total unity at the level of form when it shifts into statements, epigrams and aphorism:

Death is a great price to pay for a red rose, and Life is very dear to all. It is pleasant to sit in the green wood, and to watch the Sun in his chariot of gold, and the moon in her chariot of pearl. Sweet is the scent of the hawthorn, and sweet are the bluebells that hide in the valley, and the heather that blows on the hill. Yet Love is better than life, and what is the heart of a bird compared to the heart of a man.⁵⁴

The use of aphorism, I quote Sandra Siegel again, 'marks off' boundaries and presents statements where the distinctions between opposites can be 'readily recognised', where opposites are 'equally true, equally instructional, and equally good'. Siegel regards aphorism as a mode of an imagined universal truth, a statement which represents a closed form, a

paradigm and an authoritative voice. In the aphorisms: 'Love is a wonderful thing', 'Death is a great price' and 'Life is very dear to all', there is a universal truth. The Nightingale expresses a non-personal and authoritative voice that has no ambiguity. She is a symbol of the perfection of God and her language reflects unity and universality. The Nightingale and the Rose ends with the death of the Nightingale (unity) for the sake of love (she has fed the rose with the blood of her heart) and with the lover throwing the rose for the sake of wealth.

4.4.3. The Fisherman And His Soul

In this story there are two acts of transgression and two types of unity. The fisherman transgresses from the human world to a non-human and more unified place, and later moves backwards from this place in the world and finally to unity in death. The use of the pronoun I and aphorism appears again and comes alternatively when the speaker moves from the subject into the world. The fisherman wants to send his soul away in order to approach nature and mystery which the Mermaid sings of:

For she sang of the Sea-folk who drive their flocks from cave to cave ...; of the Tritons who have long green beards ...; of the palace of the King which is all of amber; of the gardens of the sea where ... She sang of the big whales ...; of the Sirens who tell of such wonderful things; of the sunken galleys ...; of the little barnacles; and of the cuttlefish ... She sang of the nautilus ...; of the happy mermon; of the little children ...; of the Mermaids ...; and of the Sea-lions ...; and the Sea-horses with their floating

manes.⁵⁵

Before sending the soul away and joining the Mermaid, the fisherman spoke in a language that reveals his subjective views and continuously employs the first person pronoun I. He tell the priest:

Father, I am in love with one of the sea-folk, ... Tell me how I can send my Soul away from me, for in truth I have no need of it. Of what value is my soul to me? I cannot see it. I may not touch it. I do not know it.

Later, he tell the Witch: 'My Soul is nought to me. I cannot see it. I may not touch it. I don't know it'.⁵⁶ But when the Fisherman sends the Soul away and joins the Mermaid - nature and mystery - and lives in the depth of the sea, his language style changes the use of the first person pronoun - the subject - into aphorism -short statement which reveals universal truth.

His soul comes back to him and talks about the wonder of the actual world: the east, the country of the Tartars, the Tamarisk tree, the Jackals, the camels, the merchants, the negroes, the false Prophet, the Gryphos, the Dragons, the Valleys of Pygmises, the Tower of Apes, the Tower of Serpents, the banks of Oxus, the Aurantes, the Kimnians, the Agazobae, etc.⁵⁷ The soul keeps describing material things which one can see, touch and learn by mere observation. The soul finally talks of the Mirror of Wisdom (the actual world) which everyone worships like God: 'There is no God but this mirror that one seest, for this is the Mirror of Wisdom. And it reflecteth all things that are in heaven and on earth, save only the

face of him who looketh into it'.⁵⁸ But the Fisherman, who is imbued with nature and with mystery and who could not accept a knowledge based on what one can see and touch, answers: 'Love is better than Wisdom'. His language, which consisted of a repetitive use of the first person pronoun I, reflects here self-contained truth, unity, general and universal statement. He plunges into the sea again.

The soul comes back to him again and speaks of the south: the city of Ashter, the city of Mecca, the Bedouins, the perfumes from the Indian sea, silver, turquoise stones, Jade, emeralds, etc.⁵⁹ The description of all the precious things and strange places could not attract the Fisherman who answers: 'Love is better than the Riches'.⁶⁰ His language reflects again authoritative, non-personal voice and reveals a universal truth.

When the soul comes back for the third time, it succeeds. The Fisherman yields to temptation, returns the soul which he had sent away and moves from the sea into the actual world. Under the influence of his soul, he performs evil actions: he steals silver cups, smites a child, kills a merchant who fed him. His language returns to the use of the first person pronoun which relates to the subject. He tells the Soul:

I will bind my hands that I may not do thy bidding, and close my lips that I may not speak thy words, and I will return to the place where she whom I love has her dwelling. Ever to the sea will I return, and to the little bay where she is wont to sing, and I will call to her and tell her the evil I have done and the evil thou hast wrought on me.⁶¹

The Fisherman could not rejoin his lover the Mermaid again except through death. Before his death, the Fisherman tells the dead body of the Mermaid which floated on the water and came to the shore:

Love is better than Wisdom, and more precious than Riches, and Fairer than the feet of the daughters of men ... Yet ever did thy love abide with me, and ever was it strong, nor did ought prevail against it, though I have looked upon evil and looked upon good. And now that thou art dead, surely I will die with thee also.⁶³

His language style shifts again into a combination of aphoristic statements which assert themselves strongly (love is better, love is more precious, love is fairer) and the pronoun I which refers to the individual self (I have looked, I will die). This language resembles the language of the Nightingale which combines the self and world. At this moment, the Fisherman transgresses from the actual world into the mysterious death. Hence, his language, as I have examined, reflects unity every time he leaves the actual world into mysterious and unknown places.

4.4.4. The Birthday Of The Infanta

In this story, I will examine the language which Oscar Wilde employs for each phase of transgression made by the dwarf. The world in this story dissolves into the subject. The dwarf in nature represents the model of unity who makes and unmakes the world, who builds cages and fashions bamboos. The dwarf in the palace represents a process of

disintegration into the self. This image of the dwarf in nature and later in society resembles the image of the artist who masters the world but whose imagination becomes rotten when he later mirrors reality.

The dwarf first lived in nature. Wilde employs images that makes the dwarf part of nature; 'dancing in the forest', crouched up in the oak-tree', 'sharing nuts with the squirrels', giving crumbs to the birds out of his 'little bunch of black bread', and dividing them 'whatever poor breakfast he had'.⁶³ The dwarf knows nothing about the self (the fact that he was ugly):

He liked the birds and the lizards immensely, and thought that flowers were the most marvellous things in the whole world, ... For though he had never been in a palace before, he knew a great many wonderful things. He could make little cages out of rushes for the grasshoppers to sing in, and fashion the long-jointed bamboo into the pipe that Pan loves to hear. He knew the cry of every bird and could call the startlings from the tree-top, or the heron from the mere. He knew the trail of every animal, he could track the bear by its delicate footprints, and the boar by the trampled leaves: All the wild-dances he knew, the mad dance in red raiment with the autumn, the light dance with white snow-wreaths in winter, and the blossom-dance, through the orchards in spring. He knew where the wood-pigeons built their nests, ... she would like them, and the rabbits ..., and the jays ..., and the hedgehogs ..., and the great white tortoises ...Certainly there was a great deal to look out in the forest.⁶⁴

The words 'make' and 'fashion' refer to the artist who can make the world out of his imagination which I referred to previously. They describe the dwarf as a master of his world. The 'wild dances', the 'light dance' and the 'blossom dance' refer to the organic self and pre-social places which I referred to in the chapter on Salomé. They reflect the

unity of the self with nature, spontaneity with stylisation, expression with medium, sophistication with primitiveness. The lizards, the birds, the squirrels, the pigeons, the rabbits, the jays, the hedgehogs and the tortoise are all part of the world which the dwarf -the artist- masters. The reference to the seasons -autumn, winter, spring- all points at the continuity of nature. He then starts imagining what he could 'make' if the Infanta came to the forest: he would make her 'a necklace of red bryony berries', he would 'bring her a corn-cups and dew-drenched anemones, and tiny glow-worms to be stars in the pale gold of her hair'.⁶⁵ In his imagination, the dwarf continues to make, fashion, build and rebuild the world.

But, the dwarf moves later from nature into the palace in search of the Infanta. Consequently, he moves from the organic whole into the self. In the palace, he sees a mirror which reflected his ugly image - reality. Wilde here employs images and words that describe the dwarf's self-centredness: he saw the most 'grotesque monster he had ever beheld', 'not properly shaped', 'hunchbacked', 'crooked-limbed', 'huge lolling head' and 'a mane of black hair'.⁶⁶ The discovery of the ugly social self is a process of pain to the dwarf:

When the truth dawned upon him, he gave a wild cry of despair, and fell sobbing to the ground. So it was he who was mishappen and hunchbacked, foul to look at and grotesque ... Why had they not left him in the forest, where there was no mirror to tell him how loathsome he was? Why had his father not killed him, rather than sell him to his shame?

The hot tears poured down his cheeks, and he tore the white rose into pieces. he crawled, like some wounded thing into the shadow, and lay there moaning.⁶⁷

The dwarf transgresses from the organic whole into the isolated self. There is no imagination here, no attempt to make, or fashion, or rebuild the world, no reference to nature or to any sort of continuity of life. There is nothing but the ugly self and despair. It is also noticeable that the dwarf in the first passage was always the subject (he liked the birds, he thought that the flower, he had ever been, he knew wonderful things, he could make and fashion, he could track, etc). This situation refers to dwarf's control of the world and reflects some sort of power. The dwarf in the second text turns into the object (truth dawned upon him, they left him, father killed him, than sell him) which reflects the lack of control and power he enjoyed in nature. These two situations resemble women's situations which I explored in Chapter Two: the persona affects the world by intention process (dwarf in nature) and the whole world affects the persona by intention process (dwarf in society). However, the only image which reflects unity here is the image of pain (which Wilde attributes to the personality of Christ). This self-unified image is completed later with death and the dwarf transgresses again from the self into pain and death, into unity again.

I have explained that Wilde offers modern life models of transgression and complex integrity. He gives these models different expressions and manifestations: Christ, children, music, and the Nightingale are models of unity which reject boundaries. The statue, the Fisherman and the dwarf are models of transgression: The Prince transgresses from life to death, the Fisherman moves from human to non-human world and backwards, etc. They all mount to the same thing: an attempt to challenge existing conditions - theses - by their opposites - antitheses. They signify a desire for change and for progress towards utopia - synthesis. However, the death of Christ, the growth of the child, the removal of the statue of the prince, the death of the Nightingale and the throwing of the rose, the despair of the dwarf and the Fisherman all reflect a pessimistic view of the world and show how far is the actual world from the perfection of God.

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CHAPTER FIVE

**CONCLUSION: LANGUAGE AND WILDE'S VIEW OF
THE WORLD**

Examining several aspects in Wilde's use of language expressed his tendency to abolish contemporary forms of culture (transgression which was expressed in Salomé through silence, in Earnest through defamiliarisation, in De Profundis through rhetoric and dialectic) and heightened his attempt to recreate forms of life in different ways (unity expressed in Salomé through the anti-Realist world, in Earnest through the integration of art and reality, and in De Profundis through the dialectical unity). What I would like to explore finally is the relation between Wilde's style and his point of view. The elements of transgression and unity illuminated two opposing views of the world: dynamic and developmental on the one hand and static on the other hand. In his works, the developmental world works towards the static one which embodies his utopian dream, or, as we might find in the cases of some of his short stories and in the character of the child, the old utopian life of unity disintegrates into the developmental world.

In Chapter One, I claimed that the past, distant lands and cultures, different ideologies and practices were all produced in the Decadents' works and that the Decadents performed acts and thoughts of difference which reflected their desire for change and recreation of the existing forms

of life. I maintained that the Decadents escaped from existing external forms of life into Art through which they wanted to restore the imagined old unity of existence and seek perfection. The attempt to transgress the limits of the present society - through art - reflects a developmental world: a battle between art and life. Art rejects the outward appearances of life and tries to recreate them while life wants to shatter the perfection of art. The attempt to seek perfection - through art - reflects a static world: a world of unity, of no boundaries and no conflicts.

In Chapter Two, I examined Wilde's rejection of the status quo or the outward appearances in Salomé. Salomé speaks of life's external forms reflecting certain social and political order which rendered her weak, suppressed, unable to speak her mind or satisfy her desire. I explored similar reactions against the social world in other plays and suggested that Wilde remakes the external forms through the disappearance of language - the dance or other silent acts of crossing over the limits. Salomé, for example, articulates a body language through which she leaps into self-unity. These acts reflect a developmental world: a battle between individuals and social forms.

However, what I call the developmental and static world views may sometimes associate Wilde with the literature of both Realism and Modernism. Wilde's plays, for example, present the question of isolation.

Women's characters are isolated from the social world by social barriers. This isolation is due in most cases to the social surrounding which characterises the literature of Realism and which makes a 'climax' or 'anti-climax' but life beyond that goes on. Mrs. Erlynne, Mrs. Arbuthnot, and the Duchess of Padua are isolated due to their social surroundings. The end of each play continues the act of isolation either through other social barriers (shame and disgrace like the case of Mrs. Erlynne and Mrs. Arbuthnot) or through death (like the case of the Duchess), and the world beyond these anti-climaxes continues to develop. Isolation, then, which represents a static world may come amidst the developmental world.

However, isolation and solitariness in Salomé are not due to the social surrounding; rather, due to the nature of man who is solitary, asocial, unable to enter into a relationship with other human beings which characterises the literature of Modernism. Thomas Mann says: 'My view of the world is based on the firm conviction that solitariness is by no means a rare condition, something peculiar to myself or to a few specially solitary human beings, but the inescapable, central fact of human existence'.¹ The character of Salomé expresses her physical and emotional isolation from the world around her from the moment that she first appears in the play:

How sweet the air here! I can breath here! Within there, there are Jews

from Jerusalem who are tearing each other in pieces over their foolish ceremonies, and Barbarians who drink..., and Greeks from Smyrna..., and silent subtle Egyptians..., and Romans...Ah! how I loathe the Romans!²

Her isolation increases as the play progresses. I have explained how Salomé's language presents her obsession with one topical subject (sexuality) which intensifies her isolation from the world. Other characters in the play are also isolated and solitary. The conversation between the Young Syrian and the Page of Herodias at the beginning of the play reflects their isolation from each other and the lack of their communicational devices (while one is admiring Salomé, the other is describing the moon). Jokanaan is physically and spiritually isolated from beginning to end. Herod is isolated from the world by his fears, from his wife by hatred and from his brother by murder. Characters in Salomé all seem to be solitary due to their human nature. They are, like characters in the Modernist literature, 'thrown into being'.³ The only development in this static world is the general revelation of human conditions. The voice of revelation, expressed in the play by Jokanaan, represents a development in the subject of the speaker which is antithetical to the static social conditions:

After me shall come another mightier than I. I am not worthy so much as to unloose the latchet of his shoes. When he comes the solitary places shall be glad. They shall blossom like the lily. The eyes of the blind shall see the days, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened. The new born child shall put his hands upon the dragons' lair, he shall lead the lions by their manes.⁴

(Notice the continuous use of the future pronoun 'I shall' in the language of revelation). The static world continues to develop beyond the temporary development of revelation.

The developmental and static worlds appeared in the language of several characters in Wilde's works and celebrated two main points: man as triumphant over the world and man as helpless and weak. The examination of Salomé's language in Chapter Two showed that all the elements that make her consciousness are concrete which belong to one-sided area in life (pomegranate, knife of ivory, gardens, wine, etc.) and that her inner reality (sexual attraction to mouth, body, hair) is concerned with one part of her interior subject: sexuality. There is no attempt, it was claimed, in both her consciousness and inner reality to fuse opposites. The distinction between Salomé's abstract potentialities (lilies, roses, pomegranates, etc) and concrete potentialities (mouth, hair, body) is void (she identifies the mouth with the pomegranate and the roses, the body with the lilies). This situation reflects a static view of the world and characterises the literature of Modernism which negates the existence of outward reality and identifies the human subject with reality itself. Because the human subject is solitary, isolated and fragmented, this distinction leads to disintegration. Gotfried Ben says: 'there is no outer reality, there is only human consciousness, constantly building, modifying,

rebuilding new worlds out of its own creativity'.⁵ The satisfaction of Salomé's sexual desires becomes her consciousness which she constantly builds, modifies and rebuilds through her creative language style. The identification of her interior subject (solitariness and fragmentation) with reality itself leads to disintegration. Salomé's language reflects a disunified person who consequently falls apart and disintegrates.

The examination of Herod's language showed that in his consciousness (ice, cold, wind, hot, water, snow, fire, roses, etc), there is a coexistence of opposites and that in his inner reality (fear, anxiety, happiness, human senses) there is fusion and integration. This situation reflects a dynamic and developmental world view and characterises the Realist literature which aims at a truthful representation of life and demonstrates both concrete and abstract potentialities of characters. Abstract potentialities belong to the realm of subjectivity (Herod's fear, anxiety, happiness), whereas concrete potentialities are concerned with the dialectic between individual's subjectivity and the objective reality (Herod's act of self-unity and self-assertion). When individuals are confronted with reality, the abstract potentiality becomes concrete and real: Herod builds his shattered self and seeks completion. Wilde negates the existence of the outward reality, but this negation works in favour of reconstruction. He believes in the ability of the human mind to create

reality and praises the Greeks because they were the first to realise that:

Nature is no great mother who has born us. She is our creation. It is in our brain that she quickens to life. Things are because we see them, and what we see, and how we see it, depends on the Arts that have influenced us...At present, people see fogs, not because there are fogs, but because poets and painters have taught them the mysterious loveliness of such effects.⁶

Wilde celebrates the energy of the human mind and invites people to master the world rather than be mastered by it. Although Herod appears isolated sometime, his language reflects a strong, creative, energetic and constructive mind (abstract potentialities) which become concrete and real when he confronts reality. He reconstructs his consciousness and survives. So, while Salomé's language expresses disintegration from a Modernist view, Herod's language presents reconstruction from a Realist view. While the former is static, the later is developmental.

The examination of Wilde's use of language in The Importance of Being Earnest and An Ideal Husband in Chapter Three reflected his large display of the external forms of the social world. It was argued that Wilde's aim was not to present a truthful Realist picture of the social world as some might claim; rather, to disrupt the fixed social forms (internal laws of language such as inversion or forms of fashions). It was also argued that the focus in Wilde's work should be redirected from what Wilde presents into how he presents. Examining the language of the ruling classes led to the conviction that they base their world upon a

certain strategy: subjection and domination, the voiced and the silenced, the self and others. Examining the language of dissenters led to the belief that they base their rebellion mainly on changing the styles which were imposed on them by the ruling classes. Wilde, then, presents the social world as degrading but celebrates the human mind as powerful. Hence, he produces again a developmental world which witnesses a conflict between the human subject and the objective reality and argues in favour of the triumph of the human subject over the social conditions. Cecily's abstract potentialities, for example, are all demonstrated (love letters and engagement) and are made concrete when she faces reality (she loves Algy and gets engaged to him). Similarly, Sir Robert Chiltern's abstract potentialities (will to power and wealth) are demonstrated and are made real and concrete (he becomes powerful and rich). I argued that this situation also exists in women characters who triumph over the social conditions, the characters of country people, children and lower classes. The triumph of what I called form over social realities parallels the triumph of what I call here the human subject over the social conditions. Wilde presents a world of continuous movement and finally departs into a futuristic vision which embodies his utopian dream. So, The movement of the world here (developmental image) works towards unity (static image). The static world here, however, unlike the static world in the Modernist

literature, is reconstructive.

I have maintained above that the conflict between individuals and social conditions which appears in Wilde's works and which reflects a changing world characterises the literature of Realism. This leads us to the assumption that although Wilde rejected Realism as a literary approach and asked artists to avoid the accuracy of outward representation and the commitment to real events, his work is linked to the inward representation of Realism. Wilde merely rejected what Raymond Williams calls 'Realism of the surface' which misses important realities such as inner feelings or underlying and historical moments which are either not accessible to ordinary observation or which imperfectly or not at all represented in how things appear.⁷

The examination of Wilde's use of rich rhetorical language in De Profundis and other prose writings in Chapter Four continues the display of both developmental and static views of the world. The external forms of culture - thesis - are challenged by their opposites - antithesis - and develop into new and fresh forms - synthesis. This processes, which are developmental, work towards an evolution into perfect and utopian world which is a static. In De Profundis, Wilde also presents the social world as degrading but celebrates the power of the human mind to master this world. The hero here, who is Wilde himself, is an artist with an energetic

and dynamic mind. His abstract potentialities are all demonstrated: he wants to rebuild the world and master it through the power of language. His abstract potentialities are enhanced through the use of rhetoric. Wilde wants, through art, to turn his abstract potentialities into concrete ones: to reconstruct, rebuild and reunify the world. He presents examples of people who reconstruct the world out of the dialectic between their 'flamelike' mind (imagination) and the objective reality: Christ, children and artists who recreate the world in their art. Part of the letter is devoted to the dialectic between Wilde's human subject and the objective reality which was carried out in the past. This situation presents a continuous change. The overall objective of the letter (reconstruction of an ideal world through the power of mind and language) is to forward the developmental world into a static world where no conflicts are left. This concrete potentiality, however, remains concrete and could not develop into the 19th century objective reality and Wilde remains a utopian dreamer.

The language of his stories reflected a developmental world (life of the prince, the soul of the fisherman, the world of the Infanta, and the world of the lovers) on the one hand, and a static world of unity (death of the prince, life of the sea, life in nature, and the Nightingale) on the other. The developmental world reflected imperfection whereas the static world expressed perfection. The static world is a reconstruction of the present

social world.

Georg Lukacs argues that the literature of Realism based on the Aristotelian concept of man as 'zoon politicon', displays the contradictions within the individual in the context of a dialectical unity and is entitled to develop a new typology for each new phase in the evolution of society.⁸ We infer from what have been suggested that Wilde develops typologies that result from the conflict between individuals and society for each phase of the evolution of society (the triumph of form, transgression and the unity of opposites). But he also develops a typology for the final phase of the human evolution: this typology is art. Art, according to Wilde, brings the imperfection of the existing forms of life into perfection, ideality and completion, into static and final state of the world which embodies a utopia. Wilde, as I pointed out in Chapter One, believes that life should mirror art and asks people and artists to go to art in everything because it brings life to its ideal form. He explains in "The Decay of Lying" how art can recreate life and claims that art begins 'with abstract decoration', 'purely imaginative and pleasurable work' and deals with the non-existent. Then, 'Life becomes fascinated with this new wonder' and asks to be admitted into the charmed circle. Art takes life as part of her rough material, recreates it, and refashions it in fresh forms, is absolutely indifferent to fact, invents, imagines, and dreams. The true decadence,

Wilde continues, is when 'Life gets the upper hand and drives Art into the wilderness'. Wilde speaks of the magic of the English Drama which created new race, different kinds of sorrow, different joys, who combined the rage of the Titans with the calm of Gods, who had monstrous and marvellous sins and virtues. She invented different language, clothed her children with wonderful raiments and gave them masks, woke the world of antiquity and produced new Caesar and another Cleopatra, reshaped old dreams, myths and legends and rewrote history.⁹ In De Profundis, Wilde attributes perfection to God and to Art saying:

The past, the present and the future are but one moment in the sight of God, in whose sight we should try to live. Time and space, succession and extension, are merely accidental conditions of Thought. The imagination can transcend them, and move in a free sphere of an ideal existence.¹⁰

The perfection of God, ideal existence, static world of no boundaries, no oppositions and no conflicts, which are the final aim of Wilde, can only be reproduced through imagination, through Art. It is through Art, Wilde says in "The Critic As Artist", 'and through Art only, that we can realise our perfection; through Art, and through Art only, that we can shield ourselves from the perils of actual experience'.¹¹

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APPENDICES

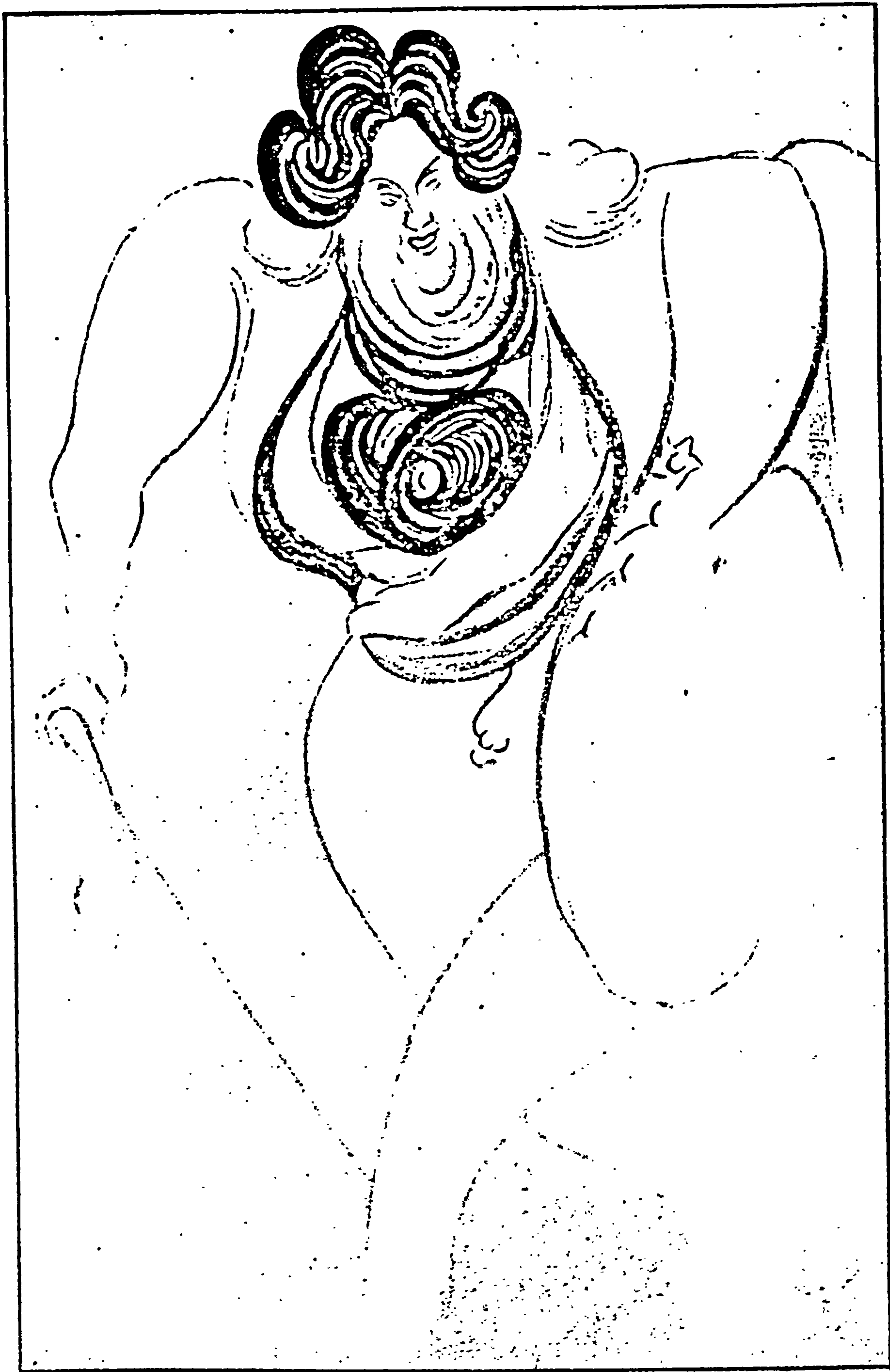
Appendix I: The Decadents' paintings are taken from The Yellow Book A Selection, compiled by Norman Denny, Spring Books, London, 1971.

Appendix II: The illustrations of the play are taken from Salomé, a Tragedy In One Act: Translated From The French Of Oscar Wilde By Lord Alfred Douglas; Pictured By Aubrey Beardsley, Dover Publications, INC, new York, 1973, p. 10, 44, 54, 56, 58, 62.

APPENDIX I



Portrait of Himself. *P. Wilson Steer*



George the Fourth. *Max Beerbohm*



Portrait of Aubrey Beardsley. *Walter Sickert*



Mr. Richard Le Gallienne. *Walter Sickert*

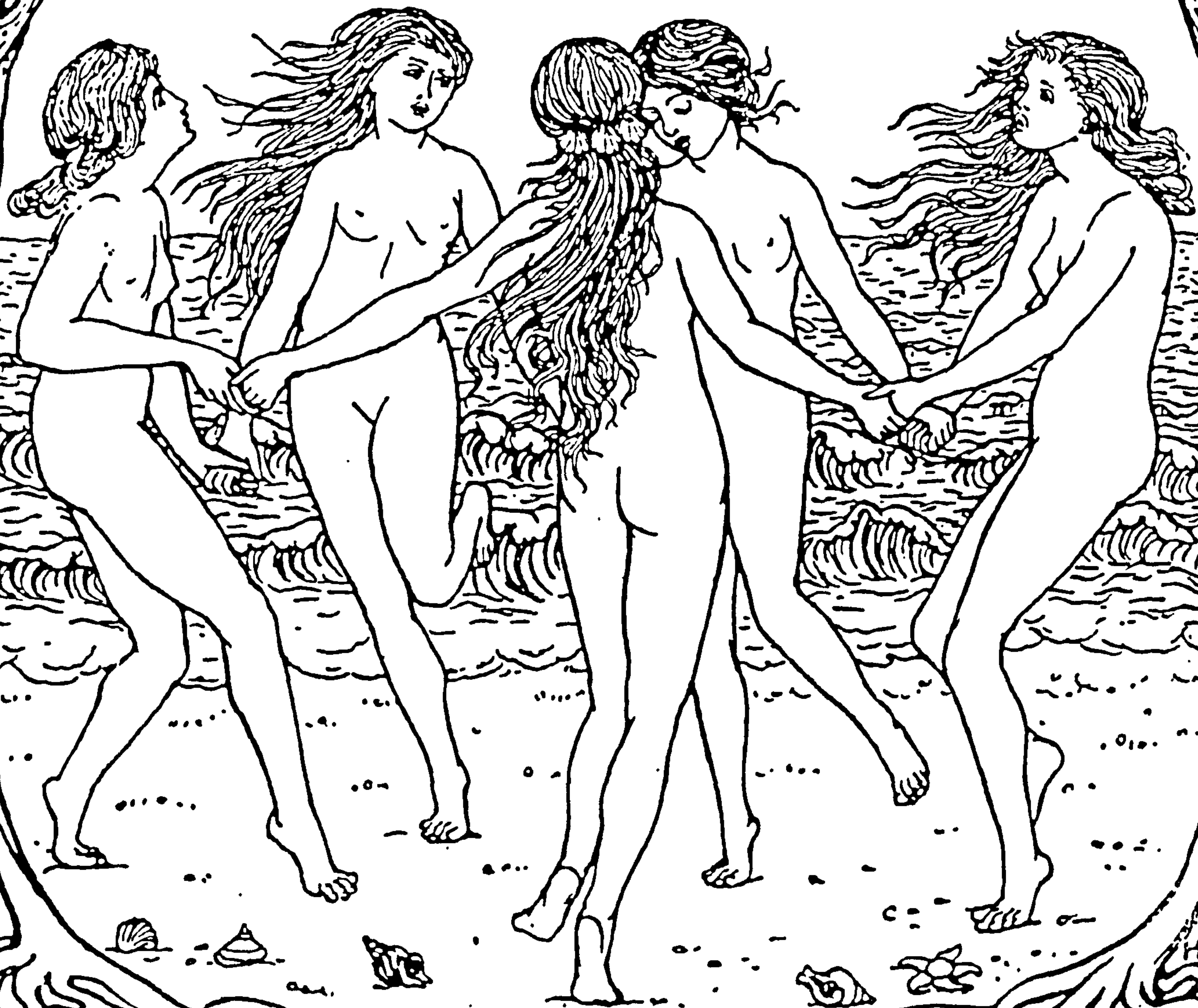


Portrait of Mr. George Moore. *Walter Sickert*



Portrait of a Girl. *Robert Halls*

COME UNTO THESE YELLOW SANDS
AND THEN TAKE HANDS.
COURTSED WHEN YE HAVE & KISS'D
THE WILD WAVES WHIST,
FOOT IT FEATLY HERE & THERE;
& SWEET SPRITES THE BURTHEN BEAR



“Come unto these Yellow Sands.” *H. Isabel Adams*



The Renaissance of Venus. Walter Crane



Skirt-Dancing. *P. Wilson Steer*

APPENDIX II









