Revised

Same-Sex Pairing as a Device to Liberate the Unconscious: A Study of Oscar Wilde's Creative Oeuvre

Thesis submitted to the
University of Calicut
for the award of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH

by

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CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
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DECLARATION

I, **Mufeeda T**, hereby declare that the thesis entitled **Same-Sex Pairing as a Device to Liberate the Unconscious: A Study of Oscar Wilde's Creative Oeuvre** submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English is an original record of observations and bona fide research carried out by me under the guidance of **Dr. T.V. Prakash**, Associate Professor of English (Rtd), Farook College and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree or diploma or similar titles.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **Same-Sex Pairing as a Device to Liberate the Unconscious: A Study of Oscar Wilde's Creative Oeuvre** submitted by **Mufeeda T** to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English is an original record of observations and bona fide research carried out by her under my supervision and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree or diploma or similar titles.

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MUFEEDA T. “SAME-SEX PAIRING AS A DEVICE TO LIBERATE THE UNCONSCIOUS: A STUDY OF OSCAR WILDE’S CREATIVE OEUVRE” THESIS. CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, FAROOK COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT, 2018.

INTRODUCTION

Sexuality based discrimination in the dominant heterosexual paradigm revokes the representation of homosexuals in the main stream existence in general and literature in particular. Since culture does not encourage the expression of 'deviant' sexuality, the mechanisms of the Unconscious will devise its own methods to get articulated. Literature offers such a space where unacceptable sexual images take the shape of acceptable literary images or codes. Oscar Wilde is a writer whose creative oeuvre has been productive in eliciting both the explicit and implicit statements of homoerotic expressions. He belonged to an era marked by social taboos, which thereby necessitated him to articulate the so called 'deviant' sexuality of both the author and his characters, in an equally divergent aesthetic. The pairing of two people of the same-sex in his works can be analysed as a scheme devised by Wilde to liberate the suppressed desires of the Unconscious.

Jonathan Dollimore states: "one of the many reasons why people were terrified by Wilde was because of a perceived connection between his aesthetic transgression and his sexual transgression" (Dollimore 67). His works have often worked both consciously and unconsciously, to subvert the dominant ideologies and heteronormative constructs of not only the Victorian society but all those homophobic cultures that still exist in various degrees in various pockets across the globe.

The cultural representation of homosexuals as deviant or perverted contributes much to their material oppression. The act of labelling homosexuals as naturally deviant is a form of social control that prohibits the expressions of gay/lesbian desires. Society's attitude towards same-sex relationship varies over time and place; but the predominant emotion has evidently been a strong disapproval of homosexuality. Most

of the religions consider homosexuality as a transgression against divine law and its hostility gets manifested as homophobia. Monique Wittig insists that the category of sex and its derivatives like gender and sexual difference have no natural or biological reality. They are ideological constructs, effects of an oppressive discourse of heterosexuality ("The Point of View: Universal or Particular" 63).

'Gender' is at present an intensely problematic word and a much contested concept which is a site of unease rather than of agreement. The discursive outbursts around the question of sex have relaxed the grip of repressive conventions and taboos. The case of Herculine Barbin(1838-1868) who committed suicide in Paris in 1868 when the medical examination declared that her 'true sex' was that of a 'young man' showcases the nineteenth century social insistence on unambiguously classifying every one as either male or female. It is the gallant willingness to put sex into question that opened up an enquiry into the various sexual possibilities and sexual identities.

Butler's *Gender Trouble,* one of the founding texts in Queer theory, is an attempt to counter the pervasive heterosexual assumptions in feminist literary theory. Butler observes in the preface to 1999 edition of the book that the aim of the text "was to open up the field of possibility for gender without dictating which kinds of possibilities ought to be realised" (viii). Various new forms of gendering have emerged in the context of transgenderism, transsexuality, lesbian and gay partners, bitch and femme identities. Butler observes that since normative sexuality fortifies normative gender, to question the dominant heterosexual frame is to give up one's sense of place in gender. The fear of losing one's place in gender is the reason of the terror and anxiety that people suffer in admitting gay/lesbian identity.

Catherine Mackinnon is of the view that it is gender hierarchy, not heterosexual normativity, which produces and consolidates gender (Butler xii). Hence for instance, gay people are discriminated because they fail to 'appear' in accordance with the accepted gender norms. Gender is performative because gender is established through a sustained set of acts. Performativity implies repetition of an action that naturalises that act in the context of a body, as a culturally sustained activity. Thus gender is not completely an internal feature but one that is produced through certain bodily acts. It is more a cultural performance than a natural fact. The reality of gender can be challenged since it is a changeable and revisable reality.

Queer theorists challenge the validity and consistency of hetero-normative discourse, and focus to a large degree on non-hetero-normative sexualities and sexual practices. Queer theory states that there is an interval between what a subject does (social role) and what a subject is (the self). So despite its title the theory's goal is to destabilise identity categories, which are designed to identify the sexed subject and place individuals within a single restrictive sexual orientation. Queer theorists seek to uncover the social construction of sexuality, sexual identities and the conjoining process of institutionalisation of the gay, lesbian and women's movements. Deeply influenced by post-structuralism, queer theory tries to dismantle the heteronormative statuesque where a binary gender system consisting of men and women dictates what is 'normal' and considers every deviation from the norm as perversion. Queer theory also focuses on the performative aspect of gender identity as gender is always *performed* at every point of life through gender specific behaviour and its continuous perpetuation. Gender is therefore not the essence of a person but is continually attributed to one through his or her behaviour and actions. The binary gender system

is criticised because there could be more forms of gender identities than just man or woman.

The question of whether homosexuality should be considered as a naturally occurring phenomenon has long been a troubling issue. Homosexual practices were common in ancient Greece. The most widespread and socially significant same-sex relation in ancient Greece was pederasty – relation between adult men (erastes) and adolescent boys (eromenos). The male sexual activity in ancient Greek society was highly polarised into 'active' and 'passive' partners; the active role was associated with masculinity, while the passive role was associated with femininity. "They appear not to be of the same age: the erastes has a beard and plays an active role, whereas the adolescent has no beard and remains passive. He will never take an initiative, looks shy, and is never shown as excited" (Dolen). Any sexual activity in which an adult male played the active role with a social inferior was regarded as normal. Social inferior could include women, slaves, prostitutes or male youths. Homosexuality in such a context was considered as quite normal (Halperin). Erastes who shamefully preferred passivity was pejoratively called "Kinaidoi" (Dolen). Evidences of relations between women also exist as far back as the time of Sappho, the Greek Poet. There are fewer references to lesbianism than male homosexuality mainly because most of the historical writings and records are found primarily on men. The word 'lesbian' however comes from 'Lesbos', the island where Sappho was born.

The patriarchal Roman society gave Roman men freedom to enjoy sex with other males without losing their masculinity or social status. Roman men generally preferred youths between the ages of twelve and twenty (Williams 18). Adult male playing the active role was considered as normal; adult male's desire to play the

passive role was considered a sickness called ‘morbus’ (Williams 200). Some Roman men even kept a male concubine before getting married to a woman. Social conquest was a common metaphor for imperialism in Roman discourse (Lopez 135).

Homosexual practices were widespread among many ancient Middle Eastern Muslim cultures. Some Arabs were surprised to see the French translation of an Arabic love poem about a young boy being changed to a young female (El-Rouayheb). The references to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Book of Genesis, the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament and the Quran speak about the existence of homosexuality in the ancient times. It is said that Sodom and Gomorrah were completely destroyed by fire and brimstone when the divine judgement by God was passed upon it. They were punished for their sin of homosexuality. Since then the names of these two cities have become synonymous with sin and homosexuality (Jordan 89). Today most of the governments in the Middle East have criminalised homosexuality. Same-sex intercourse carries death penalty in several Muslim nations.

The earliest known instance of homosexuality in ancient Egypt is the case of two high officials, Nyankh-khnum and Khnum-hotep. When they died they were buried together in the same tomb. In the tomb there are several paintings depicting two men embracing each other (Parkinson 59). Homosexuality in China has been recorded since approximately 600 BC. In Japan it is variously known as shudo or nanshoku; and has been documented for over one thousand years. It has also been a feature of Thai society for many years. Influences of Abrahamic religion and the laws of Church have played an important role in establishing sodomy as a transgression against divine law.

In the twentieth century, homosexuality has been treated as a diagnostic category, a suitable case for treatment. While the Bolshevik government in Russia repudiated all laws against homosexuals in December 1917, Germany developed a mythology in which homosexuality was seen as either the product of bourgeois decadence or fascist perversion. The sexual radicalism of the post-war period is evident in the way homosexuals turned potentially revolutionary. Glover and Kaplan observe that the term "homosexuality's first appearance in English was probably in an early translation of Krafft-Ebing's sexological compendium *Psychopathia Sexualis* in 1892" (116). Trumbach and Bray point out "the historical importance of the 'mollies' as an early example of what a collective same-sex lifestyle might look like" (Glover 119). Mollies were known for their cross-dressing and excessive rituals such as the stimulation of childbirth. Certain attempts have been made to trace the growth of modern gay culture from the 'Mollies Club'. An elaborate and detailed cultural history of gay urban life is attempted in George Chauncey's book *Gay New York* (1994), which covers the period from 1890 to the beginning of Second World War. Chauncey notes that by the1920s the word used to indicate "a distinct category of men who were sexually interested in other men, though not necessarily adopting or approving a blatantly effeminate manner was *queer*" (15-16). In the 1940s the term preferred became *gay*. But 'Gay' was a term used with caution, because by then the world had begun to change and the cultural climate had become more inhospitable to lesbians and male homosexuals (Glover 122). In 1927 the state legislature passed the repressive 'Padlock Law' to roll back the increasing visibility of gay subculture. By 1933 it became an offence for gays to assemble in public places like restaurants or clubs. As a result they were forced to enter the closet. 'Camp' is another word that has gay provenance. At the turn of the nineteenth century it meant affected or effeminate,

"and to say 'how camp he is' was effectively to identify someone as a homosexual" (Glover 128). By the 1960s the meaning of the word has broadened to signify "a distinctive set of cultural preferences or a kind of taste, a highly aestheticized way of looking at things" (128). 'Queer' is a term reinvented by gay critics and activists to denote a cultural practice. "The first strategic redeployment of the word came in 1990 with the founding of the activist group Queer Nation in New York" (133). The group actually grew out of political work on behalf of people suffering from AIDS.

Several factors and incidents have lead to the gradual, yet revolutionary growth and development of LGBT movements. "Boston marriages", the cohabitation of two women independent of financial support from a man, was recorded in the late nineteenth century, for instance, the Anglo-Irish women Eleanor Bulter and Sarah Ponsonby were identified as a couple and were nicknamed as 'the ladies of Llangollen' (Mavor). Edward Carpenter was one of the early advocates of sexual freedom. The Mattachine Society was created in 1950 to unify homosexuals. Similarly the Daughters of Bilitis was formed by some women for lesbians. Under the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 homosexual activities were made illegal. But after WWII there were many arrests and prosecutions for homosexual acts. Finally a succession of well known men were convicted of homosexual offences and the government set up a committee under Sir John Wolfenden to consider homosexual offenses which resulted in the publication of The Wolfenden report of the Departmental Committee on Homosexual offences and prostitution on 4 September 1957. The committee recommended that homosexual behaviour between consenting adults in private should no longer be a criminal offence. The recommendation eventually led to the declaration of the Sexual Offences Act 1967 that replaced the

Law on sodomy. The Act decriminalised homosexual acts in private between men above twenty one in England and Wales.

The Stonewall riots are considered as the most important event leading to the gay liberation movement. They were a series of violent demonstrations by members of LGBT community that took place on 28 June 1969 at the Stonewall Inn, New York. When the police raided the Stonewall Inn its gay residents protested violently. Within weeks they organised into activist groups to establish peace for gays and lesbians. Within a few years gay rights organisations were founded across the US. The Gay Liberation Front (GLF) was formed in New York City in 1969. On 28 June 1970 the first Gay Pride Marches took place commemorating the anniversary of the Stonewall riots. Homophile organisations gradually grew and spread to various parts of the world.

Dollimore who observes that, "Heterosexuality prevails merely because of convention; that historically homosexuality is associated with great artistic and intellectual achievement while heterosexuality is indicative of decadence" (12) also raises some valid questions about homosexuality:

> ...why in our time the negation of homosexuality has been in direct proportion to its symbolic centrality; its cultural marginality in direct proportion to its cultural significance; why, also, homosexuality is so strangely integral to the selfsame heterosexual cultures which obsessively denounce it, and why history – history rather than human nature – has produced this paradoxical position. (28)

While discussing the reasons for hostility directed at homosexuality Dollimore points out the re-emergence or intensification of homophobia in contemporary Britain

especially in relation to AIDS. Homophobia also intersects with misogyny, xenophobia, and racism. Homophobia gets manifested in the way contemporary culture is obsessed with representation of homosexuality as something that obviously exists yet ignoring its complete identification. “Attitude expressed towards it...express disavowal, hysteria, paranoia, fear, hatred, vindictiveness, ambivalence, tolerance and much more” (29). If we assess the case of many major artists, intellectuals or writers we can trace suggestions, and even demonstrations of significant homosexual elements in their lives. While some believe it necessary to demonstrate it, some others deny it. The discovery of homoerotic elements in the works of homosexual writers has in some cases led to far-reaching reinterpretations of it. When homosexuality emerges as culturally central, its existence confuses the mainstream culture. Various cultural theorists have offered different interpretations of homosexuality. George Steiner regards homosexuality as intensely formative of modernity. Luce Irigaray suggests that the fundamental structure of patriarchy is homosexual. Rene Girard says that all sexual rivalry is structurally homosexual. Roger Scruton believes that homosexuality should arouse a repulsion in accordance with which it should be prohibited (qtd.in Dollimore 29-30). Dollimore observes that “such recent centrings of homosexuality persist alongside the older tendency to ignore it, or deliberately write it out of the script” (30).

In the nineteenth century there was a so-called scientific attempt to construct homosexuality as primarily a congenital abnormality rather than a sinful evil practice as it was done before. Another attempt was to naturalise homosexuality. Dollimore observes that this “was more or less in accord with those contemporary ‘scientific’ theories transferring homosexuality from the realm of crime and evil into that of medicine...In one sense this appears a dubious improvement, merely replacing evil

with abjection" (48). Hirschfeld in the early twentieth century conducted a so-called scientific study of homosexuality and argued against its association with evil. He differentiated them in virtue of their identity and labelled them as identifiable minority (Dollimore 92). There are two different attitudes towards homosexual culture. On the one hand there are people who believe in integrating homosexual culture into the dominant culture. On the other hand there are people who argue that such integration is impossible since the existing order requires the denigration of homosexuality. A more sophisticated attitude towards homosexuality addresses sexual deviation more directly, finding in its inadequacy the origin of a devastating failure of aesthetic vision. The argument that homosexual identity is not biologically given, but socially constructed, is open to repressive deployment and is therefore problematic, because it assumes a social correction that if homosexuality has been socially made, he or she can be unmade.

In 1924 Andre Gide published his *Corydon* in which he defends homosexuality. He demands tolerance for homosexuality and also insists that it is intrinsically natural. Gide has made a bold attempt to openly discuss the topic of homosexuality at a time when it was hardly dealt with as a subject of literature. O' Brien observes that during the period of Gide's writing career no one else played a greater part in legitimizing homosexuality as a subject in literature (283). Gide defended homosexuality as a refusal to tolerate social discrimination and repression. Homosexuals were never considered as normal existence at least until the eighteenth century. Dollimore suggests that, "homosexual comes into being, is given an identity, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In its primary, pejorative form, this identity is understood as a pathology of one's innermost being" (41). Paul Claudel, in the 1920s has attacked Gide for the explicit homoerotic passages in his novel *Les Caves*

du Vatican. Claudel assumes that homosexuality has perverted Gide's art from within just as it has destroyed the person from within.

Alex Comfort in his work *Sexual Behaviour in Society* (1950) tries to demystify human sexuality so as to release them from the unnecessary and irrational sexual taboos. Similarly, the psychoanalyst and anthropologist Robert J. Stoller in his book *Sex and Gender: On the Development of Masculinity and Femininity* (1968) has made a thorough attempt to theorize the distinction between sex and gender. Novels like *The Wall* (1963) and *Ruby Fruit Jungle* (1973) have played a prominent role in the long and continuing struggle for the legitimacy of homosexuality. They reflect social change and help form some of the identifications appropriated for the reverse discourse on homosexuality. Altman, writing in 1982, gives a disturbing description of the existence of homosexuals:

> ...in this century totalitarian governments of both the right and the left have been excessively homophobic: in Nazi Germany homosexuals were sent to concentration camps; in Russia and China their existence is denied...in Argentina and Chile the present military governments have unleashed extremely crude antigay persecution; in Iran the fundamentalist regime of Khomeini has ordered homosexuals stoned to death. (109)

Mario Mieli takes a radical step in his book *Homosexuality and Liberation* which ends in an optimistic note: "I believe the movement for the liberation of homosexuality is irreversible, in the broader context of human emancipation as a whole. It is up to all of us to make this emancipation a reality" (230).

The history of homosexuality was not different in the United Kingdom. Roman Britain adopted rules which criminalised adultery among males. In the sixteenth century, King Henry VIII passed Buggery Act 1533 making all male-male sexual activity punishable by death. When Queen Elizabeth ascended the English throne in 1553, she reinstated the sodomy laws. Jeremy Bentham in his essay "Offences against One's Self." (1785) argued for the decriminalisation of sodomy in England and for the liberalisation of the laws forbidding homosexual sex. Nineteenth century witnessed a wave of prosecutions against homosexual men. The British sexologist, Havelock Ellis in 1897 argued that homosexuality has to be accepted as a natural anomaly. By the twentieth century homosexuality became more overt in London. Amidst the strict laws against homosexuality there were literatures which discussed the theme of homosexual love like the war poems of gay English poet, W.H. Auden. "In England between the wars homosexuality was tolerated in artistic circles with a knowing wink and a nudge but with little approaching understanding" (Holland 5). In 1958 the Homosexual Law Reform Society was formed in the UK to begin a campaign to make homosexuality legal. It caused much pain and took much time to reach a progressive approach to same-sex relationships. Protests and fights for rights have evidently loosened the hard core laws against homosexuality. Homosexual acts were decriminalised in the UK in1967. By 1970s the Gay Liberation Front was established. Moreover, The Civil Partnership Act 2004 gave same-sex couples the same rights and responsibilities as married heterosexual couples in England. A paradigm shift was marked when Andy Street became the UK's first openly gay directly-elected Metro Mayor in 2017.

Though there is a drastic change in the attitude of English people towards homosexuality in the present scenario, it has to be admitted that the situation was

worse in the Victorian England. In the prologue to Hesketh Pearson's work *The Life of Oscar Wilde,* George Bernard Shaw prophetically observes that people's attitude towards homosexuality would slowly change, but not during his time (11). The term 'Victorian' itself implied a claustrophobic room of "overstuffed moral furniture" (Fussell 126). "Prudery urged the Victorians to clothe the legs of tables, for legs must not be bare. They even started using 'rooster' for 'cock', the latter being a taboo slang for male genitals" (Ghosal 37).

Victorian England constituted a community which was hostile towards homosexuality because the act of same-sex relations threatened familial stability. The Victorian moralists imposed certain social discourses based on the bourgeois ideals of domestic life which condemned 'abnormal' sexual activities. During this period sexuality became more and more repressed until it was eventually confined to the personal sphere throughout. Thus, sex and sexuality gained the status of something that one does not talk about. The acting out of 'deviant sexual behaviour', such as homosexuality thus moved underground into nonexistence in the public eye. Although heterosexuality was considered to be normal during the period, homosexuality was secretly practiced owing to the laws prohibiting indecency in public. People with alternative sexual orientation often hesitated to come out of the closet, since their orientation was not accepted in the society. Keeping the 'secret' within the family allowed them to remain acceptable in the society. In 1885 gay sex behind closed doors was made a criminal offence and this was precisely what led to the imprisonment of Oscar Wilde. Wilde's trial in 1895 for gross indecency over his relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas gives a picture of sexual repression and hostility towards same-sex relationships in the nineteenth century England. Pearson gives a rather distressing picture of the way Victorian society dealt with Wilde:

> ... It was not a pleasant sight. The Victorians were busily engaged in a very ancient pastime at which they were adept...they damned Wilde with such vigour and thoroughness that, on this evidence alone they must be considered the most vicious age in history. By the fury of their condemnation they stand condemned. (291)

Pearson also observers that "'The Sphinx' is the first of his (Wilde) works to hint at hidden vices...he said that he had hesitated to publish it as it would destroy domesticity in England" (92). *The Importance of Being Earnest* was staged while Oscar's trial was a hot topic of discussion in the society. Consequently, the author's name was concealed with papers on the boards that announced the release of the play. Wilde was a victim in several distinct ways of Victorian hypocrisy and of much progressive yet repressive resistance which is called heterosexual humanism. This social hypocrisy becomes apparent if we examine the writers of the period who were put under severe pressure to come to terms with the establishment. "In England the free space for artistic creation was highly constricted in the Victorian era because of very strong ethical demands. While prudery in life was literally insufferable, the didactic function of art was taken almost for granted" (Ghosal 9). Oscar Wilde is one of the most cherished authors of the Victorian age and when talking about queer or gay history his name is often mentioned at some point during the discourse.

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde (Oscar Wilde) was born in Dublin on 16 October 1854 to Sir William Wilde and his wife Jane. Oscar's father, William Wilde was Ireland's popular ophthalmologic surgeon. "Near-dwarf though he was, William was irresistible to women: his first notable platonic conquest was the romantic novelist Maria Edgeworth. At twenty the first of his many natural children was born" (Jullian 21). He was knighted in 1864 for "his services as medical adviser and

assistant commissioner to the censuses of Ireland" (McGeachie 2). Oscar's mother was a successful poet and journalist. She wrote under the pseudonym "Speranza". Oscar had an elder brother, Willie, and a younger sister, Isola Francesca, who died at the age of ten. He was educated at Portora Royal School (1864-71), Trinity College, Dublin (1871-74), and Magdalen College, Oxford (1874-78).

Wilde's birth disappointed his mother who was anxiously waiting for a daughter in her second delivery. So, she dressed him as a girl long after the age when the clothes of male and female children become distinctive. "In some queer way known to pathology but obscure to commonsense this fashion has seriously affected Wilde's sexual nature", observes Pearson (26). He was more a journalist in the beginning, writing reviews and articles for journals and magazines. His literary life began as a poet, but his career and fame thrived with the publication of children's stories, plays and a novel later on. While the contemporaries of Wilde campaigned for new theatre staging radical social ideas, Wilde delivered plays which were artistically innovative and commercially successful. His prominence in London stage lasted for three years, from the release of *Lady Windermere's Fan* in 1892 to that of *The Importance of Being Earnest* in 1895.

While at Oxford, he was influenced by the Aesthetic philosophy of Walter Pater. Wilde later became the apostle of the philosophy of Aestheticism which deeply influenced his thinking and outlook of life, art and culture. "It was during these years that Wilde developed a reputation as an eccentric and a foppish dresser who always had a flower in his lapel" (Cauti 1). Aesthetes, including Wilde were engaged in an exclusive pursuit of beauty. The central principle of the theory of art for art's sake, that every artist must have a supreme non-interfering space for creation, relies primarily upon the supposition that art has no ulterior value. Wilde who was well

aware of this argument believed in the perfect artistic freedom. In the essay, “The Soul of Man under Socialism” he argues that “the form of government that is most suitable to the artist is no government” (*Poems and Essays* 384). But Wilde’s works do not completely preclude the question of social accountability of the artist. A close scrutiny of his works reveals their social relevance. Wilde’s mentor Walter Pater was one of the key figures for the Aesthetic movement in England. John Charles Duffy argues that “the Aestheticism promoted by Pater has its roots in Pater’s homosexuality” (335). Alan Sinfield has also tried to establish the connection of Aestheticism with the image of queer people who place importance on visual attributes and beauty (84). Wilde is also frequently mentioned as one of the foremost representatives of the dandy culture. “He provoked the jeers of the public by proclaiming and practising a reform in dress and in the appearance of the home” (Joyce 57). Wilde scorns the public voice which seeks to police culture. Dollimore observes that,

> ...Wilde recognizes the priority of the social and the cultural in determining not only public meaning but ‘private’ or subjective desire. This means that for Wilde, although desire is deeply at odds with society in its existing forms, it does not exist as a pre-social authenticity; it is always within, and informed by, the very culture which it also transgresses. (11)

Life is in fact an energy which finds expression through the forms which art offers it. For Wilde art, like individualism, is oriented towards the realm of transgressive desire: “What is abnormal in Life stands in normal relations to Art. It is the only thing in Life that stands in normal relations to Art” (Maxims 1203). “Art is Individualism and Individualism is a disturbing and disintegrating force. Therein lies

its immense value", says Wilde (Soul 272). He is against judging the quality of art in terms of its moral messages. He never tried to classify a work as either moral or immoral. Wilde's observations on the relation between art and morality are quite consistent and unambiguous. "As a writer/critic, Wilde seems to have one-point agenda – battering the citadel of Victorian priggishness" (Ghosal 40). He was equally critical of the invisible censorship that operates through public opinion. He believed that any attempt to gratify the public expectations is to betray one's aesthetic vision, which will definitely degrade the quality of art. Wilde was distressed to know that people found in *Salome* only incest and necrophilia. He feared that censorship would degrade literature far more than any didactic or so called immoral book could possibly do (Ghosal 45). Wilde strongly protested against the moral devotion that delimits the scope of the artist. He opines: "No artist has ethical sympathies. An ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style" (*The Complete Works of Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde: Stories, Plays, Poems, Essays* 17).

He married Constance Lloyd in 1884 and had two children Cyril and Vyvyan, by 1886. To support his family, Wilde accepted a job as the editor of Woman's World Magazine, where he worked from 1887-1889. He was happily married to Constance, but slowly their love declined. "Indeed as time went on, his wife's devotion became rather overpowering, and his epigrams on the subject of marriage harmonized less and less with the Dickensian ideal of nuptial bliss" (Pearson 121). His relationship with his wife declined towards the end. "He seems to have stopped thinking about her or being aware of her, a withdrawal of the premises of love, or even affection, so total that it must have helped to destroy her as much as him" (Bayley 9). W. H. Auden describes Wilde's marriage as "the most immoral and perhaps the only really heartless act of Wilde's life" (121). He states:

> It can happen that a homosexual does not recognize his condition for a number of years and marries in good faith, but one cannot believe that Wilde was such an innocent. Most homosexuals enjoy the company of women and, since they are not tempted to treat them as sexual objects, can be most sympathetic and understanding friends to them; like normal men, many of them long for the comfort and security of a home and the joy of having children, but to marry for such reasons is heartless. (121)

Wilde was closely associated with Robert Ross, whom Ian Small describes as "Wilde's first homosexual lover, certainly a lifelong faithful friend and his painstaking literary executor" (xvii). Robert Ross was Wilde's most intimate friend who probably understood and sympathised with him more than anyone else. They met in the late eighties. Pearson describes Ross thus: "He was a small, slight, attractive man, with an affectionate, impulsive nature, and considerable charm of manner. People took him to at once; and as he had the art of flattering them without appearing to do so, his circle of acquaintance rapidly widened" (182). Their friendship deepened and they were soon 'Oscar' and 'Robbie' to one another. They remained close friends throughout and Ross remained Wilde's literary executor. In 1891 he met Lord Alfred Douglas with whom he developed a strong friendship that would last until the end of his life. The poet, Lionel Johnson introduced Douglas to Wilde. Pearson describes Douglas thus: "By nature he was generous, outspoken, loyal to his friends, a terror to his enemies, high spirited, wilful and independent... He responded quickly to kindness, but reacted fiercely against any sign of hostility or the least attempt to dominate him" (266). They met and very soon they became intimate friends.

> They were almost instantaneously attracted to one another, Douglas being fascinated by Wilde's conversation, Wilde being fascinated by Douglas' personal appearance and historic name... Douglas was an aristocrat, and Wilde romanticised aristocrats; Douglas was a budding poet, and Wilde loved poets; Douglas was excessively good-looking and Wilde worshipped physical beauty...Douglas became his ideal. (Pearson 265)

Auden observes that it was Douglas "who introduced Wilde, whose affairs had thitherto been confined to persons of his own class, to the world of male prostitution" (124). Though Philippe Julian has traced evidences for Wilde's attraction towards same-sex in his childhood, Pearson observes that it was in the late eighties that Wilde became a practicing pederast.

> We are told by people who study this kind of thing that in the lives of many adolescents there is a period when attraction to their own and other sex is about equal, and during which their sexual bent may be decided by chance. Whether or not true, Wilde at any rate remained bi-sexual for a prolonged period, becoming homosexual from the time when he gave way to that side of his nature. To anyone who had known him well or studied his personality closely, there can have been nothing surprising in the revelation of his sexual nature, for the emotional life of a man is bound up with his sexual life, and, as we have seen, there had been no development of his emotional nature. (Pearson 260-61)

At the height of his fame and success he had the Marquess of Queensberry prosecuted for criminal libel which unfortunately unearthed evidences against Wilde himself and led to his own arrest and trial for gross indecency with men. Queensberry hated Douglas' company with Wilde. He sent insulting letters about Wilde to Douglas. Philippe Jullian gives a picture of Wilde's confrontation with Queensberry at the Tite Street: "...Wilde: 'Lord Queensberry, do you seriously accuse your son and me of improper conduct?' Queensberry: 'I don't say you are it, but you look it and you pose it, which is just as bad. If I catch you and my son together again in any public restaurant, I will thrash you'" (258).

Very soon Wilde received a card from Queensberry on which was written 'To Oscar Wilde, posing as a somdomite' (sic). In his rage the Marquess seemed to have mis-spelt the word (Jullian 264). Wilde was so upset that he decided to go on with a criminal prosecution. Wilde met Humphreys, Ross' solicitor, and applied for a warrant. Marquess was arrested and charged at Marlborough Street Police Court, and the case was adjourned for a week. Humphreys then tried to persuade Sir Edward Clarke to lead for the prosecution. Clarke was ready to help if Wilde could assure his innocence.

> He (Clarke) asked Humphreys to bring Oscar to see him and said, 'I can only accept this brief Mr Wilde, if you can assure me on your honour as an English gentleman that there is not, and never has been, any foundation for the charges that are made against you.' Wilde solemnly swore that the charges were absolutely false and groundless... If only he had admitted the truth to the barrister matters would have rested there, but was a prisoner of the very prejudices at which he mocked. (Jullian 264)

Meanwhile, Lord Queensberry with the help of his detectives set about obtaining witnesses and evidences to prove the accusation on the visiting card. During the trial, Wilde hesitated to admit his orientation towards homosexuality, though he encouraged it in his literary works, especially in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Wilde's writings were used by Queensberry's lawyer as evidence against him. "In the Queensberry case it was used as evidence against him, and there are no more instructive passages in forensic records than his cross-examination on the subject by Edward Carson a contemporary of him at Trinity College, Dublin" (Pearson 155). Wilde lost the first case and his friends advised him to flee to France in order to avoid prosecution, which he refused. He was acquitted of the charges of gross indecency and was eventually found guilty. "He was immediately charged by the Crown for offences under the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act which criminalised all homosexual activity, irrespective of the age or consent of the parties involved" (Varty 7). He was then sentenced to two years imprisonment with hard labour, "the most severe punishment which the law imposed for this crime" (7). He was released from the Reading Goal in 1897. After his release Wilde lived in France under poor conditions. He lived there under the name of Sebastian Melmoth which he used as a pseudonym until his death. He died of cerebral meningitis in Paris on November 30, 1900. He is buried in Lachaise Cemetery, Paris.

Homosexual practices, though not openly recognised, were widespread in London. "During the 1890's no less than 20,000 people in that city alone were known to the police for this reason. But the police...did not prosecute homosexuals unless they committed some really flagrant indiscretion which brought their case into publicity" (Woodcock 160). Theoretically, Wilde praised the desexualised pro-male love discourse that was more or less accepted in Victorian society. But, practically he

indulged in the pederasty by having sexual relations with young boys (Bartle 94). Wilde was unable to admit his homosexuality as this would have invited severe judicial consequences. Wilde denied his having sexual relations with boys or men during his trials and thus renounced homosexuality. “This foolhardy attempt to deny his homosexual tendencies placed Wilde himself in the dock; he refused to listen to his friends’ pleas that he cross the Channel, and ended by serving two years in prison” (Stonyk 254). In a society that upholds the ideology of compulsive heterosexuality and undermines homosexuality as a crime, one has no option than conceal his sexual orientation. Consequently, a gay/lesbian writer has to fake a created self so as to satisfy the social needs. To accomplish acceptance in the mainstream literary world they are coerced to be ‘normal’. They conceal their desires and drives because the cultural codes force them to do so.

Since culture does not facilitate the expression of alternative sexual orientations, the mechanisms of the Unconscious acquire a medium of its own to get articulated. The conscious self is permitted to project only that kind of images which are socially and culturally acceptable; but the unconscious finds ways of expressing the forbidden desires through symbolic expressions. Psychoanalysis, which has sought not to silence or repress sexuality but to make people speak about it in particular ways, offers this insight.

Psychoanalysis is hardly considered as one of the physical sciences since it lacks a positivist definition. It is a theory of interpretation and is primarily discussed in relation to the commonsense facts of consciousness. Foucault points out that “Psychoanalysis can be considered as a science of science, since science is itself a highly interpretative activity” (373). The theories postulated by Sigmund Freud offer explanations to the unconscious functions in the production and consumption of arts:

> Freud saw art as a privileged means of attaining instinctual pleasure. In order to achieve this end without suffering fear or guilt the censor had to be caught unawares. The successful strategies of the artist in getting an audience to share the pleasure was what Freud called the artist's 'innermost secret' (Wright 84).

Though psychoanalysis is basically a kind of therapy employed to cure mental disorders by examining the interfaces between the conscious and the unconscious elements in the mind, some of its technique can very well be used in the interpretation of literary texts as well. Despite its methodological disparities it provides a platform for the critical examination of many literary works. Psychoanalysis associates literary works' 'overt' content with the conscious mind and 'covert' content with the unconscious. The peripheral reading of a literary text may yield to the social and moral demands, but the covert meaning discloses the writer's unconscious mind, thus facilitating the return of the repressed.

Sigmund Freud, who pioneered the psychoanalytic criticism, speaks most importantly about the unconscious element of the mind which has a strong influence upon our thoughts and actions. The forbidden desires, traumatic experiences and unresolved conflicts of the mind are forced out of conscious realm to the unconscious through a problematic process called 'repression'. In order to explain this concept Freud divides the psyche into three levels namely- Ego, Super Ego and Id which correspond to the Consciousness, Conscience and Unconscious respectively. Since most of his ideas are concerned with various aspects of sexuality his literary criticism is often criticised as being 'pan-sexualism' which means the act of tracing all actions to sexual instinct. What is of peculiar interest to psychoanalysis is that aspect of experience which has been ignored or prohibited by the rules of language. The

energies of these suppressed desires become directed outside conscious awareness, associating themselves with particular images which represent unconscious wishes. As Dollimore states:

> ...in growing to childhood, and thereby becoming positioned within sexual difference – masculine or feminine, with each of these governed by a prescriptive heterosexuality – perverse desire is not eliminated but transformed, via repression and sublimation, into other kinds of energy which civilisation then draws upon – indeed depends upon. (Dollimore 105)

There are different methods of psychology which discuss the various mechanisms of the return of the repressed. Elizabeth Wright has made a classification of Id Psychology, Ego Psychology and Psychoanalytic character analysis. 'Id Psychology' is a model of psychology which emphasises on the sexual instinct trying to find representation in images. 'Psychoanalytic character analysis', on the other hand, focuses on the interpretations based on the psychoanalytic study of the fictional characters. 'Ego Psychology' seeks "meaning not in the individual psyche, in private fantasy, but in the public encoding of the private, in what was mutually shareable" (Wright 61).

Pearson observes that "the core of Freud's doctrine is in Wilde's statement: 'Every impulse that we strive to strangle broods in the mind, and poisons us...the only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it'" (202). Freud defines homosexuality as the most important 'perversion' of all which obsessively preoccupies many cultures. "He also found homosexuality to be so pervasive in human psychology, and made it so central to psychoanalytic theory, that he became unsure as to whether or not it

should be classified as a perversion" (Dollimore 174). Freud argues that considerable amount of homosexuality can be detected in all normal people (*The Standard Edition of the complete Psychological Works* 399). He explains the relationship between the perverted and the normal in three ways. First, some pervert trait is seldom absent from the sexual life of normal people. Second, there is a continuum between the normal and the perverted. Third, normal sexuality can be understood only by understanding its pathological form.

If on the one hand the repression of desires helps to produce the noblest cultural achievement, they actually stem from a renunciation which will be the cause of suffering forever. Freud observes that, "Society believes that no greater threat to its civilization could arise than if the sexual instincts were to be liberated and returned to their original aims" (Dollimore 176). The repression of perverse desires to attain normality actually generates extreme dysfunctions like neurosis. In order to escape this, repressed desires seek expression in accepted social spaces, but in disguise.

Literature offers such a space where the unacceptable fantasies and desires become sublimated into acceptable literary images. As Freud proposes, art draws upon the unconscious for its themes and images. Suppressed desires in the unconscious often take distorted forms in literature thus getting projected to the so called forbidden social space. Pairing of two people of the same-sex in a fictional work can be analysed as such a scheme devised by some gay writers. The friendship between two people becomes one of the key relationships in these works. The two people may come from different walks of life and may have different personalities and potentials, but they are normally shown to exhibit strong companionship and mutual respect.

Oscar Wilde has employed the pairing of same-sex in many of his works as a mechanism to liberate the libidinal desires of his unconscious. The fact that Oscar Wilde, the apostle of the doctrine of aestheticism, was imprisoned for being a homosexual evidently throws light upon the absurdity of the social and moral control that was part of the conventional morality of Victorian Britain. Since it was not morally acceptable in the Victorian England for a person to be a homosexual, Oscar Wilde had to invent this 'other world' within his own literary world. To put it in Freud's own words, "The creative writer does the same as the child at play. He creates a world of phantasy which he takes very seriously – that is which he invests with large amount of emotion – while separating it sharply from reality" (*The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works* 144). It can then be evidently argued that pairing of the same-sex is a device Wilde has made use of to give shape to his forcibly suppressed sexual orientation. Although the strict norms of society insist on leading a morally upright life the desire to relish a life of pleasure takes shape in different forms.

Pairing of the same-sex thus acts as a device which offers the writer a space where his unacceptable desires get sublimated into acceptable literary image. Wilde, in his works, has thus paradoxically given expression to the 'deviant' sexual orientation, while satisfying the Victorian moral needs as well. It took time for a progressive liberation that offered a powerful and provocative counter narrative to the long established story about Victorian sexual repression.

Oscar Wilde being a prominent writer of the Victorian Period has been the subject of numerous biographies. A few among them are Frank Harris's *Oscar Wilde: His Life and Confessions* (1916), Lord Alfred Douglas' *Oscar Wilde and Myself*

(1914) in which Douglas discusses his relationship with Wilde, Hesketh Pearson's *Oscar Wilde: His Life and Wit* (1946), Richard Ellman's *Oscar Wilde* (1987), a much popular biography of Wilde which received the Pulitzer Prize for Biography in 1989, Neil McKenna's *The Secret Life of Oscar Wilde* (2003) which offers an exploration into Wilde's Sexuality; and Andre Gide's *In Memoriam: Oscar Wilde* (1905).Wilde's sexual orientation has variously been considered by his biographers as bisexual, gay or pederast. Eibhear Walshe's *Oscar's Shadow: Wilde, Homosexuality and Modern Ireland* (2011) discusses Wilde's alternative sexual orientation. It is also an attempt to study the idea of homosexuality as prevalent in Ireland. However, Merlin Holland, Oscar Wilde's granddaughter, cites from several different biographies of Wilde to demonstrate how biographies become unreliable fictional representation of so-called facts. She observes that:

> Thirty-eight years after his death two of Oscar Wilde's friends were corresponding about his life. 'I don't suppose', wrote Reggie Turner to Robert Sherard, 'any book will ever be published on that limitless subject (Oscar) which will be entirely satisfactory to everybody "in the know" or will be free from inaccuracies, mostly unimportant enough, and the future historian or compiler will be puzzled to get at the most probable straight path and is sure to stray sometimes and somewhere. All these books have told me that no biography is quite to be trusted. (10)

Not just Wilde, but his literary works as well have been subjected to scholarly examinations. A remarkable attempt is made by Michael Patrick Gillespie in his *Oscar Wilde and the Poetics of Ambiguity* (1996) in which he examines all of Wilde's oeuvre to bring to light Wilde's literary career. In *Acting Wilde: Victorian Sexuality,*

Theatre and Oscar Wilde (2011) Kerey Powell demonstrates that Wilde's works are organised by the idea that all so called reality is a mode of performance and the meaning of life are really the scripted elements of dramatic spectacle.

No attempt is so far made to scrutinise Wilde's literary world as a whole based on his alternative sexual orientation. Critics have of course traced the homoerotic elements in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; and 'Earnest' and 'bunburying' in *The Importance of Being Earnest* have been examined by a few at least as a code word for gay. But male-male bonding or 'same-sex pairing' in many of his works remains unexplored.

The main objective of the proposed research is to elicit and explicate the same-sex pairings in the works of Oscar Wilde in general and to explore the queer possibilities in it. It is also an attempt to show how pairing of the same-sex in literature has proved itself an effective tool whenever the moral codes of society forbade the free expression of alternative sexual orientation. The research focuses primarily on the creative oeuvre of Oscar Wilde including his plays, novel, short stories, poems, prose and letters. The methodology of the research is purely textual, reading the texts in the light of Psychoanalysis and Queer theory.

The thesis, titled *Same-Sex Pairing as a Device to Liberate the Unconscious: A Study of Oscar Wilde's Creative Oeuvre,* has three core chapters other than Introduction and Conclusion. Chapter division is devised based on the thematic concerns of the project. The thesis as a whole is an attempt to bring out the same sex pairing in the works of Oscar Wilde and to examine how the same-sex pairs serve the function of the return of the repressed.

The first chapter titled “The Triumph of Mind over Morals” examines the explicit same-sex pairings in Wilde’s works and discusses the social responses towards it. It analyses Wilde’s works which have explicit same-sex pairing in it. The study focuses on how Wilde has employed same-sex pairs in his works, so as to liberate his repressed sexual desires. An attempt is made to trace the presence of two people of the same sex, most often men, who are emotionally bound to each other. Though Wilde hardly presents them as homosexuals their friendship exhibits much intimacy, giving subtle homosexual undertones to the stories. This chapter also examines the social responses towards Wilde’s attempt to depict same-sex pairs in his works. The works analysed in this chapter include, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, “The Model Millionaire”, “The Sphinx without a Secret”, “The Devoted Friend”, “The Star Child”, “The Happy Prince”, *The Importance of Being Earnest, Vera, The Duchess of Padua* and a few poems. The title of the chapter echoes Henry’s remark in the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray:* “Men represent the triumph of mind over morals” (Chapter IV, p. 58)

The second chapter “Mask Speaks more than the Face” deals with the symbolic manifestations of same-sex pairing in Wilde’s works. It examines how certain images and symbols in the text facilitate the depiction of same-sex pairs. Since the portrayal of explicit same-sex pairs threatens the moral stability of the society, as it is observed in the first chapter, the writer devises some alternative mechanism to find outlet for his repressed desires. Wilde has thus made use of symbolic manifestations of same-sex pairing in order to liberate his unconscious desires. He does this by using some every day object or images in the plot which suggests homosexuality. The disambiguation of such objects makes homosexual reading of the work possible. Wilde’s short stories, “The Remarkable Rocket”, “The

Canterville Ghost" and "The Selfish Giant"; his plays *Salome* and *An Ideal Husband;* his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray;* and some of his poems are subjected to interpretations in this chapter. The title of the chapter is an observation made by Wilde in his essay "The Truth of Masks": "Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth"

The third chapter titled "The Return of the Repressed" examines the various psychological approaches to same-sex pairing. A psychological study of the characters is carried out to examine the functioning of same-sex pairing in Wilde's works. The study focuses on the ways in which the literary characters and situations can be analysed using the principles of psychoanalysis. Different components of psychoanalytic theory are employed as tools to examine the presence of unintended depiction of same-sex pairing in the select literary texts. The works considered in this section are *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime,* "The Fisherman and his Soul", *A Florentine Tragedy, A Woman of No Importance,* "The Portrait of Mr. W.H." and "The Decay of Lying". The title of the chapter implies the psychological process by which repressed elements in the unconscious tend to reappear as unrecognizable derivatives in the conscious mind.

The works categorised into the three chapters are likely to overlap with each other. But for the sake of convenience they have been classified as explicit same-sex pairing, symbolic manifestation of same-sex pairing and psychoanalytic approach to same-sex pairing.

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Chapter 1

The Triumph of Mind over Morals:

Explicit Same-Sex Pairing and its Social Responses

The intense stigma around bisexuality and homosexuality compels people with alternative sexual orientation to suppress their same-sex desire. This suppression leads to the outburst of desires not always through promiscuous behaviour but also as creative exuberance. Wilde's creative dexterity was perceptibly one of the ways by which he expressed his homoerotic consciousness and liberated his suppressed homosexual desires. Same-sex pairing in many of his works comes across as one such attempt to unleash his repressed libidinal desires.

Homosexuality has variously been a subject of philosophical discussions and deliberations. The central issue debated in the philosophical circles is basically regarding the social construction of gender hierarchies. Beginning from Plato's application of the idea of a fixed, natural law to sex that categorises same-sex sexuality as "unnatural" to the contemporary queer theorists' attempt to challenge the heterosexual hegemony that perpetuates the categories of sex, diverse group of thinkers on various theoretical contexts have articulated their observations on homosexuality.

Feminist criticism with its heterosexual assumptions failed to incorporate the wider possibilities of sexuality since it was centred around the category of women alone. To put it in Butler's words, "...the category of 'women', the subject of feminism, is produced and restrained by the very structures of power through which emancipation is sought" (4). Simone de Beauvoir prefers to consider a lesbian as a

'superwoman' rather than a 'failed' woman. According to her "homosexuality can be a way for woman to flee her condition or a way to assume it" (Beauvoir 431). She criticises psychoanalysts' attempt to interpret a woman's natural human behaviours such as her sports, her intellectual and political activities and even her desire for other women, as 'masculine protest' or as her attempt to identify with the male. For Beauvoir, these are all part of a woman's choice of a subjective attitude. An adolescent female's fear of penetration and masculine domination creates in her repulsion for the man's body and the feminine body becomes an object of desire for her. Hence in a way every woman is naturally homosexual, and homosexuality for her becomes an attempt to "reconcile her autonomy with the passivity of her flesh" (431). She goes on to argue that it is the absence or failure of heterosexual relations that destine women to inversion. "Many women who work among women in workshops and offices and who have little opportunity to be around men will form amorous friendship with women; it will be materially and morally practical to join their lives" (442). She concludes the chapter saying, "In truth, homosexuality...is an attitude that is chosen in situation; it is both motivated and freely adopted...It is one way among others for woman to solve the problems posed by her condition in general and by her erotic situation in particular" (448). Toril Moi has rightly observed that in *The Second Sex* the chapter on lesbianism is confusing "perhaps revealing the difficulty in writing it" (Rowbotham xi).

Julia Kristeva's theory of semiotic dimension of language exposes the limitations of Lacanian premises and also offers a feminine locus of subversion of the paternal law within language. According to Lacan it is the paternal law in the Symbolic stage that structures all linguistic significations. This law creates the possibility of meaningful language through the repression of libidinal drives. It

structures the world by suppressing the multiple meanings and stating a univocal meaning. But Kristeva argues that the primary maternal body serves as a perpetual source of subversion within the symbolic. In terms of language it is the poetic language that has the potential to subvert and displace the paternal law. The semiotic according to Kristeva constitutes a prediscursive libidinal economy, and it gets manifested in language through poetic language. She thus questions Lacan's equation of the Symbolic with linguistic meaning by defining the Semiotic as the multiplicity of drives manifest in language. Kristeva points out that poetic language is sustained culturally through its participation in the Symbolic; but she does not acknowledge the nonpsychotic social expression of homosexuality (Butler 114). According to her, female homosexuality is the emergence of psychosis into culture. She observes that homosexual cathexis can be achieved through displacements such as poetic language or the act of giving birth, both of which are sanctioned in the symbolic realm:

> By giving birth, the women enters into contact with her mother; she becomes, she is her own mother; they are the same continuity differentiating itself. She thus actualizes the homosexual facet of motherhood, through which a woman is simultaneously closer to her instinctual memory, more open to her psychosis, and consequently, more nugatory of the social, symbolic bond. (Kristeva 239)

Her repudiation of female homosexuality is in accordance with her reification of the paternal law. Lesbianism thus becomes a site of irrationality for her.

The contributions of queer theorists like Eve Kosofky Sedgwick, Judith Butler and Foucault expanded the scope of studies in homosexuality. Foucault's innovative and intellectual formulations have greatly influenced queer studies. *The History of*

Sexuality makes an elaborate study of the social construction of gender and sexuality. The discourses of sexuality are governed by the power politics in human relationships. He criticises Lacanian attempt to consider culturally marginal form of sexuality as culturally unintelligible. Instead, he suggests dismantling of the categories of sex and power regime of sexuality.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points out that a radical incoherence in the form of 'universalising' notions of sexuality has affected the methodology of Western sexological formulations. She maintains an anti-homophobic attitude in questioning the heterosexual normativity in identity formulations.

Judith Butler stresses on the theory of gender performativity in order to dismantle the cultural construction of gender. She traces the importance of repetition in performativity that determines gender subjectivity.

Monique Wittig is of the view that the category of sex is neither invariant nor natural:

> Sex is taken as an 'immediate given', 'a sensible given', 'physical feature', belonging to a natural order. But what we believe to be a physical and direct perception is only a sophisticated and mythic construction, 'an imaginary formation' which reinterprets physical features (in themselves as neutral as others but marked by a social system) through the network of relationships, in which they are perceived. ("The Straight Mind" 105)

Wittig argues that the category of sex is "a specifically political use of the category of nature that serves the purposes of reproductive sexuality" (Butler 153).

The division of human bodies into male and female sexes is made only to lend a naturalistic gloss to the institution of heterosexuality. She also claims that “a lesbian is not a woman” (153). A woman exists as a binary and oppositional relation to a man in the context of heterosexuality. Since a lesbian denies heterosexuality, it is not possible to define a lesbian in terms of this oppositional relation. A lesbian transcends the heterosexual matrix, since she is beyond the categories of sex. Instead of subverting the system Wittig suggests to overthrow it. In her work *The Lesbian Body* she gives a textual demonstration to overthrow the category of sex through a destruction and fragmentation of sexed body. In her essay “Paradigm” she suggests the possibility of a cultural field of many sexes in order to overthrow the system of binary sex. She says that, “For us there are, not one or two sexes, but many, as many as there are individuals” (“Paradigm” 119). But Wittig’s radical departure from heterosexuality, by becoming lesbian or gay, becomes politically problematic. As Butler puts it: “Wittig’s lesbian-feminism appears to cut off any kind of solidarity with heterosexual women and implicitly to assume that lesbianism is the logically or politically necessary consequence of feminism” (173).

Donald E. Hall takes a radical stand in stating that “readiness for experience” is what characterises queer theory (37). He speaks about the need to have a sexual narratology: “sexual radicals, queer theorists, and otherwise audacious iconoclasts should continue to test and critically probe narratives of instrumentality, even with and through the experience of failure, and that ‘queer’ self identity...should involve an ongoing project of enthusiastically politicised hermeneutic questioning” (9). Similarly, Michael Warner observes that “heteronormativity can be overcome only by actively imagining a necessarily and desirably queer world” (xvi).

It was only in the late 1980s and early1990s, with the gradual growth of queer theory, that the hierarchies of gender identities were challenged to pave way for heterogeneity of sexual identities. During the Victorian period, discourses on homosexuality could not find a place neither in the philosophical spheres nor in the social life. Although Sigmund Freud has made valid deliberations on sexuality, gender and alternative sexual identities remained an unresolved 'trouble'. Homosexuality was perceived by the Victorians as a perversion to be suppressed. No wonder Wilde was left with no option than conceal his same-sex interest. Suppression of this libidinal drive resulted in the literary expression of repressed desires in the form of same-sex pairs in his works.

Pearson feels that Wilde's homosexual strain is the result of his attraction to the idea of doing something outrageous than desirous of fulfilling his nature. He might have turned to it because he was allured by the concept of 'sin'; it seemed to him daring, peculiar, decadent, perverse, rebellious and even aristocratic (262). In Wilde's transgressive aesthetic the reverse discourse works through a different strategy, that is "to destabilize, subvert, and displace the binary through inversion, or a turning back upon, a trangressive reinscription within, the dominant, to destroy at base the categories responsible for one's exclusion" (Dollimore 226). Dollimore makes a contrast between Andre Gide's transgressive ethic and Wilde's transgressive aesthetic. Gide is explicit about his homosexuality but Wilde conceals his deviant desires under his principles of aestheticism. "... Deviant desire is legitimated in terms of culture's opposite, nature, or, in a different but related move, in terms of something which is pre-cultural and so always more than cultural" (15). He also observes that: "Wilde's transgressive aesthetic, along with the lost histories of perversion and, through them, a reconsideration of Freud and Foucault and the paradoxical cultural

centrality of homosexuality, facilitate the development for cultural politics of the concept of the perverse dynamic" (33).

Of the different methods Wilde has devised to liberate the Unconscious, explicit same-sex pairing is the most striking. He has overtly dealt with this theme in his work *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. In some other works he has subtly used a pro-male love discourse which is based on an idealised devoted friendship model between men. This can be traced in many of his works including short stories, plays and novel. He generally presents in his plot, two people of the same sex, most often men (owing to his own sex) who are emotionally bound to each other. Their friendship displays so much of warmth and intimacy that it almost borders on homosexuality, thus giving subtle homosexual undertones to the story. He nowhere makes a claim that his characters are homosexuals; instead presents them as two closely associated friends. Wilde has employed same-sex pairs in such a way that "its effects are dependent on an uncontrolled return of the repressed, thus privileging the unconscious of the author over his conscious mastery" (Wright 38). Dollimore gives a vivid picture of the social response towards Wilde's attempt to give expression to homosexual drives:

> Notoriously, some of Wilde's contemporaries were not disarmed by his playfulness. In the first of the three trials involving Wilde in 1895, he was cross examined on his Phrases and Philosophies, the implication of opposing counsel being that its elegant binary inversions, along with Dorian Gray, were calculated to subvert morality and encourage unnatural vice. (67)

The responses towards Wilde's attempt to give expression to his alternative sexual orientation through the depiction of same-sex pairs in his works reflect the

social fear of the connection between sexual perversion and intellectual and moral subversion. Dollimore describes the fate of Wilde thus:

> After he had been found guilty of homosexual offences and sentenced to two years' imprisonment with hard labour, the press subjected Oscar Wilde to vicious attack... the London *Evening News* accused him of trying to subvert the 'wholesome, manly, simple ideals of English life', and connected his sexual perversion with intellectual and moral subversion. He possessed as the Daily Telegraph conceded on 27 May 1895, 'considerable intellectual powers'. It advocates a 'reaction towards simpler ideas...for fear of national contamination and decay'. (240)

These descriptions of Wilde and his art echo a fear of degeneration as envisaged by writers and intellectuals of the time. Dennis Altman's remark on homophobia seems historically correct in this context: "The original purpose of characterisation of homosexuals as people apart was to project the homosexuality in everyone onto a defined minority as a way of externalizing forbidden desires and reassuring the majority that homosexuality is something that happens to other people" (72).

Hesketh Pearson observes that Wilde's novel has caused him a great deal of harm. People whether they read the novel or not, hated the author.

> *The Picture of Dorian Gray* had given such a shocking jerk to Victorian moral expectations from literature that *The Daily Chronicle* found its atmosphere 'heavy with the mephitic odours of moral and spiritual putrefaction'. The reviewer of *St. James' Gazette* refrained

> from analysing the novel because he did not want to ‘advertise the developments of an esoteric prurience. (Ghosal 43)

Pearson shows how passages from Wilde’s novel were used as evidences against him in Queensberry case. He says, “there are no more instructive passages in forensic records than his cross-examination on the subject by Edward Carson, a contemporary of his at Trinity College, Dublin” (155). Extracts from Carson’s cross-examination clearly portray the social attitude towards the portrayal of ‘deviant’ sexual drives in literary works.

When Carson tries to interpret *Dorian Gray* as a perverted novel, Wilde observes that such an interpretation “could only be to brutes and illiterates. The views of Philistines on art are incalculably stupid” (155). Carson even points out that the description of the feeling of one man towards another in the novel could be an improper feeling. To which Wilde retorts: “I think it is the most perfect description of what an artist would feel on meeting a beautiful personality that was in some way necessary to his art and his life...” (156). When Carson asks Wilde whether he has adored any young man madly, Wilde answers thus:

> Wilde: No; not madly. I prefer love; that is a higher form...
>
> Carson: Then you never had that feeling?
>
> Wilde: No; the whole idea was borrowed from Shakespeare, I regret to say; yes, from Shakespeare’s sonnets.
>
> Carson: I believe you have written an article to show that Shakespeare’s sonnets were suggestive of unnatural vice?

> Wilde: On the contrary, I have written an article to show that they are not. I object to such a perversion being put upon Shakespeare...
>
> Carson: These unfortunate people that have not the high understanding that you have, might put it down to something wrong?
>
> Wilde: Undoubtedly; to any point they chose, I am not concerned with the ignorance of others. I have a great passion to civilise the community. (157-158)

Works of Wilde in which explicit same-sex pairing can be traced are *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, "The Model Millionaire", "The Sphinx without a Secret", "The Devoted Friend", "The Star Child", "The Happy Prince", *The Importance of Being Earnest, Vera, The Duchess of Padua* and a few poems. Some of the representations in these works were even cited as evidences to Wilde's homoerotic tendencies during his indictment for the same.

During the trial Carson tried to explain Wilde's sexual behaviour by taking clues mainly from *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. It is a controversial novel with subtle as well as explicit homosexual elements in it. The novel does not just show how the writer's fantasies get projected in his work, but pin points the social attitude towards the expression of such libidinal desires in literature. The novel articulates an artist's admiration for his Muse, a young boy. Although Wilde describes this admiration as merely an expression of aestheticism, it can very well be interpreted as homoerotic. The novel features three explicit same-sex pairs. Dorian with his extreme physical charms epitomises sexual desirability. It is Dorian's association with his friends that constitutes different male-male bonding. Wilde does not speak about the nature of Dorian's 'sin', but offers innumerable possibilities of interpretation. As James Joyce

puts it, “Everyone, he (Wilde) wrote, sees his own sin in Dorian Gray. What Dorian Gray’s sin was no one says and no one knows. Anyone who recognizes it has committed it” (59).

The first same-sex pair is Dorian and Basil. Basil’s admiration for Dorian is more personal than artistic. Dorian says:

> I have always been my own master; had at least always been so, till I met Dorian Gray. Then – but I don’t know how to explain it to you – something seemed to tell me that I am on the verge of a terrible crisis in my life. I had a strange feeling that Fate had in store for me exquisite joys and exquisite sorrows. (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 13)

The language here is very suggestive, and the homoerotic feelings of the painter find expression when he describes his passionate affection for Dorian:

> Our eyes met again. It was reckless of me, but I asked Lady Brandon to introduce me to him. Perhaps it was not so reckless, after all. It was simply inevitable. We would have spoken to each other without any introduction. I am sure of that. Dorian told me so afterwards. He, too, felt that we were destined to know each other. (14)

This suggests an intimate connection between Dorian and Basil. The interaction between them is not in a manner which men are expected to behave normally in a social situation. The situation presents two men sharing looks and glances, noticing the physical proximity and experiencing a strange feeling for one another. Basil showers praises on Dorian which looks flirtatious. “But he is much more to me than a model or a sitter...his beauty is such that Art cannot express it”

(17). He goes on to say that, “I see things differently, I think of them differently. I can now recreate life in a way that was hidden from me before” (17). Dorian seems to share the same feeling towards Basil, from which it can be assumed that what is shared between them is not a painter’s artistic interest in the subject, but a man’s sexual attraction towards another man. It is further more interesting to note that Basil prefers to keep his secret within himself. He regrets for having revealed Dorian’s name to Henry: “I didn’t intent to tell it to you... I have grown to love secrecy. It seems to be the one thing that can make modern life mysterious or marvellous to us” (10). Basil declares his life to be embedded in secrecy after meeting Dorian. He also admits that the painting of Dorian bears the secret of his own soul (12).

Basil is very much under the magic spell of Dorian’s beauty that he says, “Every day. I couldn’t be happy if I didn’t see him every day. He is absolutely necessary to me” (16). He even pleads with Henry not to come between himself and Dorian: “The world is wide, and has many marvellous people in it. Don’t take away from me the one person who gives to my art whatever charm it possesses; my life as an artist depends on him” (21). When Dorian is too much attracted to the beauty of the portrait, he fears of losing his own beauty. Basil’s reaction when he sees Dorian in tears looks like a lover’s affection for his beloved: “Hallward turned pale, and caught his hand. ‘Dorian! Dorian!’ He cried, ‘don't talk like that. I have never had such a friend as you, and shall never have such another’” (34).

Like a possessive and jealous lover Basil gets irritated and dejected when Henry builds a relationship with Dorian. Dorian leaves with Henry from Basil’s apartment, and “as the door closed behind them, the painter flung himself down on a sofa, and a look of pain came into his face” (39). Dorian moves away from Basil once his friendship with Henry grows. He completely ignores Basil when he is in

possession of his portrait and seeks new possibilities of pleasures. He exclaims: “I have not laid eyes on him (Basil) for a week. It is rather horrid of me, as he has sent me my portrait in the most wonderful frame, specially designed by himself...” (67).

When Dorian announces his intention to marry Sybil, Basil is taken aback and fears that he will lose Dorian forever:

> A strange sense of loss came over him. He felt that Dorian Gray would never again be to him all that he had been in the past. Life had come between them... His eyes darkened, and the crowded, flaring streets became blurred to his eyes. When the cab drew up at the theatre, it seemed to him that he had grown years older (94).

Dorian’s life of passion distances him from Basil, but when he meets Basil after a long while he confesses his sincere affection for him:

> You have not realised how I have developed. I was a school boy when you knew me. I am a man now. I have new passions, new thoughts, new ideas. I am different, but you must not like me less. I am changed, but you must always be my friend. Of course I am very fond of Henry. But I know that you are better than he is. You are not stronger – you are too much afraid of life – but you are better. And how happy we used to be together! Don’t leave me, Basil, and don’t quarrel with me. I am what I am. There is nothing more to be said. (128-29)

Basil reciprocates his love and admiration for this incarnation of beauty. Explicit homoerotic elements can be traced in Basil’s description of his love for Dorian:

> Dorian, from the moment I met you, your personality had the most extraordinary influence over me. I was dominated, soul, brain and power by you. You became to me the visible incarnation of that unseen ideal whose memory haunts us artists like an exquisite dream. I worshipped you. I grew jealous of everyone to whom you spoke. I wanted to have you all to myself. I was only happy when I was with you... of course I never let you know anything about this. It would have been impossible. You would not have understood it. I hardly understood it myself. I only knew that I had seen perfection face to face, and that the world had become wonderful to my eyes – too wonderful, perhaps, for in such mad worships there is peril, the peril of losing them, no less than the peril of keeping them. (132)

The very expression of love and admiration in the above passage is something that is beyond the compass and acceptability of a heteronormative society, especially in the background of Victorian ethos. Basil's dilemma is artfully captured in the 'peril' of both losing and keeping the object of his admiration. The reference to "us artists" resonates with autobiographical implications, simultaneously making an attempt to conceal his 'love' behind the mask of his 'art'. Moreover, these lines prefigure Wilde's words to Lord Alfred Douglas via his letters: "I can't live without you" (*Letters* 358) and "you are the atmosphere of beauty through which I see life. You are the incarnation of all lovely things...I think of you day and night" (*Letters* 363). Dorian is aware of Basil's selfless love for him which is different from Henry's love that has more poisonous influence on him.

> Basil would have helped him to resist Lord Henry's influence, and the still more poisonous influences that came from his own temperament.

> The love that he bore him – for it was really love – had nothing in it that was not noble and intellectual. It was not that mere physical admiration of beauty that is born of the senses, and that dies when the senses tire. (138)

After having disclosed his secret before Basil, Dorian kills Basil leaving no traces of his body. The inevitable doom falls on Basil who was lured by the charms of alternative sexual orientation. Basil's death can be explained on the basis of Augustine's observation of death as the inevitable result of deviant desires: "Augustine regarded sin as intrinsic to human nature and always bound up with perversion, transgression, and death: the perversion of free will leads a man to transgress, and it is transgression which brings death into the world" (Dollimore 131). Death has entered the world through deviant desires.

Richard Ellman in his essay, "Overtures to Salome" after having discussed in detail about Wilde's adoration for Ruskin, draws parallel between Dorian's relationship with Basil and Wilde's admiration for Ruskin. Ellman observes that:

> The painter Hallward has little of Ruskin at the beginning, but gradually he moves closer to that pillar of aesthetic taste and moral judgement upon which Wilde leaned, and after Hallward is safely murdered, Dorian with sudden fondness recollects a trip they had made to Venice together, when his friend was captivated by Tintoretto's art. Ruskin was of course the English discoverer and champion of Tintoretto, so that the allusion is specific. (88)

The second pair is Dorian and Henry. Henry is also attracted to the extreme physical charm of Dorian. He not only praises Dorian but makes him aware of

youthful desires and worldly pleasures, “You, Mr. Gray, you yourself, with your rose-red youth and your rose-white boyhood, you have had passions that have made you afraid, thoughts that have filled you with terror, day dreams and sleeping dreams whose memory might stain your cheeks with shame” (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 26). He allures Dorian in such a way that Dorian gets very much influenced by the fresh knowledge of secret pleasures. “The few words that Basil’s friend had said to him – words spoken by chance, no doubt, and with wilful paradox in them – had touched some secret chord that had never been touched before, but that he felt was now vibrating and throbbing to curious pulses” (26).

Dorian ponders on the new knowledge that frightens him. Henry speaks about the absurd moral codes of the society that hinder men like Henry to live life fully and openly according to their wishes. Dorian is very much fascinated by Henry’s words which cast a spell on him. He says, “Yes Harry, I believe that is true. I cannot help telling you things. You have a curious influence over me” (63). Henry subtly suggests to him the possible same-sex relationships other than conventional heterosexual marriages: “As for marriage, of course that would be silly, but there are other and more interesting bonds between men and women. I will certainly encourage them” (88).

Dollimore points out Richard Ellmann’s suggestion that “the ‘monotonous’ association between Wilde and Douglas was rather like that in *Dorian Gray* between Dorian and Lord Henry Wotton – ‘in effect Wilde spiritually seduced Gide’” (5).

Dorian is torn between two different ways of life. On the one side there is the hetero-normative pull and on the other side there is instinctual homosexual drive:

> There were moments, later on, when it had the wild passion of violins. You know how a voice can stir one. Your voice and the voice of Sybil Vane are two things that I shall never forget. When I close my eyes, I hear them, and each of them says something different. I don't know which to follow. (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 62)

When Dorian moves closer to Sybil Vane he is distanced from Henry's strange ideas of life. It could be that the hetero-normative principles frighten him of the 'dangerous' homosexual drives. Dorian says, "I believe in this girl" and "Harry is so cynical, he terrifies me" (96). It is obvious that he is caught between two extremes – his fear the society and the call of his body. But when Dorian loses his interest in Sybil, he turns closer and closer to the 'sinful' relationships.

Dorian finds solace in Henry's presence. Henry in fact triggers those feelings in Dorian which he himself is afraid of. Slowly their friendship grows more and more intimate. He falls for Henry's temptation and decides to lead the paths of pleasures.

> He felt that time had really come for making his choice. Or had his choice already been made? Yes, life had decided that for him – life, and his own infinite curiosity about life. Eternal youth, infinite passion, pleasures subtle and secret, wild joys and wilder sins – he was to have all these things. The portrait was to bear the burden of his shame: that was all. (122-23)

When Dorian decides to put an end to his secret life, Henry discourages him saying that, "There is no use your telling me that you are going to be good...Pray, don't change" (240). Dorian expresses his desire to go back to a normal life succumbing to the cultural norms of society: "'Culture and corruption', echoed

Dorian. ‘I have known something of both. It seems terrible to me now that they should ever be found together. For I have a new ideal, Harry. I am going to alter. I think I have altered’” (240).

Henry’s broken family life also comes to discussion at this crucial period of time. His failure in keeping relationship with his wife, Victoria, echoes the failure of a heterosexual relationship. Marriage is a mere habit for him:

> Poor Victoria! I was very fond of her. The house is rather lonely without her. Of course married life is merely a habit, a bad habit. But then one regrets the loss even of one’s worst habits. Perhaps one regrets them the most. They are such an essential part of one’s personality. (243)

Henry persuades Dorian to pursue life of pleasures disregarding Dorian’s wish to change his habits. He asks Dorian not to spoil his life by renunciations. But Dorian is determined to change. He says, “Life has been exquisite...but I am not going to have the same life, Harry. And you must not say these extravagant things to me” (248). Dorian tries to change, but in vain. Suspecting his soul being so corrupted, he finds no escape. Having failed to regain his ‘pure’ life Dorian takes his own life.

The third pair is Dorian and Alan Campbell. Campbell represents all those men with whom Dorian is leading a life of debauchery and immorality. It is said that when Dorian is at his great house in Nottinghamshire he entertains fashionable young men of his rank who are his chief companions. Basil expresses his sincere concern for Dorian’s increasingly bad reputation, which gives a clear picture of Dorian’s secret life:

> Why is your friendship so fatal to young men? There was that wretched boy in the Guards who committed suicide. You were his great friend. There was Sir Henry Ashton, who had to leave England, with a tarnished name. You and he were inseparable. What about Adrian Singleton, and his dreadful end? I met his father yesterday in St. James Street. He seemed broken with shame and sorrow. What about the young Duke of Perth? What sort of life has he got now? What gentleman would associate with him? (173)

This gives an elaborate account of what kind of relationships Dorian maintained with numerous young men in the town. His shameful interactions with these men ruined their good names in the process. It is reported that people of greater ranks, who were worried about their reputation ignored Dorian's company.

> Curious stories became current about him after he had passed his twenty-fifth year...His extraordinary absence became notorious, and, when he used to reappear again in society, men would whisper to each other in corners, or pass him with a sneer, or look at him with cold searching eyes, as though they were determined to discover his secret. (163)

Dorian's evil influence on other men and the way he adversely affects their reputation remind us of Dollimore's recollection of Andre Gide's fear of getting associated with Wilde:

> In Blidah, Algeria in January 1895 Andre Gide is in the hall of a hotel, about to leave. His glance falls on the slate which announces the names of new guests: 'suddenly my heart gave a leap; the two last names...

> were those of Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas' (Gide, If It Die, 271). Acting on his first impulse, Gide 'erases' his own name from the slate and leaves for the station. (3)

It also reminds us of Jean Delay's biography of Andre Gide where he describes Wilde's evil influence on Gide. He says that Gide's belief that his homosexuality was the corner-stone of his personality was 'fallacious' and that, had he not met Wilde, while there is no reason to think he would not have become homosexual, nevertheless he would probably not have adopted 'the attitude of the arrogant pederast, determined to assert his anomaly as a norm' (437).

More instances from the novel point to the homosexual relationships among other characters. Dorian seeks Campbell's help to dispose Basil's body. They were good friends once, "almost inseparable, indeed" (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 190). They were always found together, and their intimacy lasted for eighteen months. Then, they got separated for some unknown reason. "Whether or not a quarrel had taken place between them no one ever knew. But suddenly people remarked that they scarcely spoke when they met..." (190). It could be moral conscience that drove him away from Dorian. He stopped talking to him.

Campbell at first refuses to help Dorian because he does not want to become a part of Dorian's crime. He says, "I entirely decline to be mixed up in your life. Keep your horrible secret to yourself. They don't interest me anymore" (193). Campbell keeps himself away from Dorian and tells him, "Don't speak of those days, Dorian. They are dead" (195). Finally Dorian resorts to blackmail for Campbell's help. Dorian scribbles something on the paper and hands it over to Campbell. The content of the

letter is left to the reader's imagination. This again opens up the possible homosexual undertones in the text.

The secrecy of shame is a feature of homosexual community since men with alternative sexual orientation live in fear of being exposed of their sexuality. Nunokawa observes "the threat of blackmail" as reality for homosexual men during Wilde's time (183). Moreover, *Blackmailer's Charter* is a name of the law that made Sodomy punishable during Wilde's time (Norton 2000).

When Campbell opens the letter and reads it his face becomes "ghastly pale", "horrible sense of sickness came over him" and he "felt as if his heart was beating itself to death in some empty hollow" (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 195). Campbell shivered and a groan broke from him. He felt as if "the disgrace with which he was threatened had already come upon him" (196). In tears Campbell agrees to help Dorian. Once it is done he leaves saying, "Let us never see each other again" (200). Later in the novel readers are informed of Campbell's death: "Alan Campbell had shot himself one night in his laboratory, but had not revealed the secret that he had been forced to know" (252-53). Campbell's death underscores the inevitable doom of homosexuality. His death only points to the intense homophobia prevalent among the people during Wilde's time and is also indicative of the social suppression of homosexuality.

The name of the protagonist, 'Dorian' is highly significant. It is not a common English name. Wilde seems to have made a careful selection of name for his protagonist. 'Dorians' were a tribe who inhabited Greece:

> Those scholars who prefer the historical approach are convinced that pederasty originates in Dorian initiation rites. The Dorians were the

> last tribe to migrate to Greece, and they are usually described as real he-men with a masculine culture. According to the proponents of this theory, pederasty came to being on the Dorian island in Crete, where grown-up men used to kidnap (consenting) adolescents. (Dolen)

Undoubtedly, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a work much discussed for its treatment of homosexuality as an important theme. The controversies it has raised during the time of Wilde himself, as evident from Carson's attempt to dissect the novel for its erotic content, points out the crude social stigma attached to homosexuality during the Victorian period. Wilde's short story "The Model Millionaire" resembles *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in the way it associates the same-sex pair with an artist's aesthetic attraction towards his object. As in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* here also Wilde's subjective participation in his character's life as an artist cannot be ruled out.

"The Model Millionaire" is basically a sharp criticism on society's materialism. Like many of his stories here also a simple moral framework is adopted in which good and evil are rigidly and unambiguously defined. Hence, the plot has a suitable ending where the virtue is properly rewarded. The story is about a young man, Hughie who is handsome, but unlucky as far as financial matters are concerned, or to borrow Wilde's own words, "he was a delightful, ineffectual young man with a perfect profile and no profession" ("The Model Millionaire" 235). He has tried his luck in several different businesses, but in vain. He is in love with Laura Merton. But her father Colonel Merton does not want Hughie to marry his daughter unless and until Hughie earns ten thousand pounds of his own. One day Hughie happens to see his artist friend Alan Trevor making a portrait of an old beggar. Although he does not have much money with him Hughie is moved to pity by the pathetic sight of the

elderly beggar and gives him the coin that he has in his pocket. The young man's act of kindness brings him unexpected reward – a check of ten thousand pounds. Baron Hausberg, one of the wealthiest men in Europe, who was the beggar model, presents him with the amount as a wedding gift.

The male-male bonding in the story takes the form of a painter's artistic interest in a 'thing of beauty'. It is evidently seen in the friendship between Hughie and Trevor. Hughie is presented as a handsome, charming and popular young man.

> Poor Hughie! Intellectually, we must admit, he was not of much importance. He never said a brilliant or an ill-natured thing in life. But then he was wonderfully good looking, with crisp brown hair, his clear cut profile, and his grey eyes. He was as popular with men as he was with women, and he had every accomplishment except that of making money. ("The Model Millionaire" 235)

Trevor is a gifted and successful painter. It is stated in the story itself that Trevor is attracted towards Hughie's personal charms. "He had been very much attracted by Hughie at first, it must be acknowledged, entirely on account of his personal charms" (236). Trevor believes that painters like him should know "people who are an artistic pleasure to look at and an intellectual repose to talk to" (236). No wonder Hughie the handsome young man who was popular among men develops a strong friendship with Trevor who has a deep admiration for things of beauty. There was such a strong bonding between them that Hughie is given a permanent space in Trevor's life. "However, after he (Trevor) got to know Hughie better, he liked him quite as much for his bright buoyant spirits and his generous reckless nature, and had given him the permanent entree to his studio" (236).

Pearson makes an interesting observation about Wilde's intimacy with the painters of his time: "In the year 1884 Wilde used to often drop in at the studio of a painter, Basil Ward, one of whose sitters was a young man of exceptional beauty. Incidentally, Wilde must have been a godsend to many painters of the time, as his conversation kept their sitters perpetually entertained" (149).

Moreover, the friendship between Hughie and Trevor reminds us of the controversial relationship between Douglas and Wilde himself. Just like Trevor the artist Wilde was attracted by Douglas' personal charms.

'Cigarette' is an important image used in the story that can be seen as a phallic symbol. It is mentioned thrice in the story as part of the exchanges between Hughie and Trevor. The image of cigarette appears whenever the two meet. In psychoanalytic terms "there is a common identification of the male sexual organ with upright objects, though it is sometimes labelled as vulgar Freudian symbolism" (Wright 25).

When Hughie comes to meet Trevor at his studio Trevor is busy, making the portrait of the old beggar. Trevor enjoys Hughie's presence in his studio and he does not want Hughie to leave though it will give him a chance to concentrate more on his work. Instead he asks Hughie to smoke a cigarette and wait for him. "... But you mustn't chatter; I'm very busy. Smoke a cigarette and keep quite" ("The Model Millionaire" 237).

Again in the story, the same night when Hughie strolls into the Palette Club at about eleven o'clock Trevor is sitting by himself in the smoking room drinking hock and seltzer. Hughie lights a cigarette when he joins Trevor in the smoking room. "'Well, Alan, did you get the picture finished all right?' he (Hughie) said as he lit his cigarette" (237). Still later, Hughie gets angry when he learns from Trevor that he has

revealed all his private affairs to Baron Hausberg. Hughie is so desperately sad that he decides to leave the club at once. But Trevor wants Hughie to stay back and asks him to have another cigarette: “Nonsense! It reflects the highest credit on your philanthropic spirit, Hughie. And don’t run away. Have another cigarette, and you can talk about Laura as much as you like” (239). The recurrent references to the cigarettes during their meetings only accentuate the ‘unexpressed’ feelings between them.

Hesketh Pearson has interestingly observed cigarette smoking as one of Wilde’s indulgences. He points out one of Wilde’s aphorisms to support his observation: “A cigarette is the perfect type of a perfect pleasure. It is exquisite, and it leaves one unsatisfied. What more can one want” (172). Though the story is primarily about Hughie and his love for Laura, Wilde has beautifully painted a male-male bonding between Hughie and Trevor with the undertones indicating more than just friendship.

Like *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in *The Importance of Being Earnest* also there are explicit references to alternative sexual orientation. The word ‘Bunburying’ from the play gained general acceptance as a code word for gay relationship. *The Importance of Being Earnest* is Wilde’s funniest and most attractive play which tries to rediscover lost innocence. One of the main characters in the play is Jack Worthing who lives a double life. In the country he is the respectable Jack Worthing, a very serious and upright young man, and is in charge of the upbringing of Cecily Cardew. He makes frequent trips to London, where he assumes the name of Earnest Worthing and pursues a life of pleasure. In London he has a friend Algernon Moncrieff (Algy) who lives in a luxurious flat. It turns out that Algy too leads a double life. He has invented a friend called Bunbury who resides in the country and is a permanent

invalid. Because of Bunbury, Algy is able to go on a pleasure trip to the country whenever he wishes.

The same-sex pairing in the play can be traced in three different steps. Initially, Wilde establishes the unconventional nature of his heroes, Jack and Algernon, both having invented alter egos to facilitate their social mobility and pleasure fulfilment. Secondly, he portrays their friendship as a product of the secret life they lead. Their meeting becomes possible because of their conjured up imaginary alter egos. Finally, the intimacy of their relationship earns them the status of explicit same-sex pair.

Wilde establishes Algy's unconventional or 'anti-moral' attitude at the very outset of the play. By calling marriage as something "so demoralising" (*The Importance of Being Earnest* 363) he questions the Victorian notion of sanctity of the institution of marriage. Jack's attitude towards life is also brought to light when he says it is pleasure that brings him to town. Algy goes on to observe that it is quite romantic to be in love, but the excitement ends when one makes a definite proposal (365). Hence he feels it is better to be in love than to get married and take up familial responsibilities. He even points out that "divorces are made in heaven" (365).

Similarly, Jack leads a double life to pursue pleasure. He is Earnest in the town and Jack in the country. The possibilities of Jack having a secret life have actually brought Algy closer to him. Algy has suspected of Jack having a double life. He says: "I may mention that I have always suspected you of being a confirmed and secret Bunburyist, and I am quite sure of it now" (367). Jack observes how moral values, precisely Victorian, curb one's happiness. He says high moral tone hardly conduce to one's health or happiness. Jack has thus invented a younger brother of the

name Earnest who lives in Albany. Similarly Algy has a fictitious friend who is an invaluable permanent invalid called Bunbury in order that he may be able to go down into the country whenever he chooses. Both of them have invented a secret world away from the moral constrains of society so that they can happily lead a life of pleasures uninhibited. Algy makes interesting observations on Victorian society while encouraging bunburying even after marriage. He says: “In marriage three is company and two is none” and that the happy English home has proved it (369). While justifying the act of Bunburying Algy says that it is possible to manage his roles as both a gentleman and a pleasure seeker: “My duty as a gentleman has never interfered with my pleasure in the smallest degree” (391).

After having established his characters’ unconventional attitude towards social and moral life, Wilde shows how these two men meet each other as part of their secret lives. Jack comes to the town under the pretext of meeting his brother and spends time with Algernon. Similarly, Algy manages to roam around with Jack under the pretext of meeting his invalid friend. For instance, Algy escapes from the family dinner for which Lady Bracknell invites him with the excuse of meeting Mr. Bunbury, and asks Jack to dine with him that night. He asks Jack: “...Now if I get her (Lady Bracknell) out of the way for ten minutes, so that you can have an opportunity for proposing to Gwendolen, may I dine with you to-night at Willi’s”(370). This shows how Algy makes use of invalid Bunbury to meet Jack. . The very use of the word ‘invalid’ by Wilde is striking and the pun on the word does not go unnoticed. More than the incapacitated nature of Bunbury, it seems to suggest the very imaginary position he holds. It also indicates the attitude of the Victorian society that sought to negate such same-sex relationships.

Though Jack and Algy are best buddies both of them discourage the other having a serious relationship with a woman. Algy tells Jack “the way you (Jack) flirt with Gwendolen is perfectly disgraceful. It is almost as bad as the way Gwendolen flirts with you” (364). He hesitates to give his consent for Jack’s marriage with Gwendolen, he being privileged to be her first cousin. Similarly Jack tries to keep all the information related to Cecily a secret from Algy. When Algy expresses his wish to meet Cecily, Jack replies that he would take good care so that Algy would never meet Cecily. Moreover, there are instances of implicit sexual overtones in certain exchanges between Jack and Algernon:

> Algernon: What shall we do after dinner? Go to a theatre?
>
> Jack: Oh no! I loathe listening
>
> Algernon: Well, let us go to the club?
>
> Jack: Oh no! I hate talking
>
> Algernon: Well, might trot round to the Empire at ten?
>
> Jack: Oh, no! I can’t bear looking at things. It is so silly
>
> Algernon: Well, what shall we do?
>
> Jack: Nothing.
>
> Algernon: It is awfully hard work doing nothing. However, I don’t mind hard work where there is no definite object of any kind. (379-80)

Jack could not stand Algy’s presence in his country house where he puts on the mask of a gentleman. He exclaims “Your (Algernon) presence in my garden is utterly absurd” (392). Algy’s presence invites a clash between Jack’s secret life and

moral life. In the country he is a morally upright gentleman, but with Algy he has an entirely different attitude towards life. So Algy's presence in his country house leads to a conflict between Jack's Id and Superego.

Lady Bracknell acts as the society's mouth piece when she says, "He seems to have had great confidence in the opinion of his physicians. I am glad, however, that he made up his mind at the last to some definite course of action, and acted under proper medical advice. And now that we have finally got rid of Mr. Bunbury..." (408). She hints at the necessity to put an end to the secret life of pleasures he is leading. It becomes more evident when she says, "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 die" (371). Here again, like the death of Campbell in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the reference to the 'living or dying' of Bunbury by Lady Bracknell is yet again an attempt to portray the society's desire to bury the existence of homoerotic tendencies.

Algy and Jack decide to cease the secret life together. It is only their mutual presence that makes the secret life worth living for both of them. So if one decides to put an end to it the other naturally decides the same. When Jack decides to 'kill' his invented brother so that he can propose to Gwendolen he advises Algy to do the same with Mr. Bunbury so that both of them will be relieved of their double life simultaneously. A change in one's life style will disturb the other. So the change, if it happens, should happen in both their lives. This evidently suggests the strong bonding between the two men. When Jack chooses to enter into a heterosexual relationship he confesses that he would kill his imaginary brother if Gwendolen accepts his proposal. Since the institution of marriage demands high moral tones on all subjects, he would have to give up his life of pleasure after marriage. He advises Algy to do the same with his invalid friend. He warns Algy that the secret life may one day lead him to

trouble: “Jack, if you don’t take care, your friend Bunbury will get you into a serious scrape some day” (381). He feels relieved of worries when Algy too is forced to stop his secret life: “Well, the only small satisfaction I have in the whole of this wretched business is that your friend Bunbury is quite exploded. You won’t be able to run down to the country quite as often as you used to do, dear Algy. And a very good thing too” (402).

Although the strict norms of society insist on leading a morally upright life the desire to relish a life of pleasure takes shape in different forms. Jack and Algy offer moral satisfaction to the society only when their social environment forces them to, but disappears for long periods during which they give expression to their real self. Bunburying offers them the freedom of an ‘another world’ where the moral codes do not restrict them from being true to themselves. They enjoy their masked second life that takes them to the zenith of pleasures. Jack and Algy appear to be two such characters that Wilde has paired in his play so as to give expression to his own suppressed desires. They are not definitely presented as homosexuals but as two individuals who are intimately associated with each other. They seem to be perfectly content and comfortable in each other’s company. It is amusing to observe two grown up people grabbing muffins from each other and having silly fights at a crucial period of their life. Pairing of the two characters, Jack and Algy, thus acts as a device which offers the playwright a space where his unacceptable desires get sublimated into an acceptable literary image. Wilde, in the play, has thus paradoxically given expression to the ‘deviant’ sexual orientation, while satisfying the Victorian moral needs as well.

Similarly, in the short story “The Devoted Friend” there is perhaps somewhat more explicit pairing between two individuals. But unlike *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, here the homoerotic elements are not overtly displayed. Wilde has enjoyed,

"coupling the erotic with the ephemeral, and setting both in the immortal pantheon of art" (Bayley 7).

"The Devoted Friend" is all about the friendship between two men, Hugh, the Miller and Hans. Little Hans makes a living by selling the flowers and fruit from his beautiful garden. Hugh the wealthy Miller claims to be a good friend of little Hans. He always takes a lot of little Hans' flowers or fruit whenever he visits him. But he never shows any concern for Hans during the difficult time of the year. Miller offers Hans his old wheelbarrow, for Hans has sold his during the winter. Miller demands more and more from Hans in return for his wheelbarrow. He tells Hans that it would be unfriendly to refuse him the flowers or the plank since he has promised him his wheelbarrow. On a stormy night Miller sends Hans to fetch the doctor to treat his injured son. Hans wanders onto the moor and drowns in a pool.

It is not so uncommon to have a faithful friend like Hans, but friends like Miller who live like parasites also do exist. Their friendship cannot be called mutual love, instead one exploits the other. Masochism, the tendency to derive sexual gratification from one's own pain or humiliation, is often considered by psychoanalysts as a form of perversion. Freud describes it as "the most common and most significant of all the perversions" (*The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works* 70). Masochism is one focus of Leo Bersani's The Freudian Body, a study which shows how perversions work. Bersani observes that an aberrational 'part' of sexuality called masochism, may become the 'whole' as a result of which there occurs a centring of what was constructed as marginal (89). For him "the marginality of sadomasochism would consist of nothing less than its isolating, even its making visible, the ontological grounds of the sexual" (41). The Miller

dominates the relationship and Hans is a deliberately passive partner who considers it his duty to be submissive. Miller never misses a chance to exploit Hans and gives him nothing in return. The most ironical part of the situation is that Hans himself is not worried about Miller's selfishness. "Hans never troubled his head about these things" ("The Devoted Friend" 26).

The Water-rat who appears in the beginning of the story acts as the writer's mouthpiece when he comments that "I know of nothing in the world that is either nobler or rarer than a devoted friendship" (24). In the story Wilde speaks about devoted friendship which is nobler than love, but shows how it ruins one's life. Prophetically enough, it comes true in the life of author himself.

Hesketh Pearson's description of Wilde's relationship with Douglas in his work *The Life of Oscar Wilde* clearly reminds us of Hans' friendship with Miller. Miller is both a friend and an enemy to Hans. Hans is very much devoted to Miller, but Miller ruins Hans' life. Similarly, it is Wilde's affection and devotion to Douglas that ruins his life.

> For nearly three years – so runs his story – Douglas had been by his side except at rare intervals. Throughout that period he had kept the young man in luxury, buying him whatever he wanted, and even paying his gambling debts... Douglas had ruined him both ethically and artistically...Several times a year Wilde had ended their friendship, only renewing it after tearful entreaties, pitiful appeals, and threats of suicide...he (Douglas) had gambled with Wilde's life as he had gambled with his money...he was in reality Wilde's enemy...and he had completed Wilde's ruin in less than three years. (Pearson 324-5)

Like Wilde who keeps Douglas in luxury and pays his gambling debts, Hans also offers all his flowers to Miller and even gives his plank which leaves him in trouble. Wilde could not cease his friendship with Douglas though it destroyed his artistic career. Similarly, Hans tries to say no to Miller on several occasions, but in vain. Miller uses the wheelbarrow as a means to exploit Hans. The devoted friendship, in fact ruins both the lives of Hans and Wilde. Even Wilde's relationship with his first male lover, Robert Ross can be said to have ruined his life. "He (Robert Ross) himself was Wilde's first male lover and so could be seen to have set Wilde on the path which led to his humiliation and imprisonment for the practice of homosexuality" (Varty 5).

The same-sex pairings in *The Picture of Dorian Gray, The Importance of Being Earnest* and "The Model Millionaire" are very much explicit where the characters express their attraction towards their male pair through their words and deeds, where as in the story "The Star Child" the same-sex pairing takes a different form. Instead of the characters who try to form an intimate relationship with their pairs, here there are only subtle references to their intimacy which only a critical eye can decipher. Wilde has "preferred to leave his audience to do the work of drawing their own conclusions for themselves" (Bayley 7).

"The Star Child" is a moral fable that teaches the value of goodness and virtue. The title character, the Star child is found by two woodcutters in an awful storm. One among them brings him up with his own children. But the Star child who is extremely handsome believes that he is superior to others, and becomes arrogant and cruel. Once, his real mother, a beggar woman, comes to his village, but he denies her and mocks her for ugliness. As a result he becomes ugly with the face like a toad and skin like an adder. He realises his mistake and goes in search of his mother. After three years he reaches a city gate where the guards sell him as a slave to a magician, who

uses him to get three pieces of gold. The Star child fetches the gold but gives them to a leper who begs for it, for which he is mercilessly beaten up by the magician. Finally it is disclosed that the beggar woman and the leper are his mother and father, and they are the queen and king of that city.

The pairing occurs in the very beginning of the story. Instead of a woodcutter getting an abandoned baby from the woods, Wilde has used a pair of woodcutters. Though the number of woodcutters makes no remarkable change in the story Wilde seems to have preferred a pair of woodcutters. The story begins with these two woodcutters making their way home through a pine forest in a deadly winter. The description of the weather is highly ambivalent. A paradoxical situation is created by addressing the nature as both “dead earth laid out in her white shroud” and “the earth in her bridal dress” (“The Star Child” 150). It gives a ‘romantic view of the situation’ where they make merry amidst their pathetic plights.

The woodcutters are good companions who share their days of happiness and destitution. Poverty caused by the deadly winter has made them equally miserable and they sympathise with each other. Slowly one seems to dominate the relationship and the other acts like a submissive partner with maternal instincts. This happens when they discover the baby in the forest. One of them thinks of leaving the child in the forest itself and to get rid of this unexpected burden. But the other woodcutter rejects this idea and is kind enough to take the baby home. He behaves like an affectionate mother who showers unconditional love on her children. In the preface to *Gender Trouble* Butler has referred to this tendency among the butch and femme lesbians/gay to play the role of ‘dads’ and ‘moms’ respectively (Preface 1999 xii). The woodcutter’s wife is at first reluctant to receive the child. She accepts the child only when he convinces her.

It looks quite accidental that the product of the woodcutters' companionship is a baby. They went to the forest together and came back with a baby. This boy, the star child, later becomes a boy of beauty and Narcissistic pride. Though seemingly two unimportant characters, the woodcutters acquire a prominent meaning in the way they are paired. The writer has spared not many words to describe and develop these characters. But the description of nature and weather and the subtle references to the woodcutters' relationship widen the dimensions of interpretation.

"The Sphinx without a Secret" is another story like "The Star Child" where the prime focus is on the title character, but the relationship between the narrator and Lord Murchison, though not explicitly homoerotic, offers homosexual connotations.

"The Sphinx without a Secret" is centred on the relationship between Lord Murchison and Lady Alroy. The narrator meets his friend Lord Murchison in a cafe after a long while. Murchison dines with the narrator and tells him the reason of his sorrow. He was in love with a widow named, Lady Alroy and wanted to marry her. One day Murchison happened to see her enter a lodging house, with veiled face. When he asked her about it she denied the fact. She looked like a woman with a secret; and he was frustrated by the mystery which surrounded her. He was unwilling to believe that she does not have any secret. So he broke up their relationship and left the country. Later he read in the newspaper that she died after catching a chill. He also learned from the land lady of the lodging house that lady Alroy was a woman without a secret.

The pairing occurs between the narrator and Lord Murchison. Though the story is primarily about the title character, the sphinx without a secret, she is presented as an object of discussion for the narrator and Murchison. The narrator describes the

nature of his friendship with Murchison in the very beginning of the story. He says he was attracted to Murchison because he was handsome and frank.

> We had not met since we had been at college together, nearly ten years before, so I was delighted to come across him again, and we shook hands warmly. At Oxford we had been great friends. I had liked him immensely; he was so handsome, so high-spirited, and so honourable. We used to say of him that he would be the best of fellows, if he did not always speak truth, but I think we really admired him all the more for his frankness. ("The Sphinx without a Secret" 200)

They were meeting after a long while. Murchison looked upset and narrator easily guessed the reason for his anxiety as 'woman': "He looked anxious and puzzled, and seemed to be in doubt about something...I concluded that it was a woman, and asked him if he was married yet" (200). The narrator very well knows Murchison's discomfort with women and concludes it to be the reason for his tension. Murchison's uneasiness with women and the narrator's ability to read his friend's mind give a different shade of colour to their friendship. They are quite comfortable with each other and enjoy their mutual presence. Murchison chooses the narrator as a companion to discuss his problem. To open up his heart Murchison takes him away from the crowded city so that they can sit and chat without much disturbances. As the narration progresses one gets the picture of their intimate friendship.

In the story 'marriage' does not actually take place. Murchison loves Lady Alroy and wants to propose to her. He is infatuated by her beauty but the mystery around her troubles and maddens him. He withdraws from the marriage because he suspects that she is involved in some secret. He wonders why chance has put him in

its track (203). Perhaps, the unconscious has played a role in deciding his fate. His thoughts seem to have been controlled by his unconscious drive to follow his alternative sexual orientation that he himself finds out a reason to revoke the marriage with Lady Alroy. Final revelation of Lady Alroy as a sphinx without any secret strengthens the argument that the cancellation of marriage was actually a play of the unconscious. It is his unconscious wish to withdraw from the marriage. Consequently he digs out a reason for not marrying Alroy, though he was much fascinated by her.

Another important feature of the story is the death of the title character. Death of Lady Alroy erases the heterosexual possibilities in the life of Murchison. It binds him closer to the narrator, thus strengthening the intimacy of their friendship. The friendship between Murchison and narrator seems to be as interesting in the story as the Sphinx without a secret. The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines the word 'sphinx' as "an enigmatic or mysterious person." In the context of this definition, the title becomes an antithetical statement or an oxymoron of sorts. The sphinx without her secret is definitely shorn off her mystery. The title thus makes a guarded statement that the 'secret' after all resides with the narrator. It probably indicates his hybrid sexual orientations.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick, one of the most influential queer theorists, has explored the narrative and thematic elaboration of sexual issues. In her *Epistemology of the Closet* she proposes that culture can be better understood through an epistemology of the closet, or an exploration of the 'secrets' surrounding sexual subjectivities:

> The gradually reifying effect of this refusal meant that by the end of the nineteenth century, when it had become fully current – as obvious

> to Queen Victoria as to Freud – that knowledge meant sexual knowledge, and secrets sexual secrets, there had in fact developed one particular sexuality that was distinctively constituted as secrecy: the perfect object for the by now insatiably exacerbated epistemological sexual anxiety of the turn-of-the century subject. (73)

In the play *Vera* also there are only subtle suggestions of homoerotic possibilities. There is an explicit pairing in the play, but the intimacy of their friendship takes only a contextual meaning of homosexuality. *Vera*, Wilde's first play, is a tragedy set in Russia. Vera, a barmaid joins the Nihilists group to avenge her brother who was killed by the soldiers of the Czar. She becomes the top assassin of the Nihilists group. She adores a fellow nihilist, Alexis, but hides her love since nihilists have sworn never to marry. Soon it is revealed that Alexis is actually Tsarevich, heir to Russian throne. Prince Paul, a cruel minister of the Czar criticizes Alexis' feelings for democratic uproar. Alexis ascends the throne when Michael assassinates the Czar. Prince Paul joins the nihilists once he is expelled by Alexis. Vera is entrusted with the task of killing Alexis. She is instructed to stab him and throw the dagger out as a signal to the nihilists. Alexis asks her to marry him. Her love for Alexis pulls her back from committing the murder. She stabs herself and throws the dagger out.

The Czar and Prince Paul form the male sex pair in the play. Prince Paul is shown as a man who is very much fond of food. He relates food with the burning political issues and varying human temperaments. He says, "...a prison where one is allowed to order one's own dinner is not at all a bad place" (Vera 20). He also claims that the only immortality that he desires is to invent a new sauce (21). Similarly he brings the analogy of food whenever he converses with people. Prince Paul's

obsession with food gives the audience a different impression of him, who is already a villain.

Gluttony is considered as a crucial sin that may trigger other deadly sins. Christian morality condemns it because the pleasure of the stomach is associated with the pleasures of the loins, namely the sin of lust. The 1973 film, *The Big Feast* features gluttony as an extravagant pleasure of the stomach and the loins, combining the sin of eating and the sin of flesh together. Prince Paul's extensive interest in food connotes to his secret lustful desires. His bonding with the Czar opens up the possibilities of his same-sex interest.

Alexie considers Prince Paul as the 'evil' influence on Czar who misguides him. He observes: "Evil genius of his life that you (Prince Paul) are! Before you came there was love left in him. It is you who have embittered his nature..." (21). Prince Paul himself is aware of his influence on Czar. He says, "Yes, I know I'm the most hated man in Russia, except your father, except your father, of course, prince..." (23).

Although an emperor who dictates tyranny, the Czar presents himself as a fragile and submissive friend to Prince Paul. He trusts not even his son, but Prince Paul. The exchanges between Prince Paul and Czar give a vivid picture of their friendship:

> Czar: What do you startle me like that for? No, I won't. (Watches the courtiers nervously) Why are you clattering your sword, Sir? (To Count Rouvaloff) Take it off, I shall have no man wear a sword in my presence (looking at Czarevitch), least of all my son. (To Prince Paul) You are not angry with me, Prince? You won't desert me, will you?

> Say you won't desert me. What do you want? You can have anything – anything
>
> Prince Paul (bowing very low): Sire! 'tis enough for me to have your confidence... (24)

Freud states that all elongated objects "such as sticks, tree-trunks and umbrellas (the opening of these last being comparable to an erection) may stand for the male organ - as well as all long, sharp weapons, such as knives, daggers and pikes" (*The Interpretation of Dreams* 470). This definition places the sword on par with the other phallic symbols. The Czar does not entertain any man wielding his sword before him, least of all his son. But his immediate response to Prince Paul after making the statement is one of passivity and passion. The shift in the imperative tone addressed to the others indicates their exclusion from the realm of his desires with the exception of Prince Paul.

Moreover, Vera is a 'feminine threat' to people like Czar and Prince Paul; and they are determined to destroy her. She stands for the hetero-normative social insistence that threatens people with alternative sexual orientations. Czar in his outrage exclaims, "Am I emperor for nothing, that a woman should hold me at bay? Vera Sabouroff shall be in my power, I swear it, before a week is ended, though I burn my whole city to find her..." (28). Czar knows that Prince Paul's company is inevitable for him to defeat Vera: "Ah, Prince, if every king in Europe had a minister like you" (28). Czar's tyranny is in fact a result of his submissiveness before Prince Paul which in turn reflects his ardent affection for the Prince.

The climax of the play portrays the social reality of same-sex relationships. Czar fails in his mission to destroy Vera and meets with his own death when Michel

shoots him. Prince Paul joins the nihilists whom he was once determined to destroy. Having no other choice before him, he succumbs to the social demands. But he nurtures his unconventional nature within himself, which is made evident when he says, “A family is a terrible encumbrance especially when one is not married” (35). The Czar and the Prince form a pair whose relationship, though apparently political, gives indications of mutual homoerotic sentiments through their dialogues, thus, leaving space for a homosexual reading of the text.

The play *The Duchess of Padua* features two different pairs, of which one has more homoerotic connotations than the other. It tells the story of Guido who was brought up by his uncle. Guido meets Moranzone in Padua in order to know about his parentage. Moranzone advises him to leave his best friend Ascanio so as to begin his mission of revenging his father’s death by the hands of Simone Gesso. But Guido falls in love with Beatrice, which she reciprocates. Guido withdraws from his mission and decides not to kill the Duke. He spares him, but Beatrice takes the Duke’s life so that she can marry Guido. Guido is shocked by the sin she has committed and rejects her. In her anger she puts the blame on him. Guido is brought to trial. Guido protects her by admitting that he has murdered the Duke; and so the date is set for his execution. Beatrice visits Guido in his cell and asks him to forgive her. She drinks the poison that was kept for the prisoner and dies. Guido kisses Beatrice and kills himself with her knife.

The play features two same-sex pairs. The first is Ascanio and Guido. Ascanio comes in the initial expository phase of the play where the central character, Guido is also introduced. Ascanio’s presence offers to give a vivid picture of Guido’s character and the nature of their friendship. Ascanio is Guido’s soul-mate with whom he shares all the secrets of his life. Guido has brought him to Padua in his mission to know

about his father. But Moranzone insists on disclosing the secret to Guido alone, and Guido unwillingly sends Ascanio away:

> Guido: This is my dearest friend, who out of love has followed me to Padua; as two brothers. There is no secret which we do not share.
>
> Moranzone: There is one secret which we do not share. Bid him go hence
>
> Guido (to Ascanio): Come back within the hour. He does not know that nothing in this world can dim the perfect mirror of our love. Within the hour come.
>
> Ascanio: Speak not to him; there is a dreadful terror in his look.
>
> Guido: Nay, nay, I doubt not that he has come to tell that I am some great Lord of Italy, And we will have long days of joy together... (*The Duchess of Padua* 55)

When Moranzone asks Guido to banish his friend from his heart, he expresses his difficulty in doing so: “From Padua, not from my heart” (63). The final exchanges between Guido and Ascanio resemble the farewell of two lovers:

> Guido: Why, that we two must part, Ascanio.
>
> Ascanio: That would be news indeed, but it is not true.
>
> Guido: too true it is, you must get hence, Ascanio, And never look upon my face again
>
> Ascanio: ...cannot I be your serving man? I will tend you with more love than any hired servant.

> Guido (clasping his hand): Ascanio!
>
> Ascanio: ...Shall we never more sit hand in hand, as we were wont to sit...must I go hence without a word of love?
>
> Guido: You must go hence, and may love go with you...let us part now. (64-65)

The second pair is Guido and the Duke. Guido leaves Ascanio's company when he enters into a relationship with the Duke. When Moranzone informs Guido that his father was betrayed and sold by the Duke, Guido impulsively decides to kill the Duke. But, Moranzone advises Guido to present the Duke a slow death, because he believes that sudden death causes less harm: "...death comes best when it comes suddenly. Thy father was betrayed, there is your cue; for you shall sell the seller in his turn... Thou shall o'nights pledge him in wine, drink from his cup, and be his intimate, so he will fawn on thee, love thee, and trust thee in all secret things" (57).

Consequently, Guido tries to establish an intimate relationship with the Duke. Utmost care is taken in the description and establishment of the duke's character as well. His dialogues display his hypocrisy, secrecy, and interest in men: "if you would have the lion's share of life you must wear the fox's skin... I would have *men* about me. As for conscience, Conscience is but the name which cowardice fleeing from battle scrawls upon its shield..." (62). Ironically enough, Guido "forswears all love of women" (66) when he decides to make a relationship with the Duke. When the Duchess sees the Duke walk leaning on Guido, she observes that Guido is so affected by the Duke that "he never leaves his side, as though he loved him" (73).

Guido falls in love with the Duchess. But, when Moranzone sends him his father's dagger he is reminded of his mission to avenge his father. He then asks Duchess to banish him from her heart. He tells her, "there lies a barrier between us two we dare not pass" (81). Duchess identifies the barrier as her own husband, and hence kills the Duke. After murdering the Duke she tells Guido, "For you! I did it all for you: have you forgotten? You said there was a barrier between us; That barrier lies now in the upper chamber, upset, overthrown, beaten and battered down, and will not part us ever" (96). If it is Guido's love for the Duke that pulls him away from the Duchess, then again the Duke could be the barrier between them.

But contrary to expectations, when it is time for Guido to avenge his father's death he resolves not to kill the Duke. He confesses that he would have killed the Duke the moment he saw him in the open square, but Moranzone wanted him to form an intimate relationship with the Duke: "Guido: 'T was thou that hindered me; I would have killed him in the open square, the day I saw him first" (89). When the relationship became more and more intimate Guido could not kill the Duke. Moranzone is shocked to know that Guido has withdrawn from his mission. He exclaims: "...what bastard blood flows in your veins that when you have your enemy in your grasp you let him go! I would that I had left you with the dull hinds that reared you" (92).

Duchess has killed the Duke with the intention of getting united with Guido. In a way Duchess has fulfilled Guido's mission of avenging his father's death. But instead of appreciating the Duchess he blames her for the crime she has committed:

> Guido: O damned saint! O angel fresh from hell! What bloody devil tempted thee to this! That thou hast killed thy husband that is nothing-

> hell was already gaping for his soul- but thou hast murdered Love, and in its place hast set a horrible and bloodstained thing, whose very breath breeds pestilence and plague, and strangles Love. (95)

Guido would have accepted the Duchess, but when he learns that she has killed the Duke he denounces her. It gives subtle suggestion to the fact that Guido's love for the Duke is greater than his love for the Duchess. Guido admits that his love for the Duchess ceased the moment she killed the Duke: "Get thee gone: The dead man is a ghost, and our love too...that when you slew your lord you slew it also. Do you not see?" (99).

Out of anger and despair the Duchess betrays Guido, who is then arrested and produced before the court for trial. Later on Duchess regrets for what she has done to Guido. She tries to help him, but in vain. The play ends with the tragic union of Guido and Duchess in their death.

Guido reminds us of Hamlet who procrastinates his act of killing king Claudius. Earnest Jones in his essay "Hamlet and Oedipus" tries to give a psychoanalytic reading of Hamlet's procrastination. Hamlet sees his own alter ego in Claudius who has killed his father and married his mother. Hamlet could not hurt his alter Ego, hence he spares Claudius on several occasions. Similarly Guido fails to carry out his mission of avenging his father's death. Unlike Hamlet, Guido's difficulty is his love for the Duke. He is caught between his love for the Duke and his moral responsibilities as a son.

Wilde's "The Happy Prince" is his only short story where the pairing is between two non-human entities. Wilde has explored the possibilities of a love story through the emotional bonding between a statue and a bird. The fact that he has

attributed male gender to both of them is of grave importance in analysing the statue and the bird as a pair.

Wilde's characters, whether animal or human, in his fables are specifically referred to as either male or female. Thus a rabbit or even a rose in his story is either 'he' or 'she' rather than being just an 'it'. Attribution of specific pronouns seems to have a serious role to play in the realm of signification than simply amusing the children. "The Happy Prince" is ostensibly a fantasy story for children. It is about a beautiful statue of Happy Prince covered in gold and jewels. The Prince appears to be happy but feels greatly for the underprivileged. He seeks assistance from a Swallow to help the people who are living in poverty. At first the Prince gives the ruby of his sword, then sapphires of his eyes, finally pieces of his gold leaf to those who are in need, until all of the gold is gone. At the same time the Swallow also suffers as the weather gets steadily colder, and he dies at the statue's feet. The statue being no longer beautiful is removed and melted down. However, the Prince's lead heart is thrown into a garbage heap with the dead Swallow.

The description of the statue of Happy Prince focuses mainly on its physical charm and greatness. People greatly admire the beauty of the statue. "High above the city, on a tall column, stood the statue of the Happy Prince. He was gilded all over with thin leaves of fine gold, for eyes he had two bright sapphires, and a large red ruby glowed on his sword-hilt. He was very much admired indeed" ("The Happy Prince" 3). Although a mere statue, tender emotions like love, pity and kindness are attributed to it. Moreover the reference to the 'sword with the red ruby' does not seem coincidental in the context of reading Wilde. Red ruby has been always been held parallel to the heart.

The characterisation of the Swallow is also done with careful specificity. Firstly, it is a male Swallow. He falls in love with a beautiful Reed and decides to marry her. But his courtship does not last long and he begins to tire of his lady love. He thinks of her as a coquette who is flirting with the Wind. He does not want to continue his relationship with her, and hence finds fault with her. His loss of interest in the Reed in a sense opens possibilities for him to develop a new relationship with the statue.

The Swallow meets the statue and finds solace 'between the feet' of the Happy Prince. "Then he saw the statue on the tall column. 'I will put up there', he cried; 'it is a fine position with plenty of fresh air'. So he alighted just between the feet of the Happy Prince" (4).

He soon develops an intimate relationship with the Happy Prince. The Prince asks Swallow to stay with him for some nights. Despite the fact that the Swallow has to reach Egypt to join his friends he stays back to help the Prince. He fulfils the Prince's wish to help the poor and the needy. Gradually their friendship grows to such an intimacy that the Swallow disregards his pathetic health condition and decides to stay with the Happy Prince. When the Prince becomes blind, having given his eyes to the poor, Swallow becomes the apple of his eyes.

> Then the Swallow came back to the Prince. 'You are blind now,' he said, 'so I will stay with you always.' 'No, little Swallow,' said the poor Prince, 'you must go away to Egypt.' 'I will stay with you always', said the Swallow, and he slept at the Prince's feet. All the next day he sat on the Prince's shoulder, and told him stories of what he had seen in strange lands. (9)

The Swallow is supposed to be in Egypt in the winter, where the “sun is warm” (5). But, for the Prince he decides to endure the chilling winter.

> The poor little Swallow grew colder and colder, but he would not leave the Prince, he loved him too well... But at last he knew that he was going to die. He had just strength to fly up to the Prince’s shoulder once more. ‘Good- bye, dear Prince!’ he murmured, ‘will you let me kiss your hand?’
>
> ‘I am glad that you are going to Egypt at last, little Swallow,’ said the Prince, ‘you have stayed too long here; but you must kiss me on the lips, for I love you.’
>
> ‘It is not to Egypt that I am going,’ said the Swallow. ‘I am going to the House of Death. Death is the brother of Sleep, is he not?’
>
> And he kissed the Happy Prince on the lips, and fell down dead at his feet.
>
> At that moment a curious crack sounded inside the statue, as if something had broken. The fact is that the leaden heart had snapped right in two. It certainly was a dreadfully hard frost. (10)

Like two ardent lovers they part kissing on the lips. The story has a typical ending of a tragic love story where both the lovers meet with their tragic death for the cause of their love. The Swallow sacrifices his life for the Prince whom he loved a lot. And the Prince dies of a broken heart. The ending becomes more dramatic as the workers throw the Prince’s heart “on a dust- heap where the dead Swallow was also

lying" (11). The lovers are finally 'canonised' when the Angels of Gods rightly chose them as the "two precious things in the city" (11).

The innocent children's story gains a different insinuation while analysing the intimate friendship between the Swallow and the Prince. On the superficial realm it is just a relationship between a bird and an inanimate object, but their friendship implicitly displays the features of male-male bonding.

Explicit same sex pairing can be traced in some of Wilde's poems as well. In many of his poems Wilde has used images from ancient classics and myths in order to contrast the bleak Christian world with the bright pagan world. One of his long poems, "The Sphinx" reflects the typical Victorian fascination in ancient Egypt. The poet imagines a sphinx in his room, and the poem is composed as a monologue of the speaker addressed to the sphinx. Anne Varty observes this poem as an "exploration of forbidden sexuality" (xxii). There is an explicit same-sex pairing between the speaker of the poem and the sphinx. The poet addresses the sphinx as "half woman and half animal" ("The Sphinx" 127), suggesting to the reader that he is referring to the sphinx of Greek mythology. The sphinx is half woman in Greek mythology. She has a human head, body of a lion, wings of a bird and tail of a serpent. She is often presented as treacherous and merciless who eats all those who fail to answer her riddles. In Egyptian mythology the sphinx has the head of a man. Unlike the Greek myth, Egyptian sphinx is more benevolent (Cartwright 1). Although the poet calls it a 'half woman', there are so many references to Egypt and Nile in the poem that the Sphinx in question is undoubtedly Egyptian. The sphinx "can read the Heiroglyphs" (128), "pyramid is her lupanar" (130) and the poet's final command to the sphinx to go back, "Away to Egypt" (133) confuse the gender of the human half. If it belongs to Egypt it has to be half man. Ambiguity in the gender of the sphinx gives the poet social

permission for masked homoerotic expressions. By deliberately confusing the readers about Greek and Egyptian Sphinx, Wilde, who has deep knowledge in ancient mythologies, is cleverly misleading the Victorian readers from interpreting his admiration for the sphinx as his love for a male lover.

Foucault, taking the case of Herculine Barbin, has explained the concept of "unregulated field of pleasures prior to the imposition of the law of univocal sex" (Butler 133). Herculine's anatomy confuses the categories of sex. Foucault insists that in Herculine's case it is 'non-identity' at play rather than a variety of female identities. He points out that "sexual non-identity is promoted in homosexual context" (137), and homosexuality is instrumental in overthrowing the categories of sex.

Moreover, the speaker's admiration for the sphinx and the poet's dedication of the poem to "Marcel Schwob in friendship and in admiration" (127) strengthens the possible homosexual connotations. The poet is addressing his male lover when he says, "Come forth my lovely languorous Sphinx! And put your head upon my/knee" (127), but in disguise.

The poet asks the sphinx to tell him about 'her/his' memories, particularly the erotic encounters s/he has witnessed. The fact that the sphinx was cursed by the priests for seizing their snake to slake her/his "passion by the shuddering palms" (129), and the sphinx's various sexual encounters with animals like giant lizard, monstrous hippopotamus, horrible chimera and gilt-scaled dragons offer insight into the different ways in which the sphinx derives sexual pleasures, suggesting even masturbation.

He supposes that Ammon was sphinx's lover: "Great Ammon was your bedfellow! He lay with you beside the Nile" (130). Then the speaker imagines the

sphinx's erotic relationship with Ammon, which is in fact an attempt to acquire sexual gratification by the indulgent imagination of the speaker: "You kissed his mouth with mouths of flame: you made the horned god your own/ You stood behind him on his throne: you called him by his secret name./ You whispered monstrous oracles into the caves of his ears: / With blood of goats and blood of steers you taught him monstrous miracles" (131). Finally, when Ammon is crushed to death, the poet asks the sphinx to "make anew thy mutilated paramour!" (133), and he also asks the sphinx to "wake mad passion in the senseless stone" (133).

The poet's final confession that the sphinx's intimacy is arousing forbidden desires in him, evidently proves his exploration of homoerotic love which he strives to attain through his admiration of the sphinx. He says, "You wake in me each bestial sense, you make me what I would not be. /You make my creed a barren sham, you wake foul dreams of sensual life," (135). Wilde was well aware of the Victorian populace's admiration for exotic Egyptian allusions and Greek mythologies. By alluding to the Sphinx, he was probably trying to euphemize homonormative behaviour.

He concludes the poem by invoking the image of crucifixion, which is typical of Wilde's poems. For Wilde pagan images stand for unrestricted sexual expression, where as Christian world represent social and religious values. He is constantly reminded of his moral responsibilities and social recognition. Hence, the inevitable return to the Christian world after an imaginary exploration of forbidden love in the pagan world.

In the poem "Endymion" the pairing is between the poet and his love. The poet asks the moon to leave his love to him. He asks the moon to be a guardian or

sentinel to his love. The “purple shoon” is a recurring image in the poem. The colour purple is often used to denote gay people. In gender lexicons, pink is associated with the female and blue with the males. Purple says C.Violette “ is a blend of the traditionally gender-identified colors pink and blue, blurring the lines, subverting and challenging gender norms” (Para 3). The LGBTQ community celebrates Spirit Day to promote LGBTQ awareness and solidarity in October every year. On this day the community wears purple coloured attires. Therefore the frequent references to the colour purple by Wilde are highly connotative of his sexual inclination and attempt to challenge gender norms.The poet keeps reminding the moon that his love is “shod with purple shoon” (46) indicating his gay orientation. He describes his love thus: “...he is soft as any dove, And brown and curly is his hair” (46). He asks the moon to tell his love that he is waiting for him. But when the lover does not come back he says, “False moon! False moon! O waning moon!/ Where is my own true love gone,/ Where are the lips vermilion./ The shepherd’s crook, the purple shoon?”(47) He concludes the poem asserting that his lover is not meant for the moon. The lady moon has the young Endymion, a beautiful youth who was loved by the moon. He is put into sleep, and every night the moon embraces him. The poet tells the moon, “Thou hast the lips that should be kissed” (47). He encourages the moon to have relationship with Endymion, but asks to spare his love.

As a poet Wilde is greatly inspired and influenced by the romantic poet, John Keats. The poem “The Grave of Keats” displays the poet’s affection and admiration for Keats. The poet describes Keats the way one admires his love: “O Sweet lips since those of Mitylene!” (71). Interestingly enough, Mytiline is the capital and port of the island of Lesbos. The common term lesbian is an allusion to the Greek poet Sappho whose abode was the Island of Lesbos. Mytilene is thus closely associated with

homosexuality. The poet promises that, “tears like mine will keep thy memory green/ As Isabella did her Basil tree” (71). In Keats poem, “Isabella, or the Pot of Basil” Isabella’a attachment with the pot of Basil tree underscores her ardent love for her lover Lorenzo who was beheaded. By bringing the image of Isabella and Lorenzo poet celebrates his love for Keats. The allusion to the ‘Basil’ tree also recalls the character from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* who was obsessed with Dorian, thereby cementing the hypothesis of same-sex love.

Poet’s description of his love in poems such as “Quia Multum Amavi” and “At Verona” seems equally applicable to a boy lover. In most of these poems the association is between the poet and a character within the poem. In “At Verona” a hopeless prisoner grieves over his pathetic plight. He says death would have been a better alternative for him. But at the end he consoles himself saying, “I do possess what none can take away/ My love, and all the glory of the stars” (89). The reference to war and the presence of love behind the “prison’s blinded bars” (89) underscore the homoerotic possibilities. Researches on the practices associated with sex-segregated spatial settings – prisons and other carceral institutions, the armed services, boarding schools – to explore alterity of sexual systems expose the possibilities of homosexual relationships among the prisoners (Kunzel 253). Christopher Hensley observes that incarcerated men are likely to indulge in homosexual attitudes (434). Rosemary Ricciardelli points out that “heteronormativity and homophobia are pervasive in prisoner cultures and are reflected in how sexuality is discursively constructed and acted out by incarcerated men” (336). The poem can be compared to Shakespeare’s Sonnet 29 in its thematic concern. In the sonnet the speaker bemoans his status but feels better when he thinks about his beloved. The sonnet being a part of the Fair

Youth sequence (sonnets 1-126) can very well be read as expressing the poet's love for his male love.

"Quia Multum Amavi" leaves more scope for homosexual interpretations. The poet addresses his heart. He expresses his passion for his love. It pains him that his beloved shows only a kind of liking that could not have been mistaken for love: "hadst thou liked me less and loved me more" (92). It is quite ambiguous why there is only liking and not loving. In the concluding lines poet confesses that he is stricken with remorse though he is glad to have been in love: "Yet, Though remorse, youth's white-faced seneschal,/ Tread on my heels with all his retinue/ I am most glad I loved thee" (92). The poet is thus speaking about a youthful love which he is guilty of.

Wilde has thus consciously or unconsciously given vent to his repressed desires through the portrayal of same-sex pairs in his works. As Wilde himself has pointed out, an artist always reveals his true self in his literary creations. The literary world offers him a space where he does not have to succumb to the moral needs of society. "Wilde states that a true artist...reveals himself so perfectly in his work that unless a biographer has something more valuable to give us than idle anecdotes and unmeaning tales, his labour is misspent and his industry misdirected" (Ghosal 49). Wilde's works act as polyphonic narratives giving articulations to both the repressed desires of the author and also the repressive attitude of the Victorian society that considered homosexuality as a taboo. Parallel to the elucidation of same-sex pairing, the social responses to homoeroticism are also equally relevant. The recurring image of death breaking the male-male bonding, the stringent attitude of Lady Bracknell all correspond to the social insistence on heteronormativity. "The Public voice which Wilde scorns is that which seeks to police culture; which is against cultural difference;

which reacts to the aesthetically unconventional by charging it with being either grossly unintelligible or grossly immoral" (8), remarks Dollimore.

D. H. Lawrence in his work *Studies in Classic American Literature* observes that the repressed emotions get expressed as literary texts, sometimes even without the conscious effort of the author. He argues that the author has no control over the return of the repressed. "The effects of its return in the tale, however, have enabled Lawrence to catch the author out in the act" (Wright 54).

Freud also makes a similar observation when he says that though the author is unaware of his work's rules and purposes, "nevertheless, we have not discovered anything in his work that is not already in it. We probably draw from the same source and work upon the same object, each of us by another method" (91-92). Works discussed in this chapter expose Wilde's transgression which figures in the language, dialogues, characters and symbols; and also the various kinds of resistance to this transgression. Same-sex pairing thus acts as a tool in these works to liberate the repressed desires of the artist. Wilde has consciously or unconsciously employed same-sex pairs in his works in order to articulate the repressed desires which were not acceptable or rather forbidden in the social space.

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Chapter 2

Mask Speaks more than the Face:

Symbolic Manifestation of Same-Sex Pairing

> "All art is at once surface and symbol. Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril. Those who read the symbol do so at their peril"
>
> (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 6).

The various mechanisms of the return of the repressed can be explained using different methods of psychology like Id psychology and Ego psychology. Id psychology or Instinct psychology focuses on the role of sexual instincts as the driving force of a person's life. Its principles are fixed in the notion that the work of art is the secret embodiment of the author's unconscious desires:

> The unconscious is thought of as close to the bodily sources of the pressure of need, from which libido derives, with its power to invade and transform experience, particularly in dream and fantasy. Its ability to mask itself thus enables it to appear in disguised form in activities where in the sexual origin is apparently unrecognisable, and only to be decoded with difficulty, even though the feeling they give rise to loses none of its intensity by such disguise. (Wright 37)

Freud proposes that the repressed desires and wishes which are normally prevented from surfacing into the conscious mind, take the form of images or symbols which have social permission for representation. Thus the repressed desires find outlet from the unconscious element of mind in disguise of images and symbols.

‘Symbolism’ is quite typical of psychoanalytic interpretation. The unconscious cannot speak directly and hence does so through images and symbols.

The pairing of same-sex in Oscar Wilde’s works comes across as a mechanism to liberate the libidinal desires of his unconscious. Representation of explicit same-sex pairing may sometimes raise moral disputes from the society. Hence Wilde, or more precisely his unconscious, devised another mechanism to find an outlet for his repressed desires. ‘All art is at once surface and symbol’, he (Wilde) would affirm and his own tales point the truth of this (Pearson 218). Wilde thus tries to liberate his unconscious desires through different symbolic manifestations of same-sex pairing. In the plot he uses some every day object which represents, stands for or suggests homosexuality. The disambiguation of such objects makes homosexual reading of the work possible. Symbolic representation gives the freedom to discuss the theme of homosexuality, but in disguise. There are no explicit same-sex pairs in some of the plots, but the images used as symbols attribute homosexuality to certain same-sex pairs. Sedgwick argues that Wilde had good reason to mask his same-sex passion in his works:

> For Wilde, in 1891 a young man with a very great deal to lose who was trying to embody his own talents and desires in a self-contradictory male-homosocial terrain where too much was not enough but, at the same time, anything at all might be too much, the collapse of the homo/hetero with self/other must also have been attractive for the protective/expressive camouflage it offered to distinctly gay content. (160)

Art fulfils the secret wishes of the mind by making use of strategies in order to overcome the resistance of consciousness: “Work is done by the dreamer and the artist

in order to transform their primitive desires into culturally acceptable meaning" (Wright 28).What is implied by Freud's notion of symbolism is that "the whole world can be observed narcissistically, the sexual drives that can attach themselves to anything the senses perceive" (Wright 41). Frederick Crews in his book, *The Sins of the Fathers: Hawthorne's Psychological Themes* observes that "the images and symbols are condensations and displacements of the libidinal impulse" (Wright 48). To put it in Wilde's own words, "an idea is of no value till it becomes incarnate and is made an image" (Ghosal 56).

Oscar Wilde's short stories, "The Remarkable Rocket", "The Canterville Ghost", and "The Selfish Giant"; his plays *Salome*, and *An Ideal Husband;* his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray;* and some of his poems are subjected to interpretations based on Id psychological model to explore the ways in which the repressed desires return. In these works for instance, Wilde employs symbols like 'Rocket' or 'Ghost', which have social permission for representation in literature, in order to speak about certain repressed desires which are normally prevented from getting projected into the conscious realm. Symbolisation is a process in which "some neutral objects stand for, or allude to, some aspect of sexual life or those persons connected with it..." (Storr 45). Homosexuality becomes one among the different significations of the text, though in the guise of some ordinary objects which are symbolic manifestations of same-sex pairing. A symbol means something which has a representative function. Anthony Storr observes that: "'Freudian symbols' are popularly supposed to be objects occurring in dreams or phantasies which represent the genitals. Thus, hollow containers, like caves or handbags, may symbolize the female genitals; while swords, umbrellas, or pencils may be taken as indicating the penis" (48).

In the short stories “The Selfish Giant” and “The Remarkable Rocket” the symbolic manifestation of same-sex pairing works on the principle of psychoanalysis which attribute phallic connotation to tall and erect objects.

In the fairy tale, “The Remarkable Rocket” the repressed material in the unconscious finds an outlet through the paring of two unimportant characters. In the story it functions on two different levels. The first part of the story establishes the representation of the Remarkable Rocket as a phallic symbol, which is typical of Freudian interpretation of attributing sexual connotation to objects. In the second phase the phallic symbol is shown to have possessing power only in association with the male-male bonding in the story.

“The Remarkable Rocket” is often regarded as a parody of aristocratic pride and masculine conceit. The story is basically about the marriage of a wealthy prince and a Russian princess who are madly in love with each other. Ostentatious preparations are made for their wedding to make it a huge celebration. It is said that the major attraction of the ceremony is its grand fireworks. Since the princess has never witnessed a firework in her life the prince is excited to show it to her. Though the fireworks in the story are inanimate objects, they are attributed human traits, the most important being their ability to talk with each other.

As the narration progresses the focus of the story shifts from the prince and princess to the fireworks. There is a Rocket among the fireworks who considers himself ‘remarkable’. He is arrogant, pompous and egoist. He tries to assert his superiority over other crackers by boasting about his special features. While talking to other crackers the Remarkable Rocket goes emotional and bursts into tears. As a result he goes wet before he is lit and becomes too damp to catch fire. The servants

dispose of him over the castle walls and he lands in a swamp. The Rocket does not realize that he has been thrown out. Instead he believes that he is being given time to recover his strength before being lit.

It is then that two boys come to the spot. While collecting wood to make a fire they mistake the rocket for a piece of kindling. Much to the Rocket's resentment, they place him on their fire. Eventually he dries up enough to ignite and explode. Unfortunately it happens in the middle of the day, and no one sees the display except a startled goose. And the story ends with the explosion of the Remarkable Rocket who still believes that he has created a great impression.

The Remarkable Rocket assumes phallic dimensions symbolically, in the very beginning itself when the marriage of prince and princess comes under the scanner. The firework is considered to be the highlight of the ceremony and it is planned to be set off in the midnight. It is also said that the 'virgin' bride has never seen a firework in her life and is waiting to see it on the day of her marriage.

> The last item on the programme was a grand display of fireworks, to be let off exactly at midnight. The little Princess had never seen a firework in her life...
>
> 'What are fireworks like? She asked the Prince, one morning, as she was walking on the terrace.
>
> 'They are like the Aurora Borealis'... 'only much more natural'... You must certainly see them'. ("The Remarkable Rocket" 36)

Her ignorance about the fireworks signifies her chastity. Being a ‘loyal and chaste’ bride she waits to see the firework on the day of her marriage only. Her anticipation makes the image all the more powerful. The Rocket himself claims that the Prince is lucky to have the Rocket let off on the day of his marriage: “‘How fortunate it is for the King’s son’ he remarked, ‘that he is to be married on the day on which I am to be let off. Really, if it had been arranged beforehand, it could not have turned out better for him’...” (37). The Rocket assumes a superior position among other crackers. He is so important that his inefficiency may adversely affect the marital life of the Prince and the Princess. It attributes a symbolic association between the efficiency of the Rocket and the Prince’s potency. Hence, the Rocket’s malfunction on the wedding night suggests the Prince’s disappointment in making love with the Princess. The Rocket himself makes a valid observation about the matter:

> ...‘Suppose, for instance, anything happened to me to-night, what a misfortune that would be for every one! The Prince and Princess would never be happy again, their whole married life would be spoiled; and as for the King, I know he would not get over it. Really, when I begin to reflect on the importance of my position, I am almost moved to tears’. (39)

An exploration of the parapraxis is possible in the second phase of the story where the application of the phallic symbol on two different types of relationships shows apparently two contrasting results. While the Remarkable Rocket proves itself a failure in the relationship between a male and a female, it successfully explodes when associated with the two little boys. Wilde seems to have unconsciously favoured a male-male bonding, where the Rocket effectively explodes. Though the explosion of

the rocket in the presence of the pair of boys stands symbolic of same-sex love, it also hints at Wilde's interest in pederasty.

In the case of the bonding between the Prince and the Princess (male-female), the Rocket is found to be desperately futile. On the wedding night, at the stroke of midnight when the fireworks begin, the Remarkable Rocket eagerly waits to get himself let off, but in vain. "Everyone was a great success except the Remarkable Rocket" (41). He is labelled as a 'Bad Rocket' and soon finds himself in the ditch: "The next day the workmen came to put everything tidy...Then one of them caught sight of him...and he threw him over the wall into the ditch" (41).

The situation is just the opposite when the Rocket comes to the possession of the two boys (male-male). They pick the Rocket out of the ditch and decide to put it into the fire to boil their kettle. Soon the Rocket catches fire: "The Rocket was very damp, so he took a long time to burn. At last, however, the fire caught him" (45). The language used for the description of the final explosion of the Remarkable Rocket is packed with sexual connotations or sexual innuendo. The words are carefully selected to suggest erection, orgasmic pleasure and ejaculation.

> 'Now I am going off!' he cried, and he made himself very stiff and straight. 'I know I shall go much higher than the stars, much higher than the moon, much higher than the sun. In fact, I shall go so high that-'
>
> Fizz! Fizz! Fizz! and he went straight up into the air.
>
> 'Delightful!' he cried, 'I shall go on like this for ever. What a success I am!'

> But nobody saw him.
>
> Then he began to feel a curious tingling sensation all over him.
>
> 'Now I am going to explode', he cried. 'I shall set the whole world on fire, and make such a noise, that nobody will talk about anything else for a year'. And he certainly did explode. Bang! Bang! went the gunpowder. There was no doubt about it. (45)

Where the Remarkable Rocket stands for phallic symbol it fails in a heterosexual relationship and proves itself successful when associated with a male-male bonding. The Rocket is thus used as a powerful phallic symbol to discuss the theme of homosexuality. The 'innocent' rocket image poses no threat to the moral codes of Victorian society, and hence its representation in literature is acceptable. Wilde makes use of this innocent image as a means to communicate a forbidden desire which is denied manifestation in the conscious realm of mind.

Similarly, in "The Selfish Giant" same-sex pairing attains its symbolic signification when phallic connotations are attributed to a tree trunk. The religious background of the story is only a pretext to discuss the theme of pederasty.

"The Selfish Giant" is a fantasy story about a giant who learns compassion from the innocence of children. The giant has a beautiful garden where children could play each day after school. The giant was away for seven years to visit one of his friends. When he returns he is infuriated to see the children trespassing. So he builds a huge wall around his garden and keeps a sign board reading TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED. The spring comes, but in the giant's garden winter remains. One day the children enter the garden through a hole in the wall, and a linnet is found

singing with flowers in full bloom all around. The children have brought spring back to his garden. The giant is moved by the sight and helps a little crying boy climb a tree. As the years pass the giant grows old and watches the children play in his garden. One day he sees that boy again under the same tree with wounds of love on his hands and feet. Later children find the giant lying dead under the tree covered in white blossom.

Wilde breaks the conventional expectations of a fairy tale by addressing his story to parents more than children. The subversion of conventions challenges moral values of the society. This strategy of reversal can be seen in both the thematic concerns and formal structures of Wilde's stories, which makes them a subtly unconventional.

> In "The Selfish Giant", the role of the child is to educate the giant into the art of good parenting, and the giant's reward for learning the values of tolerance and altruism is a divine death-bed revelation: the child he has cared for becomes mysteriously and magically transformed into an image of Christ offering His hand to lead the giant to heaven... all of this represents a thoroughgoing if simple reversal of the conventional fairy tale form, for Wilde's stories run directly counter to the nineteenth century tradition of moral tales for children that emphasise the role of parents in educating recalcitrant children into the norms and values of adult culture. (Small xv-xvi)

In this story again there is a play of the unconscious where the libidinal urges take the form of accepted literary images. Hence the significant religious imagery acts as a cover up to conceal the homosexual undertones in the story. An interpretation of

the story made in the light of Id psychology opens up the possibilities of implied paedophilic references. As stated in the case of "The Remarkable Rocket," an important subject often considered while talking about Wilde and his works is the influence of pederasty, a relationship between an adult man and an adolescent boy. Chris Bartle has observed the strong pederastic identity of Wilde's character when he emphasised "the need to consider the pederastic nature of Wilde's Eros as opposed to the homosexual one" (87). Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has also pointed out that "Wilde's own eros was most closely tuned to the note of...pederastic love" (57). Philippe Jullian, in his biography of Oscar Wilde narrates an incident from Wilde's school days which emphasises Wilde's interest in and affection for small boys. Jullian has cited the reference from Wilde's biographer, Frank Harris.

> According to him (Frank Harris), Oscar confided that he often went for walks with a boy a little younger than himself who listened agape to his improvisation: 'My friend had a wonderful gift for listening', he said. When the time came for him to leave school for good, Oscar did not disguise his joy. 'You seem to be glad to go', said the friend, asking if he could accompany Oscar to the railway station. On arrival there, the boy stayed in the compartment until the whistle sounded for the train to leave, where upon he took Oscar's head in his hands and kissed him on the mouth. Oscar sat there in amazement. 'This is love: this is what he meant – love. I was trembling all over. For a long while I sat, unable to think, all shaken with wonder and remorse'. (31)

The story is about a Giant and his beautiful garden. There is no blossom in the Giant's garden when spring comes all around. His garden alone remains barren with snow covered grass and frozen trees. The sterility of the land connotes to the Giant's

impotency. There is no change in the weather and in the Giant's condition. "His breath was like ice" ("The Selfish Giant" 20); and nothing warms him up. Suddenly spring comes to his garden with the arrival of the children. Children have brought spring to his garden and potency to his life.

He notices a small boy who wants to climb a tree. The tree trunk is a phallic symbol with sexual implications. The Giant helps the child mount the tree and the tree breaks at once into blossom. The image of child mounting the tree trunk and helping it bloom reinforces the sexual connotations in the story. The Giant and the small boy constitute the same-sex pair, connected with the symbolic image of the tree trunk.

> He was so small that he could not reach up to the branches of the tree, and he was wandering all around it, crying bitterly... And the Giant's heart melted as he looked out. 'How Selfish I have been!' he said, 'Now I know why the spring would not come here. I will put that poor little boy on top of the tree...' And the Giant stole up behind him and took him gently in his hand, and put him up into the tree. And the tree broke at once into blossom, and the birds came and sang on it, and the little boy stretched out his two arms and flung them round the Giant's neck and kissed him. (21)

The symbolic signification of the tree trunk becomes highly ironic in the religious background of the story. Freud, while explaining the mechanism of 'Sublimation' has identified the use of religious themes as an escape of the repressed from forbidden sphere: "A similar process is that of *sublimation,* whereby the repressed material is promoted into something grander or is disguised as something

noble. For instance, sexual urges may be given sublimated expression in the form of intense religious experiences or longings" (Barry 93).

Wilson Knight observes that "Christ is a key to Wilde's life" (147). His interest "increased every year until at length he almost identified himself with Christ and often spoke in parables" (147).

When the Giant recognises the role of children in bringing back spring he allows them to play with him. The little boy remains his favourite. "The Giant loved him the best because he had kissed him" ("The Selfish Giant" 22); but the little boy soon disappears and the Giant feels so sad. He longs for his first little friend and says "how I would like to see him!" (22). He grows old and stops playing with them, but happily watches them playing.

The climax of the story is highly paradoxical in the sense that it is packed with religious as well as sexual images. The child comes again to the garden, this time with wounds of love on his hands and feet. This image of child reminds us of Christ with wounds of love and sacrifice on his hands and feet. The divine entity has come to beckon the Giant to Paradise, suggesting Giant's death and entry to heaven. The Giant's wickedness is forgiven with the divine intervention. The religious aura, thus is a pretext in the story to cover up its sexual undertones because the climax is as symbolic as it is religious.

It is on a winter morning that the little child makes his second visit. His arrival has again brought blossom to his garden. "In the farthest corner of the garden was a tree quite covered with lovely white blossom. Its branches were all golden and silver fruit hung down from them, and underneath it stood the little boy he had loved" (22). The final image of the Giant "all covered with white blossom" (22) represents his

potency. Though it is winter around he alone enjoys blossom. The child's return has given him potency and peaceful death. Moreover, the description of the tree with its golden branches and silver fruits, and its blooming in winter evokes the picture of a well decorated Christmas tree, fortifying the religious imagery. Moreover, the roots of the Christmas tree can be traced back to the pagan customs of tree worship which was practiced by the ancient pagan communities in Europe; it was translated as a Christian tradition by way of the Scandinavian customs of adorning their houses and barns with evergreens around the New Year to keep away the devil and also by setting up a tree during Christmas for birds. This was further observed by the Germans by placing a Yule tree at an entrance or inside the house during the midwinter holidays (Encyclopaedia Britannica). The paradoxical interlacing of the pagan and the Christian seems to represent Wilde's own sexual orientation and also the fear of the moralizing forces of his time. Both desire and the fear of exhibiting it seem to conflict in his unconscious.

Again, in his poem "Le Jardin des Tuileries" Wilde gives subjective expression of the Giant's experience. He speaks about how he enjoyed the company of young children around him. The poet's identification with the Giant can be traced in the poem where he gives an account of similar experience:

> Ah! Cruel tree! If I were you,
>
> And children climbed me, for their sake
>
> Though it be winter I would break
>
> Into spring blossoms white and blue! (116)

While narrating the simple story of the Giant, Wilde unconsciously leaves space for a homosexual reading of the text. Here again he makes use of sexual symbols to take the repressed desires out of the unconscious realm. Though written in a religious backdrop the story acquires a different meaning with its powerful symbolic signification.

Attribution of homosexuality in human as well as non-human entities is yet another method employed by Wilde to give symbolic rendering of same-sex pairing in his works. “Symbols are treated by Freud as predominantly serving the function of concealment, or of making the anatomical aspects of sexuality more acceptable” (Storr 49). Chremamorphism is in function in the process of attributing homosexuality in the Ghost and Salome. “If personification is the technique of giving inanimate human characteristics, Chremamorphism is giving characteristics of an object to a person” (“Chremamorphism”). Here, the features of homosexuality are given to the ‘Ghost’ and ‘Salome’ in “The Canterville Ghost” and *Salome* respectively.

Gothic literature occupies a prominent space in the Victorian literary world. Hence, handling a forbidden feeling like homosexuality becomes easier under the pretext of an accepted literary image like ghost. Wilde has beautifully exploited the possibilities of symbolic manifestation of homosexuality through the image of a ghost in his short story “The Canterville Ghost”. Ghost stories amazingly appeal to the mass audience underscoring its cultural relevance worldwide. Reason and logic willingly refrain from the realm of the supernatural giving way to the play of imagination. Though often written in a way to be scary and frightening ghost stories serve some other purposes as well. Morality tales and comedies are instances. Attempts have always been made to dig out the possible parallel readings in popular ghost stories. In certain cases, while assuming the form of a ghost story on the surface level, it

implicitly draws attention to some gruesome social injustices. The vengeance of the ghost may thus get reverberated as the uproar of the wretched of the society. Julia Briggs in her essay "The Ghost Story" observes that the ghost story is the product of a divided society

> ... So the ghost story, with its many symbolisms of a world within us, beyond us or looming out of the past to our destruction, continues to be a potent and living literary form, offering its readers a serious and even self-reflexive message as well as the thrill of fear, and will continue to do so, as long as human life is terminated by the mystery of death, and the working of nature and our own minds remain opaque to us. (Briggs 143)

Oscar Wilde's "The Canterville Ghost" is ironically one of his funniest short stories. He paints an unconventional ghost that breaks all the traditional concepts of a ghost. The comic discrepancy between manners and morals is a common theme in many of Wilde's Society Comedies. The plot of "The Canterville Ghost" works on a similar kind of inversion. It is the evil avenging ghost which turns out to be the hero, and the members of family become villains. The implication is that criminal behaviour is produced by society's lack of moral imagination and sympathy – a theme Wilde was to take up in his essay "The Soul of Man under Socialism" and, in relation to his own imprisonment, in *De Profundis*. Unlike the deadly ghosts of many ghost stories here we have a suffering ghost whose attempts to frighten the Otis family always go futile. He is ridiculed, insulted and even tortured by the Otis family, especially the twins. The ghost has succeeded in frightening the members of the Canterville family, but this modern American family of Mr. Otis is not affected by the menacing stories about the ghost. When Lord Canterville warns Mr. Otis about the

ghost he says "...But there is no such thing, Sir, as a ghost, and I guess the laws of Nature are not going to be suspended for the British Aristocracy" ("The Canterville Ghost" 207) to which Lord Canterville replies "You are certainly very natural in America...and if you don't mind a ghost in the house, it is all right. Only you must remember I warned you" (207). The ghost apparently poses a threat to the British aristocracy, but remains ineffectual and natural to a modern pragmatic family from America. British aristocracy on the other hand fears the pranks of the ghost and tries to lead their social life away from the ghost's fatal games.

The ghost feared by the British aristocracy symbolises homosexuality, a social threat that challenged Victorian moral codes. "The Canterville Ghost" thus becomes a literary piece showcasing Victorian society's homophobia. The story seems to underscore a conflict between the old and new world orders in the sense that the Canterville family and the people related to it stand for the hard core Victorian morality and the Otis family who moved to the castle represents an ideal pragmatic family capable of accepting alternative sexual orientations.

Suppressed desires in the unconscious often take distorted forms in literature thus getting projected to the so called forbidden social space. The Canterville ghost is such an image that takes secondary signification in the symbolic realm. The fear of ghost thus symbolically signifies Victorian apprehensions about a homoerotic culture.

The gothic elements of the story get projected when the people of Canterville castle are subjected to encounters with the ghost. Their fear gets manifested when they narrate their experiences related to the ghost. In the beginning of the story Lord Canterville recollects the incidents that led his family flee from their own castle:

> 'We have not cared to live in the place ourselves,' said Lord Canterville, 'since my grand-aunt, the Dowager Duchess of Bolton,

> was frightened into a fit, from which she never really recovered, by two skeleton hands being placed on her shoulders as she was dressing for dinner, and I feel bound to tell you, Mr. Otis, that the ghost has been seen by several living members of my family, as well as by the rector of the Parish, the Rev. Augustus Dampier, who is a fellow of King's College, Cambridge. After the unfortunate accident to the Duchess, none of our younger servants would stay with us, and Lady Canterville often got very little sleep at night, in consequence of the mysterious noises that came from the corridor and library'. (206)

When Washington Otis cleaned the blood stain from the floor a terrible flash of lightening lit up the sombre room. Mrs. Umney, the house keeper fainted when she heard the fearful thunder, while the Otis family just blamed the monstrous climate. Mrs. Umney's awareness about the deadly nature of the ghost justifies her fear. It is mentioned in the story that she was extremely upset and sternly warned Mr. Otis to be aware of an upcoming trouble: "'I have seen things with my own eyes, sir' she said, 'that would make any Christian's hair stand on end, and many and many a night I have not closed my eyes in sleep for the awful things that are done here'" (209).

Her reference to 'any Christian' hints at how the ghost challenges the moral and spiritual values of England. Homosexuality has evidently been a threat to Christianity. Victorian apprehensions regarding homosexuality become apparent again when the ghost speaks about Madame de Tremouillac while recollecting how he succeeded in frightening the people of Canterville.

> ...He thought of the Dowager Duchess, whom he had frightened into a fit as she stood before the glass in her lace and diamonds; of the four housemaids, who had gone off into hysterics when he merely grinned

> at them through the curtains of one of the spare bedrooms; of the rector of the parish, whose candle he had blown out as he was coming late one night from the library, and who had been under the care of Sir William Gull ever since, a perfect martyr to nervous disorder; and of Old Madame de Tremouillac, who having wakened up one morning early and seen a skeleton seated in an armchair by the fire reading her diary, had been confined to her bed for six weeks with an attack of brain fever, and on her recovery, had become reconciled to the Church, and broken off her connection with that notorious sceptic Monsieur de Voltaire. (212)

It is significant to note that Madame de Tremouillac's encounter with the ghost reconciled her to the Church breaking her connection with a free thinker like Monsieur de Voltaire, obviously because of the skeleton being out of the closet. Evidently the 'fear of ghost' seems to make one morally and spiritually more committed. Her moral awareness saved her from the social threat and brought her close to religion. Religion is definitely a social factor that plays a key role in the cultural repression of homosexuality as a perversion.

The most striking suggestion of homophobia occurs in the description of Lady Barbara's uneasiness with the ghost:

> ...he had so frightened pretty Lady Barbara Modish by means of it, that she suddenly broke off her engagement with the present Lord Canterville's grandfather, and ran away to Gretna Green with handsome Jack Castleton, declaring that nothing in the world would induce her to marry into a family that allowed such a horrible phantom to walk up and down the terrace at twilight. Poor Jack was afterwards

> shot in a duel by Lord Canterville on Wandsworth Common, and Lady Barbara died of a broken heart at Tunbridge Wells before the year was out, so, in every way, it had been a great success. (219)

Her disgust in getting married into a family where a 'horrible phantom' dwells made her run away with Jack Castleton. When the matter of marriage is in question, alternative sexual orientation becomes a real social threat.

Otis family on the other hand represents an ideal world, though then a utopia, where homosexuality is considered a normal phenomenon. 'America' has to be taken as a euphemistic connotation for a 'dream land' where alternative sexual orientations are considered normal. Mr. Otis is ready to buy the ghost, if there is any, along with the furniture. He says he comes from a 'modern country' and so is not worried about the ghost. For the Otis family the blood stain on the library floor which is meant to frighten them is just an ordinary stain that can be removed using Pinkerton's Champion Stain Remover and Paragon Detergent. When the ghost appears in his 'terrible aspect' before Mr. Otis he is least frightened and gives a practical solution to the noise produced as the ghost walk around. Upon hearing the clanking noises in the hallway, Mr Otis promptly gets out of bed and pragmatically offers the ghost Tammany Rising Sun Lubricator to oil his chains.

> 'My dear sir' said Mr. Otis, 'I really must insist on your oiling those chains, and have brought you for that purpose a small bottle of the Tammany Rising Sun Lubricator. It is said to be completely efficacious upon one application, and there are several testimonials to that effect on the wrapper from some of our most eminent native divines. I shall be happy to supply you with more should you require it.' With these words the United States Minister laid the bottle down

> on a marble table, and, closing his door, retired to rest. For a moment the Canterville ghost stood quite motionless in natural indignation; ... (211)

The reference to the lubricator is also highly suggestive. The sexual undertones associated with the oil and Mr. Otis's practical solution cannot be missed. His progressive mind and the solution he offers to lessen the clanking noise is again a process of acceptance of the forbidden by habitual conditioning. He is ready to supply the ghost with more of 'it'. Moreover the reference to the chains indicates societal curtailment of alternate sexual orientation and the process of oiling may also be considered as the normalising of such forbidden acts. The taboo associated with homosexuality is again creatively concealed by Wilde.

"The Canterville Ghost" is aptly subtitled 'A Hylo-idealistic Romance'. Hylo idealism is a philosophical position that seems quite a strange concept as far as a ghost story is concerned. Here it refers to the marvellously pragmatic Otis family. Their pragmatism looks odd in a social situation like the one that existed in the England of Victorian era. But it offers a romantic outlook of how different the attitude towards life could be.

Virginia, Mr. Otis' daughter is different from everyone else in the family. She does not dismiss the ghost. Unlike her parents and brothers she is a bit afraid of the ghost. "The only person who did not enter into the joke was little Virginia, who, for some unexplained reason, was always a good deal distressed at the sight of the blood-stain, and very nearly cried in the morning it was emerald green" (213). She is more an English lady who respects moral values. At times she has "a sweet Puritan gravity, caught from some old New England ancestor" (223). Mr. Otis himself exclaims that

his daughter has a different temperament. He tries to give an explanation for why his daughter is different from other members of the family:

"... For my own part, I confess I am a good deal surprised to find a child of mine expressing sympathy with medievalism in any form, and can only account for it by the fact that Virginia was born in one of your London suburbs shortly after Mrs. Otis had returned from a trip to Athens" (232).

Her place of birth seems to have played a role in colouring her character and made her more English. Consequently she fears the ghost and terribly anticipates the danger that the ghost may bring home. For her the ghost exhibits vulgarity, "it is you who are rude, and horrid and vulgar ...." (224). Virginia out of her pity for the ghost decides to comfort him. She warns him that this is not the place for him to survive. Being a person who has lived her life both in England and the 'Modern Country' she persuades him to escape from England:

> You know nothing about it, and the best thing you can do is to emigrate and improve your mind. My father will be only too happy to give you a free passage, and though there is a heavy duty on spirits of every kind, there will be no difficulty about the Custom House, as the officers are all Democrats. Once in New York, you are sure to be a great success. I know lots of people there who would give a hundred thousand dollars to have a grandfather, and much more than that to have a family ghost. (224)

She paints in words before him a world where he would be accepted, but he is reluctant to leave. She then promises to help him get a peaceful sleep in the Garden of Death, the only option that the ghost has in front of him if he truly wishes to be in England.

Since the ghost is reluctant to leave England the Modern country with its remarkable possibilities remains a Utopia for him. In England, he knows, he can attain normalcy only through death. 'The death of the ghost' symbolically signifies the suppression of homosexuality or conversion to heterosexuality, thus attaining normalcy. Victorian apprehensions about homosexuality will fade away with the death of the ghost.

The ghost was supposedly leading a life full of vices: "It is quite true that his life had been very evil, but upon the other hand, he was most conscientious in all things connected with the supernatural" (219). The ghost was content with his own ways but for the people of England he was evil. The ghost exposes his vulnerability during his encounter with Virginia. When he reveals to her his desire to sleep, "I am so lonely and so unhappy, and I really don't know what to do. I want to go to sleep and I cannot" (225) he displays his inner conflict. Under the magic spell of Virginia he decides to sleep but finds it impossible. He believes that Virginia can help him get sleep. She can lead him to the Garden of Death,

> Yes, Death. Death must be so beautiful. To lie in the soft brown earth, the grasses waving above one's head, and listen to silence. To have no yesterday, and no tomorrow. To forget time, to forgive life, to be at peace. You can help me. You can open for me the portals of Death's house, for Love is always with you, and Love is stronger than Death. (225)

Virginia's significance functions at two different levels. First of all she is presented as a person who is different from the other members of Otis family because of her 'Englishness'. The principles of English morality force her to shun the ghost.

She represents Victorian morality that undermines homosexuality as a crime. Hence she is determined to help the ghost attain normalcy through death, (conversion to 'normal' sexual orientation).

Secondly, Virginia's company with the ghost as a woman adds a different colour. The ghost can die (attain normalcy) only if a lady weeps for him. The presence of a person of opposite sex underscores the act of negating homosexuality. The company of a woman (conversion to heterosexuality) is said to be essential for the death of the ghost (suppression of homosexuality). The old prophesy on the library window evidently supports the suggestion:

> When a golden girl can win
>
> Prayer from out the lips of sin,
>
> When the barren almond bears,
>
> And a little child gives away its tears,
>
> Then shall all the house be still
>
> And peace come to Canterville. (226)

It means Virginia should weep with the ghost for his sins and should pray for his soul. Then the Angel of Death will have mercy on the ghost. Virginia agrees to do so, so that the Ghost will be rewarded with death: "He rose from his seat with a faint cry of joy, and taking her hand bent over it with old-fashioned grace and kissed it. His fingers were as cold as ice, and his lips burned like fire, but Virginia did not falter, as he led her across the dusky room" (226).

Moreover, Virginia hesitates to reveal what has happened to her on the day she went with the Ghost. After her marriage with Cecil when he asks her about it she expresses her unwillingness to share the secret even with him.

> ... Suddenly he threw his cigarette away, took hold of her hand, and said to her, 'Virginia, a wife should have no secret from her husband...You have never told me what happened to you when you were locked up with the ghost.' 'I have never told anyone, Cecil,' said Virginia gravely.
>
> 'I know that, but you might tell me.'
>
> 'Please don't ask me, Cecil, I cannot tell you. Poor Sir Simon! I owe him a great deal. Yes, don't laugh, Cecil, I really do. He made me see what Life is, and what Death signifies, and why Love is stronger than both'. (234)

After the death of the Ghost, the victorious Virginia proudly announces to her family that she has saved the ghost from all his sins: "I have been with the Ghost. He is dead, and you must come and see him. He had been very wicked, but he was really sorry for all that he had done..." (230). She acts like a saviour who has saved the ghost from all his wicked deeds. Even the Canterville family is indebted to her for the great service she has done to the Ghost and to the Victorian society. Lord Canterville expresses his gratitude by letting Virginia keep the jewels that the Ghost has given to her. He says, "My dear sir, your charming little daughter rendered my unlucky ancestor, Sir Simon, a very important service, and I and my family are much indebted to her for her marvellous courage and pluck" (232).

Virginia's endeavour can be read as an attempt to bring solution to a social issue by driving the 'evil' away. The ghost represents a social threat that questions the very existence of 'moral values'. Virginia's decision to solve the so called social issue envisages the strengthening of moral uprightness. The death of the Ghost thus symbolically suggests the repression of homosexuality which was considered a social threat during Oscar Wilde's time, and the fatal outcome of a predominantly homophobic society. Logically speaking a ghost is an apparition of an already dead person, and subjecting it to death again is absurd. Probably Wilde's fear of the society is reflected in the unconscious act of exorcising the ghost by this ironical expulsion. In addition, when the ghost states that "Love is stronger than Death" towards the end of the story there is a clear indication that the re-emergence of the ghost is possible. For Wilde, 'love' is the aesthetics of his sexuality or rather the sensuality of his aesthetics and it is in the aesthetic enterprise of his writing that the ghost is likely to reappear and take different forms.

In the Canterville story male-male bonding works in the relationship between the Otis twins. Fear of ghost, as it is observed, metaphorically suggests homophobia and the ghost symbolises homosexuality. The symbolic ghost is closely associated with the Otis twins. Unlike Virginia who is afraid of the ghost, the twins enjoy playing with him though they often hurt his feelings. He is a play thing for the twins. The ghost instead of succeeding in scaring the twins is "agitated by their vulgarity" (214). The twins seem to identify themselves with the ghost, thus assuming the symbolic meaning attributed to the ghost. When they meet the ghost the twins dress themselves up to look like "two little white robed figures" (211). The attire of 'ghostly figures' emphasises close semblance between the twins and the ghost thus exposing the twins' role in the symbolic realm of representation. The ghost is so

frightened by their pranks that he wastes no time to escape. “There was evidently no time to be lost, so, hastily adopting the Fourth Dimension of space as a means of escape, he vanished through the wainscoting, and the house became quite quiet” (211).

Later when the ghost decides to frighten the twins they spoil his plan by displaying a “horrible spectre, motionless as a carven image, and monstrous as a madman’s dream!”(217). The ghost being a ‘strange phenomenon’ in his native place is shocked to realise that there could be monsters like him anywhere else. The ghost gets this insight from the ‘funny games’ of the twins. “Never having seen a ghost before, he naturally was terribly frightened, and, after a second hasty glance at the awful phantom, he fled back to his room, tripping up in his long winding sheet as he sped down the corridor...” (217). Canterville Ghost is a unique phenomenon in the society because no kind of this exists anywhere in England. That is why he has never seen another ghost before. This suggests the Victorian social situation which denies the existence of homosexuals.

The ghost that poses a moral threat to the society is frightened by the twins who are further more frightening. Thus the twins as well possess a symbolic signification and connotes to homosexuality. The portrayal of the twins as ‘Republicans’ stresses the homosexual undertones in the story. They are introduced as the “true republicans of the family” (208). A Republican is someone who is an advocate of republicanism which stresses unalienable individual rights as central values. The room occupied by the twins is called “Blue bed chamber”. While preparing to frighten the twins, the ghost observes that “their beds were quite close to each other” (216). Moreover, the description of the twins’ childish mischief underscores the homosexual undertones in the story: “For some time he was disturbed

by wild shrieks of laughter from the twins, who, with the light hearted gaiety of schoolboys, were evidently amusing themselves before they retired to rest, but at a quarter past eleven all was still, and, as midnight sounded, he sallied forth" (216).

Oscar Wilde seems to have tried to liberate the libidinal desires of the Unconscious through this story as well. The Ghost penned his suppressed self through its symbolic manifestation. No wonder Wilde's Ghost epitomises the pathetic existence of homosexuals that resulted from Victorian homophobia. Several attempts have already been made to reread popular gothic texts to show how they become an artefact embedding the cultural nuances of the period of its production and consumption. For instance, Bram Stocker's *Dracula'*s transformation from a nineteenth century sensation fiction to a socially and culturally significant text reflecting Victorian anxieties has widely been acknowledged:

> Christopher Bentley's analysis (1972) of *Dracula* focusing on the sexual undercurrents in the sucking and transfusing of blood...and Carol Fry's observations on vampirism and female sexuality added much to the subsequent reading of the novel...Judith Weissman's reading of the novel as a depiction of male fear of female sexuality represents one of the major feminist perspectives about the text (Latheef 1)

Like Dracula, which is also a Victorian product, "The Canterville Ghost" expresses the social apprehensions regarding sexuality and morality. Ghost thus becomes a culturally significant symbol which stands for homosexuality. The story depicts Victorian homophobia which in a way destined Wilde to a miserable death.

Salome is a symbolic rendering of the biblical story of Salome, step daughter of the tetrarch Herod Antipus. She asks for the head of Jokanaan (John the Baptist) as a reward from Herod for performing the dance of the seven veils. Unlike the biblical story, Wilde focuses more on the lustful desires of Salome than Herodias' vengeance on Jokanaan. To give shape to the sexual energy of Salome, Wilde has made use of the Veil dance. Salome is portrayed as a femme fatale, a woman of immense power whose purity is perverted by her sexual desires. She is presented as a lustful woman who uses her sexuality to corrupt and destroy men.

When the play begins the Tetrarch and his family are seen on the terrace of Tetrarch's palace. A young Syrian admiringly looks at Salome, Tetrarch's daughter, and praises her beauty. In the backdrop, the voices of Jews howling about their religion can be heard. Suddenly the voice of Jokannan prophesying the arrival of Messiah is also heard. Jokannan is a prophet whom the Tetrarch has forbidden from being seen. Through the soldiers it is explained that the Tetrarch had ordered to kill his brother, and married his brother's wife. Salome finds it difficult to tolerate the way Tetrarch looks at her. She insists on meeting the prophet and he emerges. Salome is so fascinated by the physical charms of Jokannan that she asks Jokannan to let her kiss him. He curses her and orders her to seek the Lord. Meanwhile, Herod asks Salome to dance for him, but she refuses. Soon she agrees to dance and asks for Jokannan's head as a reward. Salome hungers for Jokannan's body, and nothing will quench her. She dances wildly and Herod orders to behead the prophet. The voice of Salome announces that she kissed the dead prophet's head. Terrified by the horror, Tetrarch orders the soldiers to kill her. The play ends when the soldiers rush forward and crush her beneath their shields.

Wilde's creation of Salome owes largely to his interest in French literature and art forms. This explains the politics of representing Salome as a femme fatale, because for the French she was an incarnation of dissolute desires,

> To the French, Salome was not a woman at all but a brute, insensible force: Huysmans refers to her as 'the symbolic incarnation of undying Lust...the monstrous, beast, indifferent, irresponsible, insensible' and Mallarme describes her as being inscrutable: 'the veil always remains.' Huysmans' hero Des Esseintes characterises her as a 'weird and superhuman figure he had dreamed of...in her quivering breasts,...heaving belly,...tossing thighs...she was now revealed as the symbol incarnate of old world vice. (Rachel 46)

Anne Varty calls Salome "the most notorious femme fatale of the fin de siècle". She says that, "for the culture of 1890s the figure of the beautiful but vengeful and patriarchally destructive girl who ushered out the old and heralded the new held a particularly resonant power" (x). Salome, who poses a threat to the patriarchal society, takes a symbolic signification and identifies with homosexuality. Like a femme fatale, homosexuality was also considered as a social threat. In the context of the French characterisations of Salome, she can be taken as a symbol of homosexuality because of the social threat that she posed. It is also to be noted that 'she' is deemed not a woman but a monster with no specific gender attached in these descriptions by the French writers.

Moreover, Skaggs, in her essay "Modernity's Revision of the Dancing Daughter: The Salome Narrative of Wilde and Strauss" discusses the possible homosexual subtext of the play. She points to one instance in the play when Salome

promises Narraboth a flower, a signal of homosexuality in Wilde's time. She argues that "Salome's sexuality is presented as typically masculine, which makes the relationship between her and the young Syrian border on the homoerotic" (125).

An interesting contribution of Wilde to *Salome* is his persistent use of parallels between Salome and the moon. Christopher Nassar observes that "moon is meant to suggest the Pagan goddess, Cybele, who like Salome was obsessed with preserving her virginity and thus took pleasure in destroying male sexuality" (12). When Salome sees the moon, she observes: "The moon is cold and chaste. I am sure she is a virgin. She has a virgin's beauty. Yes, she is a virgin. She has never defiled herself. She has never abandoned herself to men, like other goddesses" (Salome 138). Salome's association with the moon insinuates her power to destroy male sexuality, and subtly suggests homosexuality.

Moreover, Aubrey Beardsley through his illustrations for the play emphasises that the "disturbing sexuality expressed by the drama, teases with physical display and concealment, and confuses the gender of Salome and Jokanaan by depicting them as mirror images of one another, their faces identical"(Varty, xii). This again hints at the homosexual undertones in the play.

When Salome with all her lustful desires stands for homosexuality her relationship with three different men constitute three different same-sex pairs.

The first pair is Salome and the young Syrian. The young Syrian is overwhelmed by her beauty that he showers words of praises on her. Whereas, the Page of Herodius sees her as "a woman rising from a tomb" (Salome 135) and warns the young Syrian several times about the horror that awaits him if he enters into a relationship with Salome: "Why do you look at her? You must not look at her...

something terrible may happen" (137). But the young Syrian is so fascinated by her beauty that he ignores the words of his friend. The page of Herodius functions as society's mouthpiece who constantly reminds the young Syrian about the tragic fate of those who try to breach the social rules. Although Salome is indifferent towards the young Syrian's affection for her, she flirts with him to get him obey her commands:

> Salome: You will do this thing for me, will you not, Narraboth?...
>
> ...and tomorrow when I pass in my litter beneath the gateway of the idol-sellers, I will let fall for you a little flower, a little green flower.
>
> ...I will look at you through the muslin veils; I will look at you, Narraboth, it may be I will smile at you. Look at me Narraboth, look at me. Ah! You know that you will do what I ask of you. (140)

The young Syrian's attraction towards Salome symbolically suggests his desire to indulge in homosexual relationship, irrespective of the social laws. He disregards the social warning that comes from the mouth of his friend, the Page of Herodius; and the negligence culminates in his own death: "He kills himself and falls between Salome and Jokanaan" (143). His death again, points finger at the social condemnation of homosexuality.

The second pair is Salome and the king. Despite being a stepfather to her, Herod is sexually attracted to Salome, and she is quite aware of that. She says: "Why does Tetrarch look at me all the while with his mole's eyes under his shaking eyelids? It is strange that the husband of my mother looks at me like that. I know not what it means. In truth, yes, I know it" (138). Moreover, Herod's impotency in his relationship with his wife implies his failure in a heterosexual relationship:

> Herodius: I am sterile? You (Herod) say that, you that are ever looking at my daughter, you that would have her dance for your pleasure? It is absurd to say that. I have borne a child. You have gotten no child, no, not even from one of your slaves. It is you who are sterile, not I. (152)

Herod tries to feed his sexual urges by watching Salome perform the veil dance. Hence, Herod pleads with Salome to dance, whereas Herodius discourages it:

> Herod: Salome, Salome, dance for me. I pray thee dance for me. I am sad tonight... Therefore dance for me. Dance for me, Salome, I beseech you. If you dance for me you may ask of me what you will, and I will give it you, even unto the half of my kingdom...
>
> Herodius: Do not dance my daughter. (153)

Salome dances the dance of seven veils and he is extremely pleased, which symbolically suggests his sexual gratification. He exclaims: “Ah! Wonderful! Wonderful! You see that she has danced for me, your daughter. Come near, Salome, come near, that I may give you reward. Ah! I pay the dancers well. I will pay thee royally. I will give thee whatsoever desireth...” (155). But when Salome asks for Jokanaan’s head he is reminded of the inevitable doom and decides to stay away from Salome:

> Herod: ... It is true I have looked at you all evening. Your beauty troubled me. Your beauty has grievously troubled me, and I have looked at you too much. But I will look at you no more. Neither at things nor at people should one look. Only in mirrors should one look,

> for mirrors do but show us masks. Oh!oh! bring wine! I thirst...
>
> Salome, Salome, let us be friends. (156)

It is then he sees the threatening monstrous aspect of Salome which society has attributed to her over a long period of time: “She is monstrous, thy daughter, she is all together monstrous. In truth what she has done is a great crime. I am sure that it was a crime against an unknown God” (160). He then orders to kill her. Unlike the young Syrian, Herod suppresses his alternative sexual desire by destroying Salome. Herod represents a typical Victorian hypocrite who is forced to conceal his so called deviant sexual orientation in order to retain his power and reputation. So the path of pleasure does not lead him to disaster. Salome’s death and Herod’s survival as the king suggest the need to suppress the homosexual drives to lead a “normal” life. Ellman in his essay, “Overtures to Salome” observes that Wilde has insisted upon Salome’s death at the end of the play in order to show how the transition from sensuality to moral revulsion happens in Herod who stands for Wilde himself:

> The execution of Salome was not in the Bible, but Wilde insisted upon it. So at the play’s end the emphasis shifts suddenly to Herod, who is seen to have yielded to Salome’s sensuality, and then to the moral revulsion of Iokanaan from that sensuality, and to have survived them both. In Herod Wilde was suggesting that *tertium quid* which he felt to be his own nature, susceptible to contrary impulses but not abandoned for long to either. (90)

Ellman substantiates his argument by pointing out that Aubrey Beardsley who has made illustrations for Wilde’s *Salome* has “divined the autobiographical element in Herod, and in one of his illustrations gave the tetrarch the author’s face” (90).

Salome and Jokanaan constitute the third pair. Jokanaan dictates social laws and he stands for moral values. He curses Herodius for marrying her late husband's brother: "Thy mother (Herodius) hath filled the earth with the wine of her iniquities, and the cry of her sins hath come up to the ears of God" (142). Salome is determined to seduce Jokanaan. She says: "Jokanaan, I am amorous of thy body! Thy body is white like the lilies...let me touch thy body... thy body is horrible. It is of thy hair I am enamoured... there is nothing in the world so red as thy mouth... let me kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan. I will kiss thy mouth" (142-3). But Jokanaan does not fall for her temptation. He is well aware of his moral responsibilities and condemns her sexuality: "I do not wish to look at thee. I will not look at thee, thou art accursed, Salome, thou art accursed" (144). Jokanaan's repulsion towards Salome reflects society's attitude towards homosexuality. Herod's decision to behead Jokanaan prophesies the social acceptance of homosexuality in the distant future.

Different social attitudes and human temperaments towards homosexuality can be analysed using these three different pairs in the play. The first pair, Salome and The young Syrian, reflects the inevitable doom of homosexuals in the Victorian period. Denial of one's existence as a homosexual culminates in the destruction of his own identity which is symbolically presented through the death of the Young Syrian. He falls in love with Salome. Salome's symbolic signification of homosexuality gives a different shade of colour to the young Syrian's love. His alternative sexual orientation destroys his self. The second pair, Salome and the Tetrarch, pictures the Victorian hypocrisy towards homosexuality. Herod is sexually attracted to Salome and expresses his desires. But when he thinks about the social consequences of his alternative sexual orientation he dismisses his desires and orders to kill Salome. Salome's death symbolically suggests the suppression of his sexual desires. In order

to succumb to the social demands and to retain his power as a king he shuns Salome and turns to his wife. The third pair, Salome and Jokannan, underscores homophobia which is a defining feature of Victorian England. Jokannan symbolically stands for religious and moral codes, and his expression of disgust towards Salome's sexuality suggests homophobia. When society enforces moral codes, its inhabitants maintain a similar attitude towards homosexuality as demonstrated by the prophet.

Similar ideas can be explored in Wilde's other works too. In *An Ideal Husband* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* the symbolic signification of homosexuality operates on abstract ideas as well. If homosexuality is associated with a fraudulent scheme in *An Ideal Husband,* it is associated with Dorian's narcissistic attraction towards the portrait in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

The play *An Ideal Husband* begins with a dinner party hosted by Sir Robert Chiltern, a prestigious member of the House of Commons, and his wife, Lady Chiltern. During the function, Mrs. Cheveley, tries to blackmail Sir Robert into supporting a fraudulent scheme to build a canal in Argentina. In his youth Sir Robert was convinced by Baron Arnheim to sell a cabinet secret related to Suez Canal project. Mrs. Cheveley has with her a letter to prove that Sir Robert has made his fortune with that illicit money. Sir Robert initially submits to her demands fearing the ruin of both his career and marriage. But, Lady Chiltern wants her husband to remain unimpeachable in all his decisions; and asks him not to succumb to the demands of Mrs. Cheveley. Lord Goring, a friend of Sir Robert urges him to fight Mrs. Cheveley and to admit his guilt to his wife. But he does not agree to do that. Later when Lady Chiltern learns about it from Mrs. Cheveley she denounces her husband and refuses to forgive him. Later, when Sir Robert goes to Goring's house seeking further counsel

from him, he discovers Mrs. Cheveley in the drawing room and, convinced of an affair between these two former lovers, furiously storms out of the house. Mrs. Cheveley proposes Goring, who rejects it. He instead traps her with a diamond brooch which she has apparently stolen from his cousin, Mary Berkshire, years ago. The final act resolves most of the plot's complications with a decidedly happy ending. Lord Goring proposes to Mabel, who readily accepts him. Sir Robert denounces the Argentine canal scheme before the House and is reconciled with his wife, Lady Chiltern.

Wilde stresses the need to forgive the sins of past, and the foolishness of tarnishing lives of great value to society because of people's hypocritical reactions to those sins. Through his observations, Wilde seems to be referring to his own situation, and his own fears regarding his secret affair. He maintains anti-upper class sentiments in his overall portrayal of the upper class in England which displays an attitude of hypocrisy and strict observance of silly rules.

The play offers a symbolic representation of same-sex pair in the relationship between the protagonist of the play Sir Robert Chiltern and Baron Arnheim. A treachery that Sir Robert has committed with the aid of Baron Arnheim makes him think of his past with guilt. He conceals his crime and wears a mask before the society. Sir Robert has cheated the government by playing a fraudulent game with Baron Arnheim. If the fraudulent scheme can be taken as a symbolic representation of homosexuality, then Sir Robert has cheated the society by breaking its rules. The symbolic reading of Sir Robert's crime gives a different interpretation to his relationship with Baron Arnheim.

Sir Robert admits to have had a fascination for Baron Arnheim: “He was very remarkable in many ways... he knew men and cities well, like the old Greek” (*An Ideal Husband* 287). It is interesting to note that the Baron’s knowledge was limited to *men.* Moreover, Mrs. Cheveley’s observation that the Baron died without “having a Penelope waiting at home for him” (287) emphasises the fact that Baron remained unmarried throughout his life, which opens up the homosexual possibilities. Mrs. Cheveley tries to blackmail Sir Robert by pointing out his relationship with the Baron:

> Mrs Cheveley: My dear Sir Robert, what then? You are ruined, that is all! Remember to what a point your Puritanism in England has brought you. In the old days nobody pretended to be a bit better than his neighbours... Nowadays, with our modern mania for morality, everyone has to pose a paragon of purity, incorruptibility and all the other seven deadly virtues- and what is the result? You all go over like ninepins – one after the other... And yours is a very nasty scandal. You couldn’t survive it. (296)

Her description of the crime committed by Sir Robert echoes the middle class apprehensions regarding homosexuality. It throws light upon the modern mania for morality. Wilde himself was a prey to a ‘nasty scandal’. Sir Robert has kept the ‘sin’ as a secret from the society as well as his wife. Consequently, when she threatens to reveal his sinful past to the society, he consents to her demands. Homosexual undertones can be traced in Sir Robert’s description of Baron Arnheim and the crime he has committed with him:

> Sir Robert Chiltern: ... with that wonderfully fascinating quiet voice of his he expounded to us the most terrible of all philosophies, the

> philosophy of power...I think he saw the effect he had produced on me, for some days afterwards he wrote and asked me to come and see him...I remember so well how, with a strange smile on his pale, curved lips, he led me through his picture gallery... (307)

Sir Robert's wife, Lady Chiltern, is presented as a lady of character who would never fluctuate over morality matters. Her insistence on judging people based on their past frightens her husband so much that he prefers to keep the secret from her. She says, "One's past is what one is. It is the only way by which people should be judged" (301). She considers her husband as an embodiment of moral virtues: "Robert, that is all very well for other men, for men who treat life simply as a sordid speculation; but not for you, Robert, not for you. You are different. 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 still" (302).

She is aware of the shameful things that men often do. But, she does not think of her husband as capable of doing anything dishonest. Sir Robert fears that she may leave him the moment she learns about his secret. He expresses his anxiety to Lord Goring who advises him to confess his past to his wife: "Do you think she would marry me if she had known that the origin of my fortune is as it is, the basis of my career such as it is, and that I had done a thing that I suppose most men would call shameful and dishonourable?" (306). He considers his dishonourable act as a mistake committed by a twenty two year old boy, which is pardonable and should not affect his present life:

> Sir Robert Chiltern (*pacing up and down the room*): Arthur, do you think that what I did nearly eighteen years ago should be brought up

> against me now? Do you think it fair that a man's whole career should be ruined for a fault done in his boyhood almost? ...Is it fair that the folly, the sin of one's youth, if men choose to call it a sin, should wreck a life like mine, should place me in the pillory, should shatter all that I have worked for, all that I have built up? Is it fair, Arthur? (306)

Lord Goring tries to convince Lady Chiltern about the triviality of Sir Robert's crime, but she finds it difficult to imagine her husband as having yielded to such a dirty temptation.

It is also important to note that Sir Robert's relationship with Lord Goring gives suggestions about his same-sex orientation. Lord Goring is presented as a very good friend of Sir Robert Chiltern. Even Lady Chiltern seems to have accepted their friendship which causes no 'harm' to the society. She tells Lord Goring "You are Robert's greatest friend... No one except myself, knows Robert better than you do. He has no secrets from me, and I don't think he has any from you" (313). Lord Goring is a bachelor who hesitates to get tied up by the chains of marriage. His father, Lord Caversham who represents patriarchy, advises him to get married:

> Every man of position is married nowadays. Bachelors are not fashionable any more. They are a damaged lot. Too much is known about them. You must get a wife, sir. Look where your friend Robert Chiltern has got to by probity, hard work and a sensible marriage with a good woman. Why don't you imitate him, sir? Why don't you take him for your model? (330)

Lord Caversham's patriarchal insistence projects social apprehensions regarding homosexual lives of bachelors. He even advises Lord Goring to follow the

model set by Robert Chiltern, who has settled down into a married life after putting an end to his 'youthful fantasies'. Lord Goring tries to justify Robert's crime before Lady Chiltern, who is taken aback by their intimate friendship:

> Lord Goring: What you know about him is not his real character. It was an act of folly done in his youth, dishonourable I admit, shameful, I admit, unworthy of him, I admit, and therefore...not his true character.
>
> Mrs Cheveley: How you men stand up for each other! (340)

Moreover, Sir Robert Chiltern's impotency in his relationship with Lady Chiltern is hinted at when he confesses that they have no children to look forward: "We are childless and I have no one else to love, no one else to love me" (335).

Towards the end of the story Lady Chiltern is pushed to such a situation that she either has to present herself as a fallen woman or forgive and reunite with her husband. She does not want to get defamed before her husband's eyes, so she prefers the latter. Sir Robert Chiltern is thus pardoned and united to his wife. Lord Goring also yields to society's demands and decides to marry Mabel Chilterrn.

Instead of a concrete image, here the symbolic projection of homosexuality is made through an abstract idea. The way Wilde has carefully crafted his art offers scope for more than one connotation. The treacherous deed of Sir Robert Chiltern symbolically stands for homosexuality. This treachery, in fact connects him to Baron Arnheim. Robert and Arnheim thus constitute a same-sex pair. In order to reinforce the homoerotic aspects of Robert, his friendship with Lord Goring is also given a different shade of colour.

The Picture of Dorian Gray on the other hand is Wilde's philosophical novel which speaks about the handsome young man, Dorian Gray and his full length portrait by Basil Hallward. Dorian is a young gentleman with perfect physical charms. Basil's painting equally reflects Dorian's beauty. Dorian, seeing the marvellous portrait of his own self, expresses his desire to sell his soul, to remain young; and the picture will age and fade. This wish is granted. Dorian leads a life pursuing pleasures while remaining young and beautiful; and his portrait ages and withers.

Dorian's narcissistic attraction towards the portrait yet again symbolises a gay relationship. "This (Narcissism) is a term originally used to describe a sexual perversion in which the subject is in love with himself rather than with another person. It was later extended to include any form of self-love" (Storr 57). Dorian's narcissistic attraction towards the painting implies an attempt to escape the fear of the opposite sex by embracing the same-sex instead. As Dollimore puts it, "The homosexual is significantly implicated in both sexual and cultural difference, and for two main reasons. First because he or she has been regarded as one who fears the difference of the 'other' or opposite sex, and in flight from it, narcissistically embraces the same sex instead" (249). The painting reminds him of the innumerable possibilities of life. It stands as a symbol for forbidden desires he wants to indulge in. He is very much attracted towards the beautiful painting:

> Dorian made no answer, but passed listlessly in front of his picture, and turned towards it. When he saw it he drew back, and his cheeks flushed for a moment with pleasure. A look of joy came into his eyes, as if he had recognised himself for the first time. He stood there motionless and in wonder, dimly conscious that Hallward was speaking to him, but not catching the meaning of his words. The sense

> of his own beauty came on him like a revelation. He had never felt it before... (*The Picture of Dorian Gray* 33)

He is so attracted towards the painting that he almost feels jealous of its beauty which would never perish. Lord Henry Wotton's strange panegyric on youth and his warning of the brevity of youth stirred Dorian as he gazed at the shadow of his own loveliness. The mortality of the painting augments his love for it: "I am jealous of everything whose beauty does not die. I am jealous of the portrait you have painted of me. Why should it keep what I must lose?" (35). When Basil sees that Dorian is much disturbed by the painting, he at once decides to destroy it with a knife. But Dorian rushes over to Basil, tears the knife out of his hand, and flings it to the corner of the studio. He screams: "No, Basil, No. It would be Murder" (36). He admits that he does not just appreciate it but is in love with it. His liking for the painting becomes adoration for a self which he loves to pursue. He loves it so much that he wishes to keep it in his possession: "If you let anyone have it but me, Basil, I shall never forgive you!" (36).

Once Dorian is in real possession of the painting he indulges in sinful life secretly. His association with the painting opens before him the door to a 'sinful' life of pleasures. He denounces his lady love, Sibyl Vane and searches for new friendships. As the days pass he feels more and more jealous of the picture for remaining younger than him, but still admires its beauty: "though I am a little jealous of the picture for being a whole month younger than I am, I must admit that I delight in it" (67).

The painting reflects Dorian's conscience and displays evil when Dorian sins. Dorian witnesses the visible changes happening to the painting as he does morally unacceptable things:

> Yet it was watching him, with its beautiful marred face and its cruel smile. Its bright hair gleamed in the early sunlight. Its blue eyes met his own. A sense of infinite pity, not for himself, but for the painted image of himself, came over him. It had altered already, and would alter more... for every sin that he committed, a stain would fleck and wreck its fairness...the picture, changed or unchanged would be to him the visible emblem of conscience... (107)

He becomes aware of the infinite pleasures of life which social codes forbid. But being the owner of a painting that would shoulder his sins, he decides to search for the hidden wonders of life. His association with the painting leads him to commit more forbidden acts and explore the contours of his desire. He decides to indulge in wilder sins, as the portrait would bear the burden.

> ...Eternal youth, infinite passion, pleasures subtle and secret, wild joys and wilder sins – he was to have all these things. The portrait was to bear the burden of his shame: that was all.
>
> A feeling of pain crept over him as he thought of the desecration that was in store for the fair face on the canvas. Once, in boyish mockery of Narcissus, he had kissed, or feigned to kiss, those painted lips that now smiled so cruelly at him. Morning after morning he had sat before the portrait wondering at its beauty, almost enamoured of it, as it seemed to him at times. (123)

The reference to secret pleasures, wild joy and wilder sins connotes to socially restricted pleasures including homosexual life. He decides to have all these things when he owns the painting. The "boyish mockery of narcissus" has a very serious attribution in the light of homosexual reading. Dorian's innocent act of kissing those painted lips suggests his same-sex interest. Gradually, but drastically, Dorian changes from the silly young boy to a sinner of great scale. He develops new passions, new thoughts, new ideas, and new ways of living. For him "man was a being with myriad lives and myriad sensations, a complex multiform creature that bore within itself strange legacies of thought and passion, and whose very flesh was tainted with the monstrous maladies of the dead" (164). Basil's description of scandals heard in relation with Dorian gives a vivid picture of the sinful life that Dorian leads:

> Why is your friendship so fatal to young men? There was that wretched boy in the Guards who committed suicide. You were his great friend. There was Sir Henry Ashton, who had to leave England, with a tarnished name. You and he were inseparable. What about Adrian Singleton, and his dreadful end? I met his father yesterday in St. James Street. He seemed broken with shame and sorrow. (173)

Basil's description explicitly hints at homosexual possibilities. He observes that Dorian's friendship is fatal for young men. Men who were his deep friends and inseparable from him often end up in shame. His relationship with them tarnishes their image and reputation. He maintains with them a relationship which is prohibited by the Victorian moral codes. Hence they meet with their fatal end. This clearly proves that Dorian's sinful life after possessing the painting centred mainly round the circle of young men. Basil examines the painting and finds it completely corrupted by Dorian's sins. "It was from within, apparently, that the foulness and horror had come.

Through some strange quickening of inner life the leprosies of sin were slowly eating the thing away" (181). Dorian's passion for sin starts dominating his nature. Wilde makes an interesting observation in the novel about the instinctual desires of men that kill the conscience. Wilde attributes Dorian's sins to the libidinal drives over which man has no control.

> There are moments, psychologists tell us, when the passion for sin, or for what the world calls sin, so dominates a nature, that every fibre of the body, as every cell of the brain, seems to be instinct with fearful impulses. Men and women at such moments lose the freedom of their will. They move to their terrible end as automatons move. Choice is taken from them, and conscience is either killed, or, if it lives at all, lives but to give rebellion its fascination and disobedience its charm. For all sins, as theologians weary not of reminding us, are sins of disobedience. (218)

Finally Dorian gets exhausted with his sinful life and decides to put an end to it. He declares to Harry, "I am going to be good" (249). But all his attempts go futile and he finds no escape from the life in which he is entrapped. He feels a wild longing for the uncorrupted purity of his boyhood. His sinful life has tarnished his self, corrupted his mind and given horror to his fancies. He regrets for having prayed that the portrait should bear the burden of his days:

> Then he loathed his own beauty, and flinging the mirror on the floor, crushed it into silver splinters beneath his heel. It was his beauty that had ruined him, his beauty and the youth that he had prayed for. But for those two things, his life might have been free from stain. His

> beauty had been to him but a mask, his youth but a mockery. What was youth at best? A green, an unripe time, of shallow moods and sickly thoughts. Why had he worn its livery? Youth had spoiled him. (252)

He realises that he cannot retrieve those innocent days of his life. Having listened to the calls of his libidinal desires, he finds himself away from the social life. He challenged the norms of society, and is denied a normal life in return. The painting has ruined his life, and he regrets for having loved it so much. His attempt to destroy the painting culminates in his own death. His death is a symbolic suggestion of the suppression of homosexuality which marks the moral constraints of Victorian period. The painting which symbolically projects the homoerotic aspects of Dorian corrupts him and brings forth his fatal end. As it is already observed since hostility towards homosexuality hinders the writer's explicit expression of homoerotic elements in his work, he devises different methods to give expression to his repressed desires.

Unlike his prose works, Wilde has approached his poems in a slightly different and more complex way through which his repressed homosexual feelings find expression by means of contrast. A study of select poems by Wilde will expose how such repressed feelings get manifest through different aspects of physical beauty.

The portrayal of women in his poems is very much relevant in the sense that they expose Wilde's attitude towards women and heterosexual relationships. Women in his poems mostly stand for symbols of chastity and represent unconsumed love. Though he brings images of virgins and praises their physical charm in abundance, he avoids their physical proximity.

Pearson makes a valid observation regarding Wilde's relationship with women:

> Part of his attractiveness to women was due to the fact that, while delighting in their society, they were not physically necessary to him. The real 'Don Juan', he told Vincent O' Sullivan, 'is not the vulgar person who goes about making love to all the women he meets, and what novelists call "seducing" them. The real Don Juan is the man who says to women, "Go away! I don't want you. You interfere with my life. I can do without you". Swift was the real Don Juan. Two women died for him'. (260)

"La Circassienne" is Wilde's poem which celebrates the beauty of a woman. The speaker admires and praises the beauty of that young lady. He loves her "tremulous topaz eyes". He adores her body, her ivory hips, her gilded breasts, sun-scorched neck, eyelids of chalcedony etc. But more than everything he loves her chastity: "And most of all, my love, I love, / Your beautiful fierce chastity" (75).

His poem "Requiescat" is about the demise of a woman who "was young and fair" but has "fallen to dust" (18). She was "lily like", "white as snow", with "bright golden hair" (18), but is now insensible to the music of the world. This poem was written in memory of his sister Isola who died shortly before her tenth birthday (Varty 8). It is a small poem in which the poet grieves over the death of his beloved. The line "She hardly knew she was a woman" ("Requiescat" 18) rules out the possible exploration of pleasures in the life of a woman. The fact that she lived the life of a woman without experiencing the pleasures which she could have had as a woman underscores her virgin existence. Hence, she lived and died as a virgin.

In the poem "The New Helen" the poet brings a different image of Helen. He says "Yet care I not what ruin time may bring/ If in thy temple thou wilt let me kneel"

(28). He loves and adores her since she is different from all other women. He says that she is not “born as common women are” (28). But he concludes the poem by stressing the fact that she is “pure and inviolate!” (29). His love takes the form of spiritual love by presenting her as pure and untainted.

Like the speaker of Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress” in the poem “Panthea” the speaker tries to arouse the feelings of his hesitant lover. He says, “I am too young to live without desire/ Too young art thou to waste this summer night” (83). He reminds her that they have lips to kiss with and hearts to love. But here again there is no consummation in their love though he tries to make their love immortal as the notes of a great symphony.

Attributing divinity to women makes it easier to describe them as virgin and chaste. In some of his poems Wilde brings the images of divine and godly women who are virgins. For instance in “San Miniato” he speaks about “The Virginal white Queen of Grace- Mary!” (19). He asks her to listen to him before the sun shows to the world his “sin and shame” (19). Similarly in the poem “Rome Unvisited” he addresses the blessed lady as “Mother without blot or stain” (21).

Wilde even portrays them as passionless and incapable of lustful emotions. In “Madonna Mia” he paints in words the image of a beautiful woman. He describes her in detail: lily girl, brown braided soft hair, blue eyes, pale cheeks, red lips and white throat with purple veins. She is presented as pure and one who is not stained with lustful emotions: “Pale cheeks whereon no love hath left its stain/ Red under lip drawn in for fear of love” (26). Wilde imagines this beauty as devoid of passion and lustful feelings. In a way this act of negating desire in women is a manifestation of Wilde’s own failure in falling for their feelings or desires. The lines “Yet, though my

lips shall praise her without cease, / Even to kiss her feet I am not bold" (26) depicts the poet's attitude towards heterosexual relationship. He can shower words of praises on her but fears her physical proximity. "Madonna Mia" was first published as "Wasted Days", which began with the following lines: "A fair slim boy not made for this world's pain,/ With hair gold thick clustering round his ears,/ And longing eyes half-veiled by foolish tears/ Like bluest water seen through mists of rain" (*The Complete Works of Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde: Stories, Plays, Poems, Essays* 732). When it appeared as "Madonna Mia" 'A fair slim boy' became 'A lily girl'; and the second line was rewritten as "With brown, soft hair close braided by her ears" ("Madonna Mia" 26). Wilde changed the persona's gender. The change in the description of the colour and texture of hair in the second line is in accordance with the change in the sex of the person.

In "Impression du Matin" the poet speaks about one pale woman with "lips of flame and heart of stone" (41). Lips of flame suggest her beautiful physical features, but the heart of stone implies her inability to arouse lustful emotions or rather her sensual frigidity. "Silentium Amoris" shows the poet's inability to express his love to his lady love. He is charmed by her beauty, but fails to express it: "So doth thy Beauty make my lips to fail, / And all my sweetest singing out of tune" (92). He is muted by excess of love and wild passion: "So my too strong passion work me wrong, / And for excess of Love my Love is dumb" (92). This poem is yet another example for the poet's failure in consummating his love with a woman. He feels that it would be better for her to leave him and go to someone else who may love her: "Else it were better we should part, and go, / Thou to some lips of sweeter melody, / And I to nurse the barren memory / Of unkissed kisses, and songs never sung" (93). It is obvious in

these poems that for Wilde love is complete only when it culminates in sexual gratification.

There are also poems which exhibit Wilde's hostility towards women and his distrust in a heterosexual relationship. He presents them as unfaithful, treacherous and even wicked. These are poems that depict women as self-indulgent unlike the angelic and immaculate representations in the poems mentioned above. Paradoxically, if it is the divinity that he attributes to the earlier immaculate representations of women that distances the poetic persona from them; it is the lustful or treacherous nature of women in the poems that follow, that repel them from the poetic persona.

"Serenade" is a poem about a faithless woman who has no feeling for her lover. He calls her his lady love but says she will not come because she does not care about a lover's vows (45). He goes on to generalise his view on women as incapable of being true to love: "True love is but a woman's toy, / They never know the lover's pain, / And I who loved as loves a boy / Must love in vain, must love in vain" (45).

"The Dole of the King's Daughter" is basically a poem about sin and punishment. The king's daughter lived a life of sins: "Seven sins on the king's daughter, / Deep in her soul to lie" (75). It is said that there is one man who truly loves her and he "hath duggen a grave by the darksome yew" (75). Perhaps he killed the king's daughter and dug the grave to bury her, because the poem concludes with the lines: "The sins on her soul are seven, / The sin upon his is one" (75). The poem is yet another example for Wilde's verses that depict treacherous and sinful woman.

As the title suggests "Her Voice" is the voice of a lady who tells her lover that they were lovers once but, "those times are over and done" (93). She says it was all a beautiful dream and they have lived their "lives in a land of dreams!" (93). Bold and

determined, she advises to “kiss once again, and part” (94). She is yet another representative of deceitful women who mercilessly cheat on their love. She confidently asserts that “I have my beauty – you your Art/ ...One world was not enough for two/ Like me and you” (94) and leaves him.

“The Harlot House” is also a poem about an unfaithful woman. The poetic persona goes to the harlot’s house with his love in the night. Together they watched the dancers spin to the loud music. He watched them with disgust and thought “the dead are dancing with the dead” (115). But soon she left his side and joined the dancers: “Love passed into the house of lust.” Here again the poet portrays the image of a dissolute woman who leaves her love to seek more pleasures. The descriptions in the poem give the readers an impression that she has no love, but lust.

These poems are particularly not instances of same-sex pairing. But the poet’s distancing from women or the intrinsic misogyny exhibited in many of the poems only point to the sexual discordance experienced by him in relation to women. It is the inappropriate pairing that subtly hints at the poet’s alternate sexual orientation.

Wilde’s story, “The Nightingale and the Rose” also epitomises his view of women as treacherous and flirtatious. The story is about a nightingale who sacrifices her life in order to procure a red rose for the young man who needs that rose to propose to a girl he loves. However, the bird’s sacrifice proves to be in vain when the girl rejects the man and his rose. He throws the rose away and it is crushed by the wheel of a wagon. The story portrays the girl as faithless and untrue to her love. She promises to dance with him at the ball if he gives her a rose. But when the Chamberlain’s son offers her jewels she decides to dance with the Chamberlain’s son, who has much better prospects than the poor Student. The story, like many of Wilde’s

poems showcases his distrust in women and disgust in heterosexual relationships. Similarly, “The Birthday of the Infanta” pictures a heartless girl who fails to see the Dwarf’s love and shows no sympathy at his death. The story is set in Spain at an unspecified point in time. It is the twelfth birthday of the Infanta, the only daughter of the King of Spain. In order to entertain her, an ugly young dwarf dancer is brought to the court. The Dwarf is completely unaware of his hideous looks and does not realize that the others are scornful of his appearance. When the Dwarf sees his own reflection for the first time in his life, he falls to the ground sobbing, and becomes still. The courtier notices that the Dwarf has died. He tells the princess that the Dwarf will never dance again because his heart is broken. To which the Infanta replies, “For the future, let those who come to play with me have no hearts” (“The Birthday of the Infanta” 114).

However, same-sex pairing can be observed in some of his poems where the speaker associates himself with a male character in the poem. In certain poems the description of his love creates an ambiguous position regarding the lover’s gender. His words of praise seem equally applicable to a boy love as well. In “Ave Maria Gratia Plena” the angel and the speaker form the same sex pair. The speaker is eagerly waiting for “His coming” (20). He has some wonderful images of this angelic figure in his mind. He tries to imagine ‘Him’ as the great “God who in a rain of gold/ Broke open bars and fell on Danae” (20) and as the god who slew Semele when she wished to see “God’s clear body” (20). Both these references connote to the Greek god, Zeus. According to the myth, Danae is the daughter of King Acrisius. When Acrisius learned that he would be killed by the son of his daughter he locked her away in a chamber. But Zeus got into the chamber in the guise of a golden shower and impregnated her. Semele is mother to Dionysus by Zeus. Zeus fell in love with her

and repeatedly visits her. Zeus' wife Hera becomes jealous of her and plants seeds of doubt in Semele's mind. Semele then demands that Zeus reveal himself in all his glory as a proof of his divinity. He does it. But being a mortal, looking at the God in his true form she perishes, consumed in flame. The speaker of the poem expects to see such a heroic paramour like Zeus in his angelic figure: "And now with wondering eyes and heart I stand/ Before this supreme mystery of Love" (20). And what he sees is "An angel with a lily in his hand" (20). Attributing the lustful images of Zeus to the angel gives a different shade of colour to the speaker's relationship with the angel. Moreover, he deliberately makes his angel a man not a woman.

The image of 'narcissi' in the poem "Sonnet Written in Holy Week at Genoa" can be taken as a symbolic representation of homosexuality. Narcissi is a type of flower which exhibits similarity in its name with the mythical character Narcissus who fell in love with himself. Narcissism is often considered as the epitome of homosexual attraction. Falling in love with one's own image is treated as the crudest form of feeling sexual attraction towards someone of the same-sex. In the poem the poet was wandering through Scoglietto's far retreat. "Life seemed very sweet" (21) as he stood enjoying the beauty of nature with the pale narcissi lying at his feet. It is then that the young boy priest announced the death of Jesus. And the speaker confesses that "those clear Hellenic hours" he had spent with his love has "drowned all memory of Thy bitter pain, / The Cross, the Crown, the Soldier and the Spear" (21). Here he presents a contrast between Hellenic pleasures and Christian values. His love has made him forget Christian values for a while.

Similarly, in his long poem "The Ballad of Reading Goal" also there is a symbolic depiction of Narcissism. As the subject of his poem Wilde has chosen an outcast – a prisoner. The prisoner of the poem has "killed the thing he loved/ so he

had to die" ("The Ballad of Reading Goal" 232). On the one hand the poem is about the prisoner who has killed his love and on the other hand it is the monologue of the poet himself who could not speak for himself. "No doubt this mixture of faceless outcast and one-time individualistic accurately reflects Wilde's status at Reading Goal, most of all in his own eyes" (Shewan 198-199). The peaks about how he watched the prisoner "with curious eyes and sick surmise" ("The Ballad of Reading Goal" 236). In *De Profundis* Wilde has cut a sorry figure of himself who laments his plight as a prisoner. He makes philosophical ruminations over his pathetic prison life. But in the "The Ballad of Reading Goal" he speaks about a prisoner who does not scorn at his state. The prisoner is all that Wilde wishes to be. The poet's admiration for the prisoner demonstrates his narcissistic attraction towards his self which is the utmost culmination of homosexuality.

In "Easter Day" the poet's undue admiration for the Pope offers a different reading to the poem. He describes the Pope thus:

> Like some great God, the Holy Lord of Rome
>
> Priest – like, he wore a robe more white than foam,
>
> And, king – like, swathed himself in royal red,
>
> Three crowns of gold rose high upon his head:
>
> In splendour and in light the Pope passed home. (24)

The vision of Pope reminds him of someone who long back has wandered by a lonely sea. He is very much touched by the spectral sight of Pope. Pope is thus a symbolic representation of a feeling that he has been longing for long.

In “Vita Nuova” the image of ‘White Limbs’ symbolically suggests the poet’s repressed desires. It stands for the persona for whom the poet waits. The speaker of the poem is not happy with his life: “My life is full of Pain”, he says (25). He waits for some miracle to happen so that the miserable experiences of his life may change. He longs for the arrival of someone “who can garner fruit or golden grain/ From these waste fields which travail ceaselessly!” (25). His quest for this mysterious presence is shown using the image of casting net into the sea. He throws away the net and finally sees, “From the black waters of my tortured past/ The argent splendours of white limbs ascend” (25). The white limbs represent his hope and happiness. He describes the ascent of the limb as “a sudden glory” (25) which has brought happiness to his life. The white limbs thus form a pair with the speaker of the poem.

“The New Helen” speaks about the return of Helen or about the Helen of his time. This Helen, he says is “not born as common women are!” (28). The poet also speaks about a God “whose feet/ In nets of gold the tired planets move” (28). The poet combines the image of Helen with the God to give a new form to the New Helen. He speaks about the God thus: “Who in thy body holds his joyous seat”. Helen’s body is the God’s abode. Helen’s association with the God attributes maleness in her, which gives her the image of a hermaphrodite. This sexual feature underscores the homosexual connotation in her relationship with the speaker of the poem. The description of Helen’s influence on other men reminds us of Dorian’s evil influence on other young men.

> No! Thou art Helen, and none other one!
>
> It was for thee that young Sarpedon died,
>
> And Memnon’s manhood was untimely spent;

It was for thee gold-crested Hector tried

With Thetis' child that evil race to run,

In the last year of thy beleaguerment; (27)

After having set the new image of Helen the poet now expresses his love for this New Helen.

O Helen! ...

For in the gladsome sunlight of thy smile

Of heaven or hell I have no thought or fear. (28)

Moreover, he has taken the image of Helen from the Greek mythology to contrast it with the barren, loveless and passionless England.

Lily of love, pure and inviolate!

Tower of Ivory! Red rose of fire!

Thou hast come down our darkness to illume

For we, close-caught in the wide nets of Fate,...

Till we beheld thy re-arisen shrine,

And the white glory of thy loneliness. (29)

She thus stands for desires which were forbidden in Victorian England. They are fated to live in the world of gloom and the New Helen sets a model before them with all the glory of her, or more precisely his loveliness.

In “In the Forest” the image of faun can be taken as a symbol for homosexual attraction. The poem is about the poet tracking the faun. The faun has gone into the forest and the poet is chasing its shadow and song. The shadow represents the soul and song stands for passion. The poet tries to chase his body through the soul. His eagerness to catch the faun expresses his attempt to pursue his passion and desires.

In “Taedium Vitae” poet yet again expresses his disgust with women. He says he does not want to mesh his soul within a woman’s hair (95). He does not wish to stab his “youth with desperate knives” (95). He thinks a woman’s love is of least importance in his life. And that it is “better to stand aloof/ Far from these slanderous fools who mock my life” (95). Instead he prefers to go back to the “hoarse cave of strife” where his “white soul first kissed the mouth of sin” (95). Kissing the mouth of sin can be taken as a symbolic representation of homosexual relationship. Thus the speaker of the poem and the symbolic mouth of sin form the pair in the poem.

Owing to the social attitude towards homosexuality Wilde had restrictions regarding blatant treatment of homoerotic themes in his works. Though he had made bold attempts to portray same-sex pairs in many of his works, he had nevertheless faced its consequences. “Wilde had no talent for a direct confrontation with the abyss. His literary genius preferred to go bunburrying” (Bayley 11). Hence the symbolic manifestation of same-sex pairing in Wilde’s works is a kind of liberation of his libidinal tendencies. Here the images speak more. His creative oeuvre exhibits ample symbols and images to speak about the unacceptable sexual desires of his time when he could not talk about same-sex pairing in explicit terms. It is explained in psychoanalysis that “the sexual wishes which appear overtly are those which are acceptable...while those which appear in symbolic form are unacceptable” (Storr 47).

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Chapter 3

The Return of the Repressed:

Psychological Approach to Same-Sex Pairing

While Id Psychology model emphasises on the sexual instincts trying to find representation in images and symbols, Psychoanalytic Character Analysis focuses primarily on the interpretations based on the fictional characters. As Kaplan and Kloss put it:

> Fictional characters are representations of life and, as such, can only be understood if we assume they are real. And this assumption allows us to find unconscious motivations by the same procedure that the traditional critic uses to assign conscious ones. (4)

In a way, the author's approach to literature can be explored through a psychological study of his characters and the effects his texts display. Some of Wilde's works are remarkable for the way they can be practically used to illustrate what psychoanalysis has to do with the text and its fictional characters. The return of the repressed happens in the text at the level of narration, structure of plot and characterisation. "Freud discovered that psychoanalysis has to deal with the body caught up in the tropes and figures of language. The relation of psychoanalysis to language and literature is patent, even though its explanatory power is different" (Wright 175).

A psychological study of certain fictional, semi fictional and non fictional characters of Wilde and the way in which these characters relate and react to one another will help us unravel homosexual undertones in the text. The close interaction

between these characters comes across as homoerotic in some ways. The characters seem to know certain things about themselves which are hidden from the rest of the world because this realisation is full of terror and fear of being exposed.

The psychological reading of same-sex pairing provides more freedom for the subtle treatment of so called 'deviant' sexuality. In order to escape the social stigma associated with the portrayal of explicit same sex pairs in literary works, Wilde seems to have experimented with their symbolic manifestations. The psychological approach to same-sex pairing explores the ways in which the literary characters and situations can be analysed using various principles and theories of psychoanalysis. Different components of psychoanalytic theory are employed as tools to examine the presence of unintended depiction of same-sex pairing in the literary text, which in fact works more on the principles of unconscious mind.

One of the most prominent and perhaps, the most controversial ideas proposed by Freud is 'Oedipus Complex', whereby Freud says that "the male infant conceives the desire to eliminate the father and become the sexual partner of the mother" (Barry 93). Though Oedipus Complex is often considered as the corner stone of psychoanalysis "it is certainly its most fundamental and reprehensible error, and is probably theoretically incoherent as well" (208), says Dollimore in the light of its failure to accommodate homosexuality in its paradigm of signification. 'Transference' and 'Projection' are the two defence mechanisms of mind identified by Freud. Transference is "the phenomenon where by the patient under analysis redirects the emotions recalled in analysis towards the psychoanalyst" (Barry 93). Projection is a mechanism by which "the negative aspects of ourselves are perceived in or attributed to another" (Barry 93). The two dream work mechanisms identified by Freud are Displacement and Condensation. In Freudian dream interpretation displacement is the

mechanism by which “an element in a dream might stand for something else” (Barry 107). In condensation “several things might be compressed into one symbol” (Barry 107). Another important mechanism explained by Freud is what he calls ‘Parapraxis’. ‘Parapraxis’ is a mechanism of mind whereby the “repressed material in the unconscious finds an outlet through such everyday phenomena as slips of tongue, slips of the pen, or unintended action” (Barry 98). Parapraxis, says Wright, “represents the return of the repressed, a mechanism that marks both the emergence of the forbidden wish and the resistance to it” (12).

Lacanian psychoanalysis begins with the slogan ‘Unconscious is structured like language’. Lacan interprets Freudian Condensation and Displacement as corresponding to Metaphor and Metonymy respectively. Lacan’s classification of Imaginary (pre-linguistic stage) and symbolic (realm of language) as unconscious and conscious mind describes how social insistence on controlling desires, emphasised by the structures of language, effects the split between conscious and unconscious: “the repression that is the tax exacted by the use of language” (Wright 109). Ehrenzweig argues that “when ego has been the servant of the superego for too long the ego collapses, or ‘decomposes’ and falls back on the id for sustenance, getting new sensory evidence, new material for image-making” (230).

The works analysed in this section are “Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime”, “The Fisherman and his Soul”, *A Florentine Tragedy, A Woman of no Importance,* “The Portrait of Mr. W.H.”, “The Decay of Lying” and the poem “Charmides”

His short story “Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime” and his prose work “The Decay of Lying” can be subjected to a psychological approach in the demonstration of the psychoanalytic model of dividing mind into Conscious mind and Unconscious mind.

In “Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime” there is a psychological approach to same-sex pairing in the sense that the bonding is between Lord Arthur and his Unconscious mind, which is personified in Mr. Podger’s form. Freud’s bipartite division of mind into Conscious and Unconscious assumes that “the unconscious was chiefly, if not entirely, derived from repression, and therefore consisted of impulses, thoughts, and feelings, which were unacceptable to the conscious Ego” (Storr 59). Mr. Podger in the story thus represents the socially unacceptable Unconscious mind of Lord Arthur.

“Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime” is a story about Lord Arthur, who meets a chiromantist, Mr. Podger at Lady Windermere’s party. Podger reads Arthur’s palm and discloses that he is destined to commit a murder. Arthur is about to marry Sybil, but he thinks that he has no right to do so until he has committed the murder. Otherwise it would be like cheating Sybil.

He decides to kill some lesser important person whose death will not affect the affairs of the world. First he attempts to murder Aunt Clemntia who suffers from heartburn. He gives her a poison pill and asks to consume while she has another attack of heartburn. But she dies a natural death; and he searches for a new victim. He obtains a bomb from a jovial German and sends it to a distant relative, the Dean of Chichester. But the bomb fails to cause harmful explosions. Arthur now believes that his marriage plans are doomed. Finally he decides to kill the same palm reader and pushes the man off a parapet into the river where he dies. Having committed the murder and his destiny fulfilled Arthur Savile returns home in relief. The story ends with Arthur getting married to Sybil. Wilde subverts the conventional expectations of moral values in the story and challenges the notion of poetic justice in it.

> The whole plot represents a comic inversion of the traditional devices of moral justice, for here it is the act of murder (rather than the unmasking of the murder) which brings about the restoration of social order: the murderer becomes the hero (and ironically is rewarded through a happy marriage) and the victim becomes the villain (and equally ironically is punished by death). The consequence of this inversion is that the reader's attention is focused not on the traditional triumph of good over evil, but rather on the kind of society where murder is justified on the grounds of right conduct, where 'right' means observing the codes of gentlemanly behaviour. (Small xxi-xxii)

Lord Arthur and Mr. Podger, the palmist form the same-sex pair in the story. More than being just an acquaintance their relationship has a psychological implication. Mr. Podger reminds Arthur of his baser instincts. He is constantly warned of a call for committing a 'sin'. The prophesy mirrors to Arthur what he is or what he could be. The very presence of this character prophesies a social evil.

> All the time Lord Arthur Savile had remained standing by the fireplace, with the same feeling of dread over him, the same sickening sense of coming evil... he thought of Sybil Merton, and the idea that anything could come between them made his eyes dim with tears. ("Lord Arthur Savile's Crime" 174)

Homosexuality, like murder, was considered as a crime during the Victorian period, Wilde himself being a victim before the law. Mr. Podger's warning about the crime and Arthur's fear of getting caught before the society can be read as suggestive of Arthur's apprehensions regarding his alternative sexual orientation getting

disclosed. Arthur being a hypocrite wants to save his face in front of the society and tries to run away from the doom. It is stated in the story that Arthur has so far lived a life of happiness and freedom. But the arrival of Mr. Podger curbs his freedom and reminds him of the awful doom.

> He had lived the delicate and luxurious life of a young man of birth and fortune, a life exquisite in its freedom from sordid care, its beautiful boyish insouciance; and now for the first time he became conscious of the terrible mystery of the Destiny, of the awful meaning of Doom. (174)

After his personal talk with Mr. Podger Arthur is very much frightened "with face blanched by terror" (176). Things around him scared him as he wandered across the street that night. But "at the corner of the Rich Street stood two men, reading a small bill upon a hoarding. An odd feeling of curiosity stirred him, and he crossed over" (178). The image of "two men" is again suggestive of his indulgence in the 'sin'. Sybil is the reason for why he is running away from the 'sin'. Arthur believes that he cannot marry Sybil unless he puts an end to it.

> He felt that to marry her, with the doom of murder hanging over his head, would be a betrayal like that of Judas, a sin worse than any the Borgia had ever dreamed of. What happiness could there be for them, when at any moment he might be called upon to carry out the awful prophecy written in his hand? What manner of life would be theirs while Fate still held this fearful fortune in the scales? The marriage must be postponed, at all costs. (180)

He is so worried about the social evil he is indulged in that he does not want it to affect his marriage in any way. “This done, he could take her to his arms, knowing that she would never have to hang her head in shame. But done it must be first; and the sooner the better for both” (180).

Arthur has two options before him. He can either pursue a life of pleasure which he was living or marry Sybil and become a responsible gentleman. “Many men in his position would have preferred the primrose path of dalliance to the steep heights of duty; but Lord Arthur was too conscientious to set pleasure above principle” (181). His reason reminds him that there is no other course open. To survive in the Victorian England as a homosexual is practically impossible. Arthur is “essentially practical” and “has that rarest of all things, common sense” (181). So he decides to select the path of principle instead of pleasure. “He had to choose between living for himself and living for others, and terrible though the task laid upon him undoubtedly was, yet he knew that he must not suffer selfishness to triumph over love” (181).

He is very well aware of the consequences of his sin and the pain he has to endure if he puts an end to it. So he is determined to “keep the secret of his self-sacrifice hidden always in his heart” (182). Arthur does not try to get away from the prophesied sin and makes two unsuccessful attempts. He does not restrain from committing the ‘crime’. His intention instead is to hide it from the society. He asks Sybil to postpone the date of wedding because he needs time to get rid of his “fearful entanglements”.

> He told her that the marriage must be put off for the present, as until he had got rid of his fearful entanglements, he was not a free man. He

> implored her to trust him, and not to have any doubt about the future. Everything would come right, but patience was necessary. (185)

When Arthur fails in both attempts he even thinks “it would be better to break off the marriage together” (195)

He slowly withdraws from his male friends. After the postponement of his marriage with Sybil he goes to Venice and meets his friend Lord Surbiton. From there he goes to the coast of Ravenna under Surbiton’s persuasion. But he feels bored and in spite of Surbiton’s remonstrance comes back to Venice. After his second unsuccessful attempt when he goes to the club where is he obliged to dine with Surbiton and a party of young men he leaves the party all of a sudden as he loses interest in the party.

Finally he gets a chance to get rid of his guilty conscience as he throws Mr. Podger into the Thames. Mr. Podger’s death unties all the tangled knots and he is set free. Having no hindrances in his path of getting married to Sybil he rushes to her and says “My dear Sybil let us be married tomorrow!” (198). Once he is relieved of the ‘pair’ Arthur embraces Sybil and begins a new life.

It could not be just a coincidence that he is to get married to Sybil. The name ‘Sybil’ reminds one of the mythological characters, the Sybil of Cumae, who was granted eternal life by Apollo. But she forgot to ask for youth. She aged and withered, but could not die. Soon she realised that death would have been a better option for her (Parada).The twentieth century poet, T.S. Eliot has used the image of Sibyl in his *The Waste Land* to describe the death in life existence of Waste Land, where there is no rejuvenation and reproduction. Similarly, what awaits Arthur in his marriage is simply

a death in life existence. He is trying to hide his sexual orientation and thus to satisfy the social needs. This will definitely earn him name and fame but not happiness.

The pairing is psychological in the sense that it is a bonding between Arthur and his Unconscious mind. Mr. Podger is a personification of Arthur's own conscience which is haunted by a sense of guilt nurtured by the social values. Moreover, Arthur resembles Wilde's personality and character:

> Social life was the very breath of his being, and his written work was his talk gone rather flat: solitude took much of the sparkle out of it. None the less he thought well of the longest story in this book, 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime', which is a resume of his personality. (Pearson 138)

The bonding between Arthur and Podger takes a symbolic signification since it is a reminder for Arthur about his alternative sexual orientation. Arthur's homosexual life is a hindrance for his marriage with Sybil. Podger acts as a mouthpiece for Arthur's conscience and warns him about the doom that awaits him. Arthur makes several attempts and slowly moves away from the men circle. Finally he overcomes his sense of guilt by putting an end to the 'sin' he was preoccupied with, which cost the very life of Podger.

Similarly Wilde's much acclaimed critical dialogue "The Decay of Lying" demonstrates the conflict between the two parts of mind namely Conscious mind and Unconscious mind. The essay is composed in the form of polemical exchanges between Wilde's own sons, Cyril and Vivian who represent Realism and Romance respectively. As Rodney Shewan puts it, "'The Decay of Lying' has its origin in 'The

English Renaissance' but was influenced by conversations with Whistler and published at the height of the controversy over realism and romance in fictions" (95).

In the essay both the superficial binary opposition between Nature and Culture, and the intrinsic binary opposition between Realism and Romance contribute much to the demonstration of the dichotomy between Conscious mind and Unconscious mind. Cyril and Vivian thus form the same-sex pair who represents the Conscious mind and Unconscious mind respectively.

The essay opens in the library of a country house where Cyril asks Vivian to go with him to "lie on the grass and smoke cigarettes and enjoy Nature" ("The Decay of Lying" 57). But, Vivian ignores Nature in order to proofread an article which deplores nature's tyranny over modern art. He observes that "Art really reveals to us is Nature's lack of design, her curious crudities, her extraordinary monotony, her absolutely unfinished condition" (57). Vivian's arguments echo Wilde's artistic preferences. Through Vivian he "defends his own prose techniques in poems in prose, tales, and the dialogues themselves, deliberately equating the artist and the social liar as two of a kind, performers who seek to give pleasures" (Shewan 97).

The premise for all Vivian's theories is an aesthetic interpretation of lies. Vivian (or rather Wilde himself) discredits Nature's authority and tries to constitute the new aesthetics. He asserts that "lying, the telling of beautiful untrue things is the proper aim of Art" ("The Decay of Lying" 87). He out rightly rejects the preoccupation of Realism in art. He insists that Realism, as a method, is a complete failure. His rejection of social realism, insistence on complete autonomy of art, and proclamation of unimpeded artistic freedom reverberate the call of the Unconscious mind.

Throughout the essay while Vivian argues with intense passion, Cyril is a weak defender or almost a passive listener. Shewan observes that Wilde has made "the younger son magister and the older the discipulus of a Socratic dialogue" (97). Vivian's longing for passionate indulgence in Romance and freedom of imagination represents the libidinal urges of the Unconscious mind which is threatened by the tyranny of social laws.

When the conversation ends, they both decide to leave the library, and thus it ends with a return to ordinary life. It is Vivian himself who suggests:

> But of this I think I have spoken at sufficient length. And now let us go out on the terrace, where 'droops the milk-white peacock like a ghost', while the evening star 'washes the dusk with silver'. At twilight nature becomes a wonderfully suggestive effect, and is not without loveliness, though perhaps its chief use is to illustrate quotations from the poets. ("The Decay of Lying" 87)

Vivian's final return to the ordinary life represents the suppression of the Unconscious mind, which has been throbbing throughout with extreme passion.

"The Fisherman and his Soul", *A Florentine Tragedy* and "Charmides" are fictional demonstrations of Freud's concept of Ego, Superego and Id. The Ego is that part of the mind which represents consciousness. It stands for "reason, common sense, and the power to delay immediate responses to external stimuli or to internal instinctive promptings" (Storr 61-62).The Superego is the agency within the mind that stands for the cultural and ethical ideas. "The Superego can be regarded as the product of repeated conditioning by parental injunctions and criticism" (63). The Id is the primitive, unorganised realm of the illogical. "The Id is governed only by the most

basic, primitive principle of mental dynamics: avoidance of ‘unpleasure’ caused by instinctual tension, which can only be achieved by satisfaction of instinctual needs accompanied by pleasure” (61). In “The Fisherman and his Soul” the Fisherman’s oscillation between the Soul and the Mermaid explains how Ego makes compromises with Superego and Id.

In the story a Fisherman gets a mermaid in his net and falls in love with her. He expresses his intention to marry her, but is informed by the Mermaid that he can marry her only if he sends his Soul away. From a Witch he learns that he can send the Soul away by cutting his shadow from his body. The Soul tempts the Fisherman with material possessions so that he would allow the Soul to enter into his body again. Finally when Soul describes the naked feet of a dancer who lives nearby, the Fisherman falls for the temptation and the Soul enters his body. Later he longs to go back to the Mermaid but he could not send his Soul away for a second time. He calls for the Mermaid in pain but she does not respond. The Soul could not enter the Fisherman’s heart because it was full of his love for the Mermaid. One stormy day the Mermaid’s body is washed upon the shore, and he dies of grief. The priest orders that both the bodies be buried in an unmarked grave where no sweet herbs grow. Three years later the priest notices some flowers in full bloom at the Fisherman’s grave.

Wilde’s stories are highly paradoxical by being both innocent and grave at the same time. His stories are satisfying narratives for children and self-conscious literary exercises as well. In most of his stories he uses parody of sub-genres as his stylistic device. Parody is a distinctive stylistic device employed by Wilde in some of his works. Most of his short stories appropriate parodies of the sub genres. “The Fisherman and his Soul” is an example for an overt and witty parody.

> In ‘Fisherman and his Soul’ they are more subtle and complex, and the line between the parodic and the serious is deliberately blurred. This last kind of story is the most self-consciously ‘literary’. And it is in this group that we find the strongest prefiguring of the complexity of Wilde’s later work. (Small xx)

“The Fisherman and his Soul” represents a complex kind of parody. “The moral of the tale centres on the familiar Christian opposition between the spiritual (represented by the conscience and the soul) and the material (represented by worldly attractions and the body) which is in turn presented in terms of the equally familiar opposition between selfless love and selfish desires” (Small xxiii). The story is about the appalling influence of the material world and sexual drives, and the ultimate victory of selfless spiritual love. Wilde has reversed the role of soul and body. When the Fisherman cuts away his soul, the Soul indulges in a life of dedicated immorality which parodies and inverts the temptations of Christ. Instead of body, it is the Soul which expresses a fascination with the sins of the flesh.

> Wilde seems to suggest that the Fisherman’s ability to withstand temptation derives from the power of his love. Usually love is considered to be the prerogative of the soul or spirit, love (and the values associated with it, such as fidelity) reside in the body. The implication is that for Wilde ‘true love’ is exclusively of the body and is therefore (sexual) desire, a conclusion which completely reverses the traditional Christian understanding of the relationship between body and soul, where soul is the regulating conscience of the body. (Small xxiv)

This is perhaps the most psychological of Wilde's short stories. "Wilde always looks upon art as subjective mode of expression" (Ghosal 150). And this story seems to be highly prophetic about Wilde's own life. The story has a strange pairing in it, the pairs being the Fisherman and the Mermaid. Instead of a male-male bonding here the pairing is between Fisherman and the Mermaid. Mermaid is an incomplete woman, a woman with a lack or a castrated woman. Mermaid can be considered as a symbol for a man turned woman or a transgender. And their relationship is a connotative image for homosexuality. The story has psychological implication in the sense that if the Mermaid stands for his Id, Soul is the projection of his Superego. Fisherman falls in love with the Mermaid and wishes to live with her. He is so blindly in love with her that he forgets his worldly responsibilities.

> So sweet was her voice that he forgot his nets and his cunning, and had no care of his craft. Vermillion-finned and with eyes of bossy gold, the tunnies went by in shoals, but he heeded them not. His spear lay by his side unused, and his baskets of plaited osier were empty. ("The Fisherman and his Soul" 117)

He learns from the Mermaid that he has to send his Soul away in order to marry her. 'Soul' represents his worldly possessions and commitments including family. He goes to a Witch seeking help from her to send his Soul away. She promises to help him but wonders why he is not attracted to her.

> And the Witch watched him as he went, and when he had passed from her sight she entered her cave, and having taken a mirror from a box of carved cedar wood, she set it up on a frame and burned vervain on lighted charcoal before it, and peered through the coils of the smoke.

> And after a time she clenched her hands in anger. ‘He should have been mine’, she murmured, ‘I am as fair as she is’. (122-23)

As a reward for her help she asks him to dance with her in the midnight and he agrees. The description of dance movements echoes sexual foreplay, suggesting her attempt to get aroused. But he is least affected and spoils the mood of the night. His lack of interest in women is again suggestive of his failure in a heterosexual relationship.

> ...taking the Fisherman by the hand she led him out into the moonlight and began to dance. Round and round they whirled, and the young Witch jumped so high that he could see the scarlet heels of her shoes. Then right across the dancers came the sound of the galloping of a horse, but no horse was to be seen, and he felt afraid. ‘Faster’, cried the Witch, and she threw her arms about his neck, and her breath was hot upon his face. ‘Faster, faster!’ she cried, and the earth seemed to spin beneath his feet, and his brain grew troubled... (122)

Sending the Soul away symbolises running away from the social ties and moral responsibilities. He sends the Soul away by cutting his very shadow. The Soul comes to meet him every year and tries to tempt him with such temptations like wisdom and riches. But he remains unaffected. Finally when the Soul mentions about a girl with naked feet the Fisherman is reminded of the Mermaid’s lack and falls for the temptation. His attraction towards the feet of the girl reminds us of “the post-modern anecdote about the foot fetishist who was in love with the foot but had to settle for the whole person” (Dollimore 175). Freud proposes that,

> Perversions are sexual activities which involve an extension, or transgression, of limit in respect either to the part of the body concerned or to the sexual object chosen. In the first case (the part of the body) perversion would involve a lingering over the intermediate relations to the sexual object – as with the foot fetishist – relations which should normally be traversed rapidly on the path towards the final sexual aim. That is reproduction via heterosexual genital intercourse. In the second case (sexual object), it would involve the choosing of an inappropriate object –e.g. someone of the same sex. (Dollimore 175)

As far as the Fisherman is concerned, the second case explains his love for the Mermaid. Mermaid is the 'inappropriate' sexual object which stands for same-sex attraction. And, the first case explains the call of material or cultural attraction towards heterosexual relationship. The foot is the part of the body that stands for sexual object in this context.

He is tempted by the Soul's description of the feet and decides to leave the Mermaid. Hence, he allows the Soul to enter into his body and goes in search of the girl. Soon he realises that it was but a false promise. The Soul having entered his body he cannot go back to the Mermaid. Having turned to his worldly commitments he cannot go back to his life of pleasures. His life becomes more and more miserable. He lives with the soul but provides no space for the soul in his heart. "so great was the power of his love" ("The Fisherman and his Soul" 144).

He weeps for the love he has lost. He is not at peace with the life he has to live. He calls for the Mermaid all day long, but she does not come to him. Later he

dies of grief when the Mermaid is found lying dead on the seashore. Next day morning the priest seeing the Fisherman lying dead on the shore hesitates to bless him for he "forsook God for the sake of love". He snubs the Fisherman and his 'leman' for having indulged in 'sin'.

> And he drew back frowning, and having made the sign of cross, he cried aloud and said, 'I will not bless the sea nor anything that is in it. Accursed be the Sea-folk, and accursed be all they who traffic them. And as for him who for love's sake forsook God, and so lieth here with his leman slain by God's judgement, take up his body and the body of his leman, and bury them in the corner of the Field of Fullers, and set no mark above them, nor sign of any kind, that none may know the place of their resting. For accursed were they in their lives, and accursed shall they be in their deaths also'. (146-47)

He is buried in the corner of the Field of the Fullers where no fragrant herbs grow. After a few years some sweet smelling flowers are found in full blossom in the corner of the field: Flowers which are rare and powerful enough to cast the spell of love even in the eyes of the priest.

The story is prophetic in the sense that it closely resembles Wilde's own life. Interestingly, Wilde himself has described in *De Profundis* the way events in his own life had been prefigured in his art. Hesketh Pearson has observed how Wilde's personality gets painted in his works: "Wilde is one of our most autobiographical writers; his personality is paramount in all his works, nearly every phase in which is stamped with his individuality: his profundity as a critic, his superficiality as a creator" (149).

Wilde was married to Constance Lloyd in 1884 and was living the life of a family man. When he began his career he was more a media personality than a literary figure. Finding himself with a wife and young family to support he was forced to turn his hand to journalism. He earned money through book reviewing for some periodicals. It was in the year 1886 that he met Robert Ross and turned to homosexuality. Wilde was closely associated with Robert Ross, whom Ian Small describes as “Wilde’s first homosexual lover, certainly a lifelong faithful friend and his painstaking literary executor” (xvii).Like the Fisherman who went with the Mermaid, Wilde discovered his first homosexual love. Very soon we see a happy and successful writer evolving. Those were the days of happiness and pleasure. Fame and the financial and social success which accompanied it came to him in 1892 with the successful production of *Lady Windermere’s Fan*. But the happiness did not last for long.

Wilde always wanted to keep his family life, even when he was having homosexual relationships. He was very fond of his children and was a loving and devoted father. “...in a letter to Robert Ross Wilde reveals the importance of his children in his life – so much so that even his gay relationships had to be accommodated to them...” (Small xvii). If it was out of temptation that Fisherman returned to his Soul, it was a tragedy that happened in Wilde’s life that took him away from the pleasures of life. Wilde was sentenced to two years of imprisonment with hard labour for ‘acts of gross indecency with another male person’. He was sent to Wandsworth Prison and declared bankrupt. Out of the prison he could not be at peace with his family. The ‘Soul’ could not enter into his heart. Constance Wilde changed her name to Holland and died in 1898. She did not allow Wilde to meet his children. The door to homosexuality having been shut by the law he could not go back to his

Mermaid as well. The Mermaid of his life had a symbolic death with the verdict of the court.

Like the Fisherman who died of grief Wilde met with a tragic end. In 1900 he fell ill with blood infection and died. All his fame turned to notoriety with his awful death, like the fate of the Fisherman who was not even given a decent burial. But the rare flowers in bloom which were capable of spreading love are symbolic of the posthumous acceptance of Wilde as one of the greatest writers the world has ever seen. It could also stand for the social recognition of homosexuality and the reforms brought out by the LGBT movements. The flowers in bloom were Wilde's prophecy about the future world.

A Florentine Tragedy is a fragmented work by Oscar Wilde. The play is about a wealthy merchant, Simone and his wife, Bianca. Simone sees his wife in the arms of a local prince, Guido Bardi. Simone extends hospitality to Guido but soon challenges him to a duel, and strangles him. The incident awakes his wife's affection and they are reconciled.

The plot of the play offers a psychological reading of the protagonist's mind.

> Sigmund Freud's structural model of psyche defines three parts of the psychic apparatus – Id, Ego and Superego. He says that our mental life is described in terms of the activities and interactions of these three theoretical constructs. According to this model of the psyche, the id is the set of uncoordinated instinctual trends; the superego plays the critical and moralising role and the ego is the organised, realistic part that mediates between the desire of the id and the superego. The

> superego can stop one from doing certain things that one's id may want to do. (Snowden 105-7)

The play features a conflict between these three parts of the psyche. The Id which constitutes the instinctual drives, acts according to the pleasure principles. The Superego strives to act in a socially appropriate manner which reflects the internalisation of cultural rules. The Ego is the original part of the personality that seeks to please the Id's drives in realistic ways. Simone's friendship with Guido forms a part of his Id, whereas his relationship with his wife is what Superego permits. The duel between Simone and Guido and the final reunion of Simone and Bianca represent the conflict between Id and Superego, where Superego triumphs when Ego suppresses the drives of the Id.

Social attitude towards homosexuality restricts the expression of alternative sexual orientations, which obviously is an instinctual drive of the Id. Since social norms do not permit the possibilities of having a homosexual relationship the desire gets suppressed to that part of the psyche which we call Id. Simone-Guido pair sets an example for a same-sex pair which is not socially permissible. A detailed conversational analysis of the exchanges between Simone and Guido brings to light Simone's unduly adoration of Guido. For Simone, who is an ordinary citizen, looks upon Guido as a privileged prince: "The son of the great Lord of Florence whose dim towers/ Like shadows silvered by the wandering moon/ I see from out my casement every night" (*A Florentine Tragedy* 429). When Simone uses obscene language while praising Guido in front of Bianca, Guido reminds him of Bianca's presence.

> Simone: ...They say, my lord,/These highborn dames do so affect your grace/That where you go they throng like flies around you,/ Each

> seeking for your favour./ I have heard also/ Of husbands that wear horns, and wear them bravely,/ A fashion most fantastical.
>
> Guido: Simone,/ Your reckless tongue needs curbing; and besides,/ You do forget this gracious lady here/ Whose delicate ears are surely not attuned/ To such coarse music. (432)

Despite Guido's indifference, Simone goes on expressing his adoration and affection for Guido. He pleads with Guido to play his lute: "Your lute I know is chaste. And therefore play; / Ravish my ears with some sweet melody; / My soul is in a prison- house, and needs/ Music to cure its madness..." (437). When Guido hesitates to play the lute Simone suggests having a drink with him at least: "If you will not draw melodies from your lute/ To charm my moody and o'er- troubled soul,/ You'll drink with me at least?" (437). Finally, when Guido is about to leave the house, Simone asks him to stay back and not to hurry his journey: "So soon? Why should you? The great Duomo's bell/ Has not yet tolled its midnight, and the watchmen, who with their hollow horns mock the pale moon, lie drowsy in their tower. Stay awhile" (439).

In contrast to the drives of the id, superego gets projected in the way Simone deals with his wife. He represents a conventional patriarchal husband who adheres to the strict social and moral codes. Heterosexuality, being a social norm acts according to the principles of Superego. He displays his insistence on sticking on to one's moral responsibilities when he reminds Bianca of the duty to run to meet her Lord (429). He makes similar patriarchal observation about a woman's household duties.

> Simone: You jest, my lord, /She is not worthy of so great a prince/ She is but made to keep the house and spin. /Is it not so, good wife? It is so.

> Look!/ Your distaff waits for you. Sit down and spin. /Women should not be idle in their homes, /For idle fingers make a thoughtless heart. / Sit down, I say". (433)

The conflict between Id and Superego takes the form of a duel between Guido and Simone. It resembles the way desires of the Id are suppressed by the moralistic Superego. Guido is strangled to death by Simone, and his death signifies the repression of the alternative sexual drives. Finally, the organised Ego reconciles Simone with Bianca. Though Bianca had no love for her husband in the beginning she too succumbs to the needs of Superego adhering to the moral codes of the society. Initially she judges her husband like this:

> How like a common chapman does he speak/ I hate him, soul and body. Cowardice/ Has set her pale seal on his brow. His hands/ Whiter than polar leaves in windy springs, / Shake with some palsy; and his stammering mouth/ Blurts out a foolish froth of empty words/ Like water from a conduit.(435)

However, once the libidinal urges are tamed by the Superego with the symbolic strangling of Guido, she embraces the Ego wholeheartedly: "She comes towards him as one dazed with wonder and with outstretched arms" (442).

The play, supposedly fragmented, ends with the victory of Superego over Id. Simone explains the structural model of the psyche and shows how the three parts of the psyche functions. The Ego mediates between the drives of Id and the principles of Superego and works according to the moral codes of the society.

The poem “Charmides” deals with the story of a charming young Greek sailor, Charmides, who breaks into goddess Athena’s temple and makes love to her statue. As a punishment to what he has done to the statue, the sailor is drowned. Later a nymph falls in love with his pale dead body, but only to die in despair. Venus, the goddess of love, takes pity on the pair and unites them in the underworld.

The poem is notorious for its treatment of perverse erotic desire. Richard Ellman observes that “Charmides was probably the focal point of the considerable moral outrage caused by the publication of *Poems”* (141). It is said that “Even Wilde’s friend and most favourable reviewer, Oscar Browning, was hard pressed to find something good to say about this poem” (Varty xix).

Charmides and the persona of the poem form the same-sex pair in the poem. Although the poem is not basically a first person narration, the poet has directly addressed the readers in stanzas 19 and 23. The persona ‘I’ has crept into the poem in these stanzas. Prompted by the public reaction these stanzas were deleted in some of the editions of the poem. These are the only stanzas of this long poem in which the persona of the poem uses the first person, breaking the narrative, to address the readers. If the sailor is the projection of the poet’s suppressed Id, the persona mediates between his Id and Superego. By addressing the readers in stanzas 19 and 23, he divides them into sinners and innocents. He says he is addressing the ‘sinners’ in his poem. They alone can identify with his projected Id. For the ‘innocents’ the description of this ‘pervert’ love may look musicless:

> Those who have never known a lover’s sin
>
> Let them not read my ditty, it will be

> To their dull ears so musicless and thin
>
> That they will have no joy of it, but ye
>
> To whose wan cheeks now creeps the lingering smile,
>
> Ye who have learned who Eros is – O listen, yet awhile. (Charmides 52)

The persona's inclination towards the suppressed Id can be traced in his description of the Greek sailor. The conventional images that a poet, necessarily a man, uses to describe a woman are used in abundance in the poem to describe the sailor's physical features. The sailor crowned his head with "fresh boughs of olive" (49), "brushed from cheek and throat the hoary spray,/And washed his limbs with oil" (49). At night he approached Athena's statue in the temple. "And from his limbs he threw the cloak away... touched her throat and with hands violate/Undid the Cuirass, and the crocus gown/ And bared the breast of polished ivory,/Till from the waist the peplos falling down/Left visible the secret mystery" (52).

Unlike a 'normal' heterosexual relationship the sailor cannot reach a fruitful consummation in his erotic passion for the statue. Hence his seduction of the statue stays outside the heterosexual matrix. It is here that the sailor becomes a projection of the poet's Id. Poet's suppressed 'deviant' sexual orientation constitutes his Id. Through the character of the sailor the persona tries to liberate his suppressed desires.

The sailor is well aware of the 'sin' he has committed and the punishment that awaits him: "Ready for death he stood" (52), as he moved to make love. In stanza 23 again the persona intervenes to say that there could be people who may not appreciate or understand the love he is speaking about. People, who "will never know of what I

try to sing, / How long the last kiss was, how fond and late his lingering" (53). Poet is perhaps speaking about the Victorian society who could never tolerate homosexuality. "In 'Charmides' Wilde pushes Victorian tolerance to the limit by telling the story of a young Greek sailor, who stole into Athena's shrine and ravished her image. He compounds the provocation by addressing his readers in stanzas 19 and 23" (Alexis 1).

When the sailor walks out of the temple some people mistakes him for Narcissus: "It is Narcissus, his own paramour,/Those are fond and crimson lips no woman can allure" ("Charmides" 55). Reference to Narcissus reinforces the possibility of homosexual connotations. Poet's adoration for the sailor gets reflected in his description of the sailor as: "the overbold adulterer, /A dear profaner of great mysteries, /An ardent amorous idolater" (56).

The sailor is drowned as a punishment for the sin he has committed. His body is washed to the Grecian shore, where a wood-nymph falls in love with him. She "called him soft names, played with his tangled hair, /And with hot lips made havoc of his mouth" (59). Her necrophilic attraction, like his seduction of the statue, has no social permission. She waits for him to wake up, but he does not. She moans bitterly and dies beside him: "Sobbing her life out with a bitter cry/On the boy's body fell the Dryad maid,/Sobbing for incomplete virginity;/And raptures unenjoyed, and pleasures dead" (65). Unenjoyed raptures and dead pleasures suggest the unconsumed love. She died without experiencing the joy of passion; and not to have known this passion, says the poet, is like not having lived at all (65). He also adds that to know this passion is "to be held in death's most deadly thrall" (65). Poet hints at the social prohibition or religious denial of this passion as a sin or crime which will be rewarded with a punishment not less than death itself.

Venus, moved by the scene of these lovers lying dead, lovers who should pass into the death's house unloved (66), unites them in the underworld: "...all his hoarded sweets were hers to kiss /And all her maidenhood was his to slay /And limb to limb in long and rapturous bliss /Their passion waxed and waned..." (69).

Concluding the poem with a return to the 'normal' heterosexual relationship is in accordance with the social insistence on heteronormative values. The underworld were these lovers are united is described as "melancholy moonless Acheron,/Far from the goodly earth and joyous day" (68). This is how a heteronormative society appears for people with alternative sexual orientations. They will be happy to get social acceptance by turning to heterosexuality, but at the cost of deceiving their sexual subjectivity. Charmides and wood nymph are 'happily' united by the godess of love, but only after suppressing their 'pervert' desires. Moreover reference to 'Lesbian waters' and 'Sappho' (69) towards the end of the poem underscores the possible homoerotic connotations.

The title of the poem is significant in the context of homosexual interpretation. Wilde, an admirer of Greek art and life, has taken the name of one of the students of Socrates. Socrates was fascinated by the beauty of young charmides. "Socrates was attracted to teenage boys as is evident in the encounter with Charmides in a palaestra" ("Male Homosexuality" 3). Palaestra means a wrestling school which was also a place to pick up a lover. Socrates always preferred to substitute his homoerotic feelings with philosophical deliberations. He was determined to keep his relationship with young men on an intellectual love: "Socrates recommended to his associates that they substitute love of the mind and moral character for purely sensual love" ("Male Homosexuality").

> When Socrates was in the company of beautiful boys, he lost his senses. Some sort of mania (divine madness) took possession of him and he was almost unable to resist it. He often complained about the fact that he was helpless towards adolescents, and said that he could only cope with the situation by asking difficult questions to these beautiful boys and teaching them philosophy. So, according to Plato, Socrates sublimated his passion". (Dolen)

Philosophy thus becomes an erotic enterprise for him. By raising such a relationship to philosophical dimension, Wilde seems to vouch for a sublimation of homoeroticism. This is also precisely the reason why the Victorian academia and the moral apparatus that was in ruling attempted to do away with the stanzas 19 and 23. By choosing Charmides, Wilde presents same-sex pairing cryptically. Direct allusion to Socrates is deliberately avoided. The persona's inclination towards the projection of his suppressed Id and the final submission to the demands of Superego facilitates the psychoanalytic reading of the same-sex pair in the poem.

The same-sex pair in *A Woman of no Importance* redefines Freud's concept of Oedipus Complex from a gay perspective. The play begins with a party hosted by Lady Hunstanton. In the party Gerald announces that Lord Illingworth has agreed to take him as his secretary, which could be a turn to his successful financial career. Lord Illingworth and his amoral relationships become a topic of discussion in the party

Macey's *Dictionary of Critical Theory* explains Oedipus complex thus:

> The existence of the Oedipus complex explains the child's sexual attraction towards the parent of the opposite sex and jealousy of the

> parent of the same sex...In a letter to Fliess dated 17 October 1897, he (Sigmund Freud) remarks that Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* has such 'gripping power' because being in love with one's mother and jealous of one's father is a universal event in early childhood... (280-81)

Laplanche and Pontalis describe its negative and positive forms like this:

> In its so-called positive form, the complex appears as in the theory of Oedipus Rex: a desire for the death of the rival – the parent of the same-sex – and a sexual desire for the parent of the opposite sex. In its negative form, we find the reverse picture: love for the parent of the same sex, and jealous hatred for the parent of the opposite sex. In fact, the two versions are to be found in varying degrees in what is known as the complete form of the complex. (282-3)

Freud's definition of Oedipus complex is made from a hetero-normative perspective; and psychoanalysis has made attempts to explain homosexuality as a series of unsuccessful resolutions of Oedipus complex:

> It is still widely believed that a boy turns out to be homosexual when he identifies with his mother and becomes effeminate ... or, by identifying with his mother, he later wants to repeat the joys he experienced with her by choosing boys whom he can treat as his mother treated him...or whether he loves her or hates her, on discovering she has no penis he develops a 'castration complex' that forces him to turn to other males in need for sex-with safety. (Tripp 78-9)

"The attempts to account for homosexual diversity have pushed psychoanalysis theory into inconsistency and even absurdity; this is most acutely the case in relation to the Oedipus complex" (Dollimore 197). There is yet another possible explanation for Oedipus complex by incorporating homosexuals to the defining paradigm. Freud speaks about the male child (heterosexual by norm) who is sexually attracted towards his mother. But, if the boy is supposedly homosexual, the attraction has to be directed towards his father. Andre Green has made a valid observation on the homosexual reading of Oedipus Complex where he discusses the other side of the Oedipus Complex, "always present in some form, where a firm identification with the 'right' parent (for a man the father, for a woman the mother) is undermined by an identification with the parent of the opposite sex" (Wright 103). The possible existence of Oedipus complex for a homosexual can be observed as a theme in Wilde's *A Woman of no Importance.* The gay perspective of Oedipus complex opens up wider scope of examining Lord Illingworth and his son, Gerald as a same-sex pair.

The play discusses the life of a fallen woman, Mrs. Arbuthnot, the charming young gentleman, Gerald, the powerful and flirtatious hypocrite, Lord Illingworth and the intense puritanical morality of the young American girl, Hester. Wilde seems to make no moral statements in judging these characters. Varty observes that "Wilde can be seen to be adjusting the conventional meaning of moral terms such as 'good' and 'bad'. So in this play he argues for an amelioration of absolute but hypocritical judgements meted out by society and religious orthodoxy" (xix). Wilde tries to break the conventional social practice of making hierarchical division of morally 'good people' and 'bad people'. Varty points out that "...the display of emotional and ethical extremes in this tableau shows the paradox on which the whole drama hinges. The

only character with conscience, moral vision and ethical depth in this play is the so-called fallen woman" (xix).

Wilde has taken utmost care to portray the hypocrisies of Victorian moral life through the exchanges between his characters, who make valid observations on marriage, family and human relationships of that period. The Victorian insistence on hetero-normative social behaviour is evidently shown when Lady Caroline says, "It is not customary in England, Miss Worsley, for a young lady to speak with such enthusiasm of any person of the opposite sex. English women conceal their feelings till after they are married" (*A Woman of no Importance* 222). This statement rules out the possible existence of homosexuals who are attracted not to the opposite sex, but to the same-sex. Later when she remarks that "it is perfectly scandalous, the amount of bachelors who are going about society. There should be a law passed to compel them all to marry within twelve months" (235), she exhibits the Victorian apprehensions regarding unmarried men. Moreover, certain statements in the play like "The world was made for men and not women" (225) and "Women are always on the side of morality, public and private" (226) try to tie women to the codes of morality and set men free to explore the paths of pleasures.

Lord Illingworth is presented as a man of high distinction who is hopelessly wicked. He is a rebel who criticises the rigid moral principles and shows interest in seeking pleasures of life. The characterisation of Lord Illingworth is another instance of what Dollimore points out as trangressive aesthetic of Wilde which takes the form of creative liberation (Appendix). Victorian society's strict adherence to the moral values is brought to light through the exchanges between Kelvil and Lady Stutfield, in which Kelvil describes Illingworth as an immoral being:

> Kelvil: Lord Illingworth is, of course, a brilliant man, but he seems to me to be lacking in that fine faith in the nobility and purity of life which is so important in this century.
>
> Lady Stutfield: Yes quite, quite important, is it not?
>
> Kelvil: He gives me the impression of a man who does not appreciate the beauty of our English home life. I would say that he was tainted with foreign ideas on the subject.
>
> Lady Stutfield: There is nothing, nothing like the beauty of home- life, is there?
>
> Kelvil: It is the mainstay of our moral system in England, Lady Stutfield. Without it we would become like our neighbours (229).

Kelvil appreciates the moral system that is prevalent in England of that time. He says that it is the existence of these moral values that add beauty to the English home life. He also observes that Illingworth does not fit into this society because he is more an immoral being, than a brilliant gentleman. He goes on to say that Illingworth is tainted with foreign ideas on the subject that makes him disregard the moral values of England. This observation considers the possibilities of Illingworth's homosexual life. Illingworth's same-sex orientation is also hinted at when he says, "I took a great fancy to young Arbuthnot the moment I met him, and he will be of considerable use to me in something I am foolish enough to think of doing" (226). He also confesses to Gerald that it is his love for Gerald that tempted him to appoint Gerald as his secretary: "It is because I like you so much that I want to have you with me" (232). Gerald also admires Illingworth and expresses his desire to accept Illingworth's offer:

“He (Lord Illingworth) knows more about life than anyone I have ever met. I feel an awful duffer when I am with you, Lord Illingworth...He has been good to me, mother” (247).

The conflict between social insistence on hetero-normative behaviour and the libidinal pull towards homosexuality gets projected as the arguments between Lord Illingworth and Mrs. Arbuthnot. Both of them assert their claim over Gerald, and this leads to a repartee between them.

> Lord Illingworth: But I did not leave him with a mere longing for things he could not get. No I made him a charming offer. He jumped at it, I need hardly say. Any young man would. And now, simply because it turns out that I am the boy’s own father and he my own son, you propose practically to ruin his career...
>
> Mrs. Arbuthnot: I will not allow him to go
>
> Lord Illingworth: How can you prevent it?...
>
> Mrs. Arbuthnot: I have brought him up to be a good man
>
> Lord Illingworth: ...You have educated him to be your judge if he ever finds you out. And a bitter, an unjust judge he will be to you...
>
> Mrs. Arbuthnot: George, don’t take my son away from me. I have had twenty years of sorrow; I have had only one thing to love me, only one thing to love. You have had a life of joy, and pleasure, and success. You have been quite happy, you have never thought of us...Leave me the little vineyard of my life...leave me that...don’t take Gerald from me. (250)

Mrs. Arbuthnot's claim over Gerald is what Freud describes as Oedipus complex. She has genuine affection for him and expects him to reciprocate it. Lord Illingworth's claim reflects the gay reading of Oedipus complex where the boy's attraction has to be towards his father. He says it is a charming offer that he extents to Gerald, which no young man would deny. This offer, though it lacks social permission, seems quite attractive for Gerald and he jumps at it. Mrs. Arbuthnot on the other hand tries to pull Gerald back from this temptation which she considers may ruin him. She thinks of him as the only happiness in her life and does not wish to part with him. She believes that she has brought him up as a good gentleman and therefore he will not violate the rules of society. However, Illingworth warns her that he is educated enough to make sensible judgement regarding the moral principles. He assumes that Gerald may listen to his Id and leave with his father. Illingworth's interest in Gerald crosses the border of paternal affection and takes homoerotic undertones when he says: "All I have got to say now is that I am very, very much pleased with our boy. The world will know him merely as my private secretary, but to me he is something very near, and very dear. It is a curious thing, Rachel; my life seemed to be quite complete" (248).

Cigarette is a recurrent motif in many of Wilde's plays and short stories. The habit of smoking cigarette is often associated with the same-sex pairs in his works. In this work as well, Illingworth takes Gerald to "smoke a cigarette on the terrace together" (251). Later when Illingworth informs Lady Hunstanton that he was having a cigarette with Gerald, homosexuality is hinted at:

> Lady Hunstanton: Ah! Here you are, dear Lord Illingworth. Well, I suppose you have been telling our young friend, Gerald, what his new

> duties are to be, and giving him a great deal of good advice over a pleasant cigarette.
>
> Lord Illingworth: I have been giving him the best of advice, Lady Hunstanton, and the best of cigarettes. (255)

Illingworth tempts Gerald with the wonderful possibilities of pleasures which they can explore together:

> Lord Illingworth: Don't be afraid, Gerald. Remember that you have got on your side the most wonderful thing in the world- youth! There is nothing like youth. The middle-aged are mortgaged to life. The old are in life's lumber room. But youth is the lord of life. Youth has a kingdom waiting for it. Everyone is born a king, and most people die in exile like most kings. To win back my youth, Gerald, there is nothing I wouldn't do –except take exercise, get up early or be a useful member of the community. (252)

His temptations are so strong and attractive that Gerald falls for it. He questions the old- fashioned principles of life, and inspires Gerald to be modern: "Ah! She (Mrs. Arbuthnot) is not modern, and to be modern is the only thing worth being nowadays. You want to be modern, don't you Gerald? You want to know life as it really is. Not to be put off with any old-fashioned theories about life. Well, what you have to do at present is simply to fit yourself for the best society" (253). He teaches Gerald to live life differently, away from the shackles of moral codes: "...And now, Gerald, you are going into a perfectly new life with me, and I want you to know how to live" (255).

Lady Hunstanton expresses society's anxiety when she says: "...You and I, dear Mrs. Arbuthnot, are behind the age. We can't follow Lord Illingworth. Too much care was taken with our education, I am afraid. To have been brought up is a great drawback nowadays. It shuts one out from so much" (256). Illingworth does not belong to the period in which he lives; or his attitude towards life takes him to a futuristic world. He describes himself as a pleasure seeker; and for the society he crosses the borders of morality: "I (Lord Illingworth) have been discovering all kinds of beautiful qualities in my own nature... there is no secret of life. Life's aim, if it has one, is simply to be always looking for temptations, there are not nearly enough. I sometimes pass a whole day without coming across a single one..." (258).

Initially Gerald gets attracted to the marvellous possibilities of Illingworth's temptations. He says, "Lord Illingworth is a successful man. He is a fashionable man. He is a man who lives in the world and for it. Well, I would give anything to be just like Lord Illingworth" (262). But when the final decision is left to Gerald to choose between his father and mother, he follows the conventions of the society.

It is Hester who changes Gerald's mind. Getting married to Hester, and thus beginning a heterosexual relationship demands a breakup from his father, Illingworth.

> Hester: (waving him back) Don't, don't! You cannot love me at all unless you love her also. You cannot honour me, unless she is holier to you...
>
> Gerald: Hester, Hester, what shall I do?
>
> Hester: Do you respect the man who is your father?
>
> Gerald: Respect him? I despise him! He is infamous. (273)

Then he chooses his mother and leaves his father succumbing to the expectations of society and reinforcing Freudian interpretation of Oedipus complex. Moreover, it seems interesting to note that "young Oscar was very much his mother's son" (Julian 29). Ian Small makes a supporting observation on the play about its gay undertones:

> The plot of *A Woman of no Importance* appears to be concerned with a familiar tension between child and parents...However the cancelled drafts of the play confirm the suspicions of some gay critics that Wilde's original concern was with plotting the dynamics of male-male desire between an older and powerful man (here Lord Illingworth) and a younger, attractive ingénue (Gerald Arbuthnot). (xxvii)

In his non-fictional work, "The Portrait of Mr. W.H." Oscar Wilde speaks about his passionate attempt to unravel the mysterious identity of Shakespeare's 'master-mistress', W.H. Wilde himself has thus set before us an example of dissecting the creative oeuvre of a writer to learn more about his ulterior motives and interests. It is easy to draw a parallel between Shakespeare and Wilde who were both alleged to have homosexual interest in young men. Wilde supports and asserts Cyril Graham's argument when he says that W.H. could be a young boy actor of Shakespeare's time.

Cyril argues that W.H. could not be either Lord Pembroke or Lord Southampton. Cyril cites ample evidences from Shakespeare's sonnets to prove his argument. He infers that 'W' stands for Will, because it is said in the punning sonnets CXXXV and CXLIII that the Christian names of Shakespeare's friend is the same as his own. The surname according to Cyril is 'Hughes' which hidden in the eighth line of 20th sonnet where Shakespeare plays on the word 'Hews'. Cyril concludes that

W.H. is none other than the boy actor who played the female characters of Shakespeare, who lived on stage as Rosalind, Portia, Juliet and Desdemona. It was he,

> Whose physical beauty was such that it became the very corner-stone of Shakespeare's art; the very source of his inspiration; the very incarnation of Shakespeare's dreams? To look upon him as simply the object of certain love-poems is to miss the whole meaning of the poems: for the art of which Shakespeare talks in the sonnet is not the art of the Sonnet themselves, which indeed where to him but slight secret things- it is the art of the dramatist to which he is always alluding;...("The Portrait of Mr. W.H." 56)

However, Cyril's theory cannot stand because he could not establish the existence of this young actor, Willie Hughes during Shakespeare's time. Wilde was so fascinated and influenced by Cyril's theory that he set out to prove Cyril's argument right. He developed Cyril's theory and came up with his own evidences. Sometimes he got interpretations, "which indeed Cyril Graham himself seems to have missed" (65). As Rodney Shewan observes it, "the more W.H. appears to correspond with objective historical truth, the more subjective it becomes in essence" (85).Willie Hughes became a passion for Wilde that Cyril's argument turned out to be his own.

> For two weeks I worked hard at the sonnets, hardly ever going out, and refusing all invitations. Every day I seemed to be discovering something new, Willie Hughes became to me a kind of spiritual presence, an ever-dominant personality. I could almost fancy that I saw him standing in the shadow of my own room, so well had Shakespeare drawn him, with his golden hair, his tender flower-like grace, his

> dreamy deep-sunken eyes, his delicate mobile limbs, and his white lily hands. His very name fascinated me. Willie Hughes! Willie Hughes! How musical it sounded! Yes; who else but he could have been the master-mistress of Shakespeare's passion... (69)

Wilde's excessive interest in proving Shakespeare's alternative sexual orientation actually is a projection of his own repressed feelings. Here, the pairing is between a non- fictional character, Shakespeare and a semi- fictional character, Mr. W.H.

Cyril here becomes an expression of Wilde's own Unconscious. Erskine is a mere listener. Thus Cyril's argument is more of a monologue which in turn can be developed as the interior monologue of Wilde. Through Cyril, Wilde's Unconscious explores Shakespeare's secret love without prying into the mystery of his sin. Shakespeare and Mr. W.H. form a pair using which Wilde tries to picture his own libidinal urges. Unlike his other works where Wilde makes use of fictional characters to liberate the unconscious, here a nonfictional character and a semi-fictional character are in function to operate the mechanisms of the Unconscious. Cyril's theory is thus a projection of Wilde's own Unconscious. Cyril becomes Wilde's Id counterpart through whom Wilde attempts his wish fulfilment. This also reminds us of Freud's concepts of 'Transference' and 'Projection'. Transference is "the phenomenon where by the patient under analysis redirects the emotions recalled in analysis towards the psychoanalyst" (Barry 93). Projection is a mechanism by which "the negative aspects of ourselves are perceived in or attributed to another" (Barry 93). Wilde transfers his emotions towards Cyril, not an analyst in this context. Similarly, he projects his so called 'deviant' desire on Shakespeare's fascination for Mr. W.H.

The third part of the essay where Wilde regrets for having explored Cyril's theory to such an extent, substantiates the psychological reading of Cyril as Wilde's Id counterpart. The interference of the 'Conscience' controls the projection of the 'Unconscious' in the 'Conscious' realm. Wilde speaks about a "curious reaction" that came over him after which he lost his curiosity in Cyril's theory on Willie Hughes:

> No sooner, in fact, had I sent it off than a curious reaction came over me. It seemed to me that I had given away my capacity for belief in the Willie Hughes theory of the Sonnets, that something had gone out of me, as it were, and that I was perfectly indifferent to the whole subject. What was it that had happened? It is difficult to say. Perhaps, by finding perfect expression for a passion, I had exhausted the passion itself. Emotional forces, like the forces of physical life, have their positive limitations. Perhaps I was simply tired of the whole thing, and my enthusiasm having burnt out, my reason was left to its own unimpassioned judgement. However it came about, and I cannot pretend to explain it, there was no doubt that Willie Hughes suddenly became to me a mere myth, an idle dream, the boyish fancy of a young man... ("The Portrait of Mr. W.H." 75)

Wilde considers his idea which he shared with Cyril as "an idle dream" or a "boyish fancy" of a young man. Through this idle dream Wilde has in fact tried to liberate his repressed emotions. As Freud puts it, repressed emotions sometimes seek outlets through "dream works", the process by which real events, desires or emotions are transformed into dream images: " Dreams, just like literature, do not usually make explicit statements. Both tend to communicate obliquely or indirectly, avoiding direct or open statement, and representing meanings through concrete embodiments of time,

place, or person" (Barry 94). Through this dream like literary imagination Wilde tries his own libidinal wish fulfilment.

Apart from Cyril Graham there is one more name mentioned in the essay, that of Erskine's. Erskine can be read as yet another projection of Wilde's Unconscious. Erskine's description of Cyril Graham echoes Wilde's creation of male-male bonding. Through Erskine Wilde expresses his emotions for the young effeminate boy. In his introduction to Oscar Wilde's anthology of Short Fiction, Ian Small observes that:

> ...the most elaborate of all of Wilde's coded reference to a gay double life occurs in the 'Portrait of Mr. W.H.' There Wilde's character (once again called Erskine) describes his relationship with Cyril Graham which is reminiscent of Wilde's representation of male-male desire, and uncannily prophetic of his own relationship with Bosie and Bosie's father, the Marquess of Queensberry. (xxviii)

Since "The Portrait of Mr. W.H." is a non-fiction the return of the repressed happens through the non-fictional characters. In the essay, Wilde presents himself as a listener to Erskine's description of Cyril Graham. But more than a speaker Erskine becomes a projection of Wilde's own Unconscious. Through Erskine's words Wilde is giving colour to his own imagination:

> He (Cyril) was effeminate, I suppose, in some things, though he was a very good rider and a capital fencer... The two things that really gave him pleasure were poetry and acting...I was absurdly devoted to him; I suppose because we were so different in some things. I was rather awkward, weakly lad, with huge feet, and horribly freckled...He certainly was wonderfully handsome... I think he was the most

> splendid creature I ever saw, and nothing could exceed the grace of his movement, the charm of his manners. He fascinated everybody who was worth fascinating, and a great many people who were not... He was horribly spoiled. All charming people, I fancy, are spoiled. It is the secret of their attraction.
>
> ... In fact, Cyril Graham was the only perfect Rosalind I have ever seen. It would be impossible to describe to you the beauty, the delicacy, the refinement of the whole thing. ("The Portrait of Mr. W.H." 52-53)

Cyril and Erskine thus function as projections of Wilde's repressed desires in two different ways. In the first case, it is through Cyril's quest to know Shakespeare's mystery that Wilde projects his Unconscious and in the second case it is through Erskine's bonding with the charming young boy, Cyril that the mechanisms of Unconscious work.

The revelations of psychoanalysis may seem intolerable to a society that brands sexuality as aesthetically offensive, morally reprehensible or even dangerous. Foucault states that

> Psychoanalysis stands as close as possible, in fact, to that critical function which, as we have seen, exists within all human sciences. In setting itself the task of making the discourse of the unconscious speak through consciousness, psychoanalysis is advancing in the direction of that fundamental region in which the relations of representation and finitude come into play. (374)

Psychological approach towards same-sex pairing thus becomes another important method through which Wilde has unconsciously explored his repressed libidinal urges.

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Conclusion

Oscar Wilde lived in a period when homosexuality was denounced as a sin or crime. The trial and imprisonment of Wilde paint a drastic picture of sexual repression and hostility towards same-sex relationships in the Victorian England. He did not ever admit his alternative sexual orientation. This denial resulted in the suppression of his homosexual desires. It has always been a social practice to suppress the socially forbidden sexual desires. Society even dislikes this sensitive area being touched upon. Victorian society was particularly against the idea of discussing individual's sexual life. However, as Freud proposes, "sexual impulses play a peculiarly large part in the causation of nervous and mental disorders. They have contributed invaluably to the highest cultural, artistic and social achievements of the human mind" (*A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* 26-27).

During the gradual building up of human civilization, primitive impulses, like sexual desire, were sacrificed for common good. They were sublimated to socially valuable objects; that is such basic energies were converted from its sexual goal and directed towards socially permissible channels. The structure thus built up by suppressing the basic sexual instincts is insecure. There is an invariable danger that a struggle of such repressed sexual impulses may occur, resulting in the liberation of the sexual impulses and a return of them to their original goal.

Modern civilisation demands sexual repression, as a result of which the individual may turn to perversion and other forms of deviation which run counter to the requirements of civilised sexual morality. "...neurosis is described as a negative of the perversion... it is understood as a failed suppression of perversion, one which is no less injurious to both the individual and to civilisation" (Dollimore 183). In its path to

perversion libido withdraws from the Ego and its policies, renouncing everything learned under Ego's influence, it becomes refractory. With the emergence of perversion, the normality of sexuality, which is gained through its repressive organisation, falls apart. Instead of turning to perversion, the energy of sexual instincts is sometimes displaced or sublimated into some cultural activity. Giving expression to one's deviant sexual desires using some accepted literary forms or images is thus a mechanism through which repressed libidinal wishes find free outlet.

The return of the repressed may not always necessarily happen as violent sexual behaviour or other sexual disorders. Its manifestation could also be in the form of slip of tongue, slip of pen and misreading. Freud observes that, "It often happens that a poet makes use of a slip of the tongue or some other error as a means of artistic expression. This fact in itself proves that he thinks the error, for instance, a slip of tongue, has a meaning; for he constructs it intentionally" (*A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* 40). Artists are people who avoid perversion by sublimating their impulses in their work. "Freud believed that sublimation of unsatisfied libido was responsible for producing all art and literature. That is, he thought that artists discharged their infantile sexuality by converting it into non-instinctual forms" (Storr 92). In a way art is essentially escapist, since it is an indirect way of obtaining instinctual satisfactions, which he would have otherwise renounced. The artist's creative activity is his unsatisfied libido manifesting itself in escapist phantasy. Freud observes that,

> An artist is originally a man who turns away from reality because he cannot come to terms with the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction which it at first demands, and who allows his erotic and ambitious wishes full play in the life of phantasy. He finds a way back to reality,

> however, from this world of phantasy by making use of special gifts to mould his phantasies into truth of a new kind, which are valued by men as precious reflections of reality. (*The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works* 224)

Wilde being an artist, the sublimation of his repressed desire has happened through the slip of pen, or he has used his literary world as a space to unleash his repressed desires. Psychoanalysis paved a way for digging such covert sexual undertones in the text formed as a result of the sublimation of the author's libidinal desires. During the twentieth century, psychoanalysis asserted great influence on art and literature.

> Freud's concept of the unconscious, his use of free association, and his rediscovery of the importance of dreams encourage painters, sculptors, and writers to experiment with the fortuitous and the irrational, to pay serious attention to their inner world of dreams and day-dream, and to find significance in thoughts and images which they would previously have dismissed as absurd or illogical. (Storr 91)

The thesis titled *Same-Sex Pairing as a Device to Liberate the Unconscious: A Study of Oscar Wilde's Creative Oeuvre* examines how Wilde has made use of same-sex pairs as a tool in his works to liberate the repressed sexual desires of his Unconscious.

Chapter 1 explores the explicit same-sex pairs in Wilde's works. There are instances of Wilde having boldly portrayed same-sex pairs in his works. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* made all the related controversies because of its overt treatment of homosexuality as one of its major themes. It is observed that Wilde has made

numerous revisions to the novel, deleting in particular some explicitly homosexual sentiments in it (Cauti xv). Even after the deliberate deletion of such explicit passages, the novel can very well be interpreted as a homosexual allegory of doomed, forbidden passion. Similarly *The Importance of Being Earnest* portrays a male-male bonding with the generally accepted connotation of Bunburrying as a gay code word. Wilde's short story "The Model Millionaire" is another work other than *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in which the representation of same-sex pair has got something to do with an artist's aesthetic enjoyment. In the short story, "The Devoted Friend" there is an explicit pairing between two individuals. However, unlike *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, here the homoerotic elements are not overtly displayed. In "The Star Child", "The Sphinx without a Secret" and *Vera* there are only subtle references to male-male bonding which only a critical eye can decipher. "The Happy Prince" is his only short story where the pairing is between two non-human entities. Explicit same-sex pairing could be traced in some of his poems as well.

The second chapter deals with the symbolic manifestation of same-sex pairing in Wilde's works. Here, Wilde makes use of everyday symbols which have social permission for representation in literature, in order to speak about the repressed desires which are normally prevented from getting projected into the social space. In the short stories, "The Selfish Giant" and "The Remarkable Rocket", the symbolic manifestation of same-sex pairing works on the principle of psychoanalysis which attribute phallic connotation to tall and erect objects. In *Salome* and "The Canterville Ghost", Wilde has attempted attribution of homosexuality in human and non-human entities respectively. 'Ghost' and 'Salome' are two personifications of homosexuality that appear in "The Canterville Ghost" and *Salome* respectively. In *An Ideal Husband* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the symbolic signification of homosexuality operates

on abstract ideas. If homosexuality is associated with a fraudulent scheme in *An Ideal Husband*, it is associated with Dorian's narcissistic attraction towards the portrait in *The Picture of Dorian Gray.* Wilde has used symbols in abundance to deal with the idea of homosexuality in his poems also.

The third chapter explores the ways in which the literary characters and situations can be analysed using various principles and theories of psychoanalysis. Different components of psychoanalytic theory are employed as tools to examine the presence of unintended depiction of same-sex pairing in the literary text. In *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*, the bonding is between Lord Arthur and his Conscience. "The Fisherman and his Soul" *A Florentine Tragedy* and "The Decay of lying" are fictional demonstrations of Freud's concept of Ego, Superego and Id. The same-sex pair in *A Woman of no Importance* redefines Freud's concept of Oedipus complex from a gay perspective. "The portrait of Mr. W.H" also depicts the same-sex pair with a play of the Conscious mind and the Unconscious mind.

No same-sex pairing could be traced in some of his short stories and plays, but these works throw light upon the writer's temperament. "The Nightingale and the Rose" showcases his distrust in women and disgust in heterosexual relationships. Similarly, "The Birthday of the Infanta" pictures a heartless girl who fails to see the Dwarf's love and shows no sympathy at his death. "The Young King" presents a young man who challenges the traditional customs and conventional practices of society. He reminds us of Wilde himself, who through his ways of living like a dandy has made people raise their eyebrows. *Lady Windermere's Fan* does not have a strong same-sex pair, but it has a chapter exclusively discussing men's party. *Lady Windermere's Fan* and *The Importance of Being Earnest* are the plays in which female-female bonding can be traced. Myrrhina, the temptress woman who tempts

Honorius, the hermit in Wilde's incomplete play *La Sainte Courtisan* projects his distrust in women.

Though some powerful and central female characters have taken life from Wilde's pen, reflection of misogyny in his works cannot be ruled out. The fallen woman, Mrs. Erlynne (*Lady Windermere's Fan*); gossiping, Lady Hunstantson; neurotic, Lady Caroline; vicious female rake, Mrs. Allonby; possessive mother, Mrs. Arbuthnot (*A Woman of No Importance*); treacherous, Mrs. Cheveleyl (*Ideal Husband*); demonic femme fatale, Salome (*Salome*); temptress, Myrrhina (*La Sainte Courtisane*) have all taken lives from Wilde's pen. Wilde being the progressive editor of the 'Women's World' has lent a sympathetic voice to the discourses on New Women. However, his sympathy was more towards the enslavement of the individual than women's causes. Lady Chiltern's (*Ideal Husband*) involvement in political association brings in the image of the suffragettes. Reference to Gwendolen's (*The Importance of Being Earnest*) participation in University lectures echoes the New Women's eagerness to embrace new educational opportunities. Hester (*A Woman of No Importance*) though a moral bully, is a social threat to Victorian life.

The portrayal of women in his poems exposes his attitude towards women and heterosexual relationships. Women in his poems mostly stand for symbols of chastity and represent unconsumed love. Though he brings images of virgins and praises their physical charm in abundance, he evades their physical proximity. Sometimes he attributes divinity to women which makes it easier to describe them as virgin and chaste. In some of his poems, Wilde brings the images of divine and godly women who are virgin. Wilde even portrays them as passionless and incapable of lustful emotions. In a way, this act of negating lust in women is a manifestation of Wilde's own failure in falling for their feelings. There are poems which exhibit Wilde's

hostility towards women and his distrust in heterosexual relationship. This includes poems in which he presents them as unfaithful, treacherous and even wicked.

Wilde has hardly tried the portrayal of female bonding except for some instance like Gwendolen and Cecily (*The Importance of Being Earnest*). Male-male bonding on the other hand can be seen in abundance, which validates the point that a free play of Unconscious has happened through Wilde's pen. In a letter to Ralph Payne he admits that "Basil Hallward is what I think I am: Lord Henry what the world thinks me: Dorian what I would like to be – in other ages, perhaps" (Shewan 113). He has always felt the need to defend himself against the charges of immorality. His insistence on concealing his alternative sexual orientation resulted in the return of the repressed.

The recurring pattern of concluding the narrative line with the death /suppression of homosexuality carves an archetypal model which is in accordance with the social insistence on heteronormativity. "Augustine regarded sin as intrinsic to human nature and always bound up with perversion, transgression and death; the perversion of free will leads a man to transgress, and it is transgression which brings death into the world" (Dollimore 131). Wilde seems to have followed the aforementioned law of transgression in equating perversion with death. In most of his stories the bonding of the same-sex pair is shattered with the death of one of them.

Basil Hallward who worshipped physical beauty far too much dies by the hand of one in whose soul he has created a monstrous vanity; Dorian Gray having led a life of mere sensation and pleasure kills himself; Alan Campbell shoots himself after having succumbed to the calls of sin (*The Picture of Dorian Gray*); Hans' blind devotion to his friend ruins his life ("The Devoted Friend"); Bird's 'unnatural'

affection for the statue takes both of their lives (“The Happy Prince”); Guido having failed to solve the moral conflicts is strangled to death by Simone (*A Florentine Tragedy*); the fisherman who listened to the call of strange love meets with his death (“The Fisherman and his Soul”); the Czar’s blind faith in his minister results in his death (*Vera*); the Duke being a threat to her love, Beatrice kills him (*The Duchess of Padua*); Mr. Podger is killed by Lord Arthur to settle his moral conflict (“Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime”); the Ghost is put to eternal sleep to save the society (“The Canterville Ghost”); the Giant is given a peaceful death (“The Selfish Giant”); and Salome who posed a moral threat to the society is mercilessly killed (*Salome)*.

Concluding the story with the death of one partner of the pair is in accord with the moral demands of society. Since the existence of a homosexual pair is not ‘normal’ in a society that upholds moral values, it becomes convenient for the writer to erase the pair from the realm of signification. The existence of a homosexual pair poses a threat to the cultural stability of society. Hence, the death of one of the partners is socially justified as an act of expelling the sinner from the impermissible space. Death, thus, functions as an anticathexis in blocking the cathexes from being utilised. Cathexis and Anticathexis are two features of libido. “Cathexis refers to Id’s dispersal of energy while the anticathexis serves to block inappropriate uses of this energy” (Cherry). When the libido affects cathexis in the form of same-sex pairing, death acts as an anticathexis to oppose it.

> The libido is blocked, as it were, and must seek an escape by which it can find an outlet for its cathexis (charge of energy) in conformity with the demands of the pleasure-principle: it must elude, eschew the ego... The ideas to which the libido now transfers its cathexis belong to the unconscious system – namely, condensation and displacement...The

> opposition against it in the ego follows it as an anti-cathexis (counter-charge) and forces it to adopt a form of expression by which the opposing forces also can at the same time express themselves. (*A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* 368-69)

If not death, marriage is the alternative social settlement suggested to solve a social threat like homosexuality. For instance, Trevor-Hughie ("The Model Millionaire"), Jack-Algernon (*The Importance of Being Earnest*) and Gerald-Lord Illingworth are the pairs resolved with alternative marriage proposals which are in accordance with the social norms. Algy and Jack form the same-sex pair in *The Importance of Being Earnest.* They were both living secret lives which they together decide to stop. It is only their mutual presence that makes the secret life worth living for both of them. So if one decides to put an end to it the other naturally decides the same. When Jack decides to 'kill' his invented brother so that he can propose Gwendolen, he advises Algy to do the same with Mr. Bunbury so that both of them will be relieved of their double life at the same time. Jack's marriage with Gwendolen and Algy's marriage with Cecily puts an end to the secret lives of Jack and Algernon and to their same-sex bonding as well. Mr. Podger and Lord Arthur form the pair in "Lord Arthur Savile's Crime". Mr.Podger's presence reminds Arthur of his indulgence in sin. He postpones his marriage with Sybil in order to solve the problem he was indulged in. Finally, he kills Mr. Podger; and the death unties all the tangled knots and he is set free. Having no hindrances in his path of getting married to Sybil, he rushes to marry her. Once he is relieved of the 'pair' Arthur embraces Sybil and begins a new life. Gerald and Lord Illingworth form the pair in *A Woman of No Importance.* Gerald gets out of his blind admiration for Illingworth and decides to get married to Hester, which puts an end to the budding relationship between Gerald and

Lord Illingworth. Suggesting marriage as a solution to solve the problem of same-sex bonding is in accordance with the social assumption that homosexuality can be 'cured' by forcing him/her to heterosexual marriages.

Wilde always had a fascination for the art and culture of ancient Greek, Egyptian and Roman lives. In many of his poems he has used images and ideas from ancient classics and myths to contrast the bleak Christian world with the bright pagan world. For him the 'pagan' world represents unrestricted expression of sexuality, where as Christian world represents the hardcore social and religious values. He escapes to this world of wonders with the help of his literary imaginations, but makes it a point to come back to face the harsh realities of the Victorian world, which alone will offer him social recognition and acceptance.

> For Nietzsche as for Wilde, a conceptual and historical interface between Classical and Christian cultures became a surface suffused with meanings about the male body. In both German and English culture, the Romantic rediscovery of ancient Greece cleared out – as such recreated – for the nineteenth century a prestigious, historically underfurnished imaginative space in which relations to and among human bodies might be newly a subject of utopian speculation. Synecdochically represented as it tended to be by statue of nude young men, the Victorian cult of Greece gently, unpointedly, and unexclusively positioned male flesh and muscle as the indicative instances of 'the' body, of a body whose surfaces, features, and abilities might be the subject or object of unphobic enjoyment. (Sedgwick136)

Not just the recurrent pattern of concluding the story with the death or marriage of one of the partners, but the consistent return to Christian images in the poems as well can be observed as anticathexis blocking the cathexes from being utilised.

Wilde's life and trial has unconsciously produced an important social effect, "since the publicity given to homosexuality and the indignation of all thinking men at home and, even more so, abroad, at the savagery of his sentence, resulted in a gradual but profound change in the public attitude towards this particular sexual eccentricity" (Woodcock 162). The suppression of gay/lesbian feelings is not just a Victorian phenomenon but a universal issue which was challenged by the Gay Liberation and LGBT Rights. For instance, early twentieth century morality did not admit the easy acceptance of homoerotic undertones in the war poems (WW I). Consequently there was a general reluctance to admit the presence of homoerotic elements in these poems. Hence, the meaning of 'love' in the poem could be read as brotherly affection or it could be interpreted as carnal desire. Thus the homosexual subtexts in the woks served as an effective modus operandi for the gay writers at a time before homosexual feelings found expression as a counter discourse.

Public tolerance of homosexuality has increased considerably, but the social attitude cannot be claimed to have completely changed. Donald E. Hall observes that it is impossible for one to shatter his/her past sexuality completely and miraculously construct a new order of sexuality on the ruins of the old one. He is optimistic and enthusiastic about the upcoming, but gradual changes: "We have to be patient and persistent and yet find ways to retain our political enthusiasm" (13). About the future of Queer Studies he says, "... we need a new reading strategy – a hermeneutics of sexuality – and a theoretical base that allows for a radically different future achieved

incrementally through critical conversation and continuing political engagement" (13).

Yogyakarta Principle is a significant attempt made to incorporate gender diversities in the global state of affairs. Yogyakarta Principles is a set of international principles formulated in 2006, related to issues regarding gender identity. It is a "universal guide to human rights which affirm binding International legal standards with which all States must comply" ("Yogyakarta Principles"). It is an effort to claim "gender diversity and sexual orientation freedom as core principles within international law and shared human experience" (Hall 90). The Principle considers sexual orientation as a person's sexual relationship with "individuals of a different gender, or the same gender or more than one gender" (91). Gender identity "may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth" but it is a person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender" (91). Hall, who is quite optimistic about global queer rights, observes that "Yogyakarta Principles are not the final word on the application of human rights law to sexual and gender diversity; they are a preliminary articulation that will allow us to converse on any number of nuanced situations and challenges" (95).

The problems of people with alternative sexual orientations remain the same, irrespective of the period in which they lived. Arundhati Roy has discussed a valid philosophical situation of the cultural limitations and complexities of language in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) through a mother's anxiety about her child's existence as a transgender:

> In Urdu, the only language she knew, all things, not just living things but all things- carpets, clothes, books, pens, musical instruments- had a

> gender. Everything was either masculine or feminine, man or woman. Everything except her baby. Yes, of course she knew there was a word for those like him – Hijra. Two words actually, Hijra and Kinnar. But two words do not make a language. Was it possible to live outside language? ... (8)

On 6 September 2018 India also witnessed a historical turn when Supreme Court stroke down the 1860 colonial law that criminalised homosexuality:

> De-fanging a 158-year-old Victorian era law that hounded the rainbow crowd, the Supreme Court in a landmark judgement on Thursday legalised consensual sexual relations among gay adults by partially striking down Section 377 – a momentous event, perhaps that first step towards the gradual embrace of the LGBTQ community and hesitant acquiescence into alternative sexuality. (Mahapatra 1)

The historical decision made India the twenty sixth country in the world where homosexuality is legal.

This research thesis helps to reread the works of Wilde with an attempt to validate the homoerotic undertones as a literary device. The research not just offers a new paradigm to define the works of Wilde; instead it proposes a methodology to examine how the suppressed desires of the unconscious find expressions as symbolic images in literature, particularly in the case of gay writers. It is high time we discarded the lineaments of identity and began to imagine a form of subjectivity that bestow with the commonsense certainties of gender.

The thesis sets a model for attempting similar research in the works of other writers with alternative sexual orientation. It also opens up the possibilities of analysing how gay writers in general use same-sex pairing as a device to liberate their unconscious sexual desires. A study of the proposed thesis with reference to Ego psychology will widen the scope of research by extending the study to gay writers in general. Ego Psychology "sought meanings not in the individual psyche, in private fantasy, but in the public encodings of the private, in what was mutually shareable" (Wright 61). It proposes that during artistic activity repressed material is transformed into something publicly shareable. Ego facilitates the traffic and trade between Id and the external world. Ernst Kris, earliest Ego psychologist puts foreword a theory of creativity in which "the emphasis is shifted from the subversive operations of the Id to the managing capacities of the Ego" (Wright 58). Instead of the unconscious wish trying to find expression, the analogy rests on the way unconscious wishes are modified by the preconscious operations of the Ego. This approach extends the use of same-sex pair from an individual's tool to the mechanism of the collective unconscious.

MUFEEDA T. “SAME-SEX PAIRING AS A DEVICE TO LIBERATE THE UNCONSCIOUS: A STUDY OF OSCAR WILDE’S CREATIVE OEUVRE” THESIS. CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, FAROOK COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT, 2018.

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Appendix

A personal interview with Jonathan Dollimore, Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the Shakespeare Institute, University of Birmingham.

Mufeeda: If by ‘transgressive aesthetic’ you mean the sublimation of repressed desire to creative liberation, why do you think Wilde’s transgressive aesthetic dates from 1886 to 1991, a period which excludes his strong theatrical career?

Dollimore: The transgressive aesthetic is indeed about creative liberation. It uses desire politically. It certainly is not repressed desire in the case of Wilde. Go back to the sections on this in SD and you will see what I mean.

Mufeeda: Could you please explain the second part of my first question? Don’t you think he has attempted creative liberation through his plays as well?

I would also like to explain why I think it is “repressed” desire in the case of Wilde. Wilde seems to have never openly admitted his homosexual identity as he belonged to the Victorian England which is noted for its homophobia. For social recognition he had to repress his feelings.

Dollimore: Definitely creative liberation in the plays, but only lightly so. You are quite right that Wilde could not be openly gay at that time. He was secretive about his sexuality but not repressed. "Repressed" usually means psychic repression whereby typically a person denies not only to other that they are gay, but to themselves also.

Repressed means: (of a thought or desire) kept suppressed and unconscious in one’s mind. “repressed homosexuality”

Synonyms- restrained, suppressed, held back, held in, kept in check, muffled, stifled, smothered, pent up, bottled up; More

It is characterized by the repression of thoughts or desires, especially sexual ones. In private Wilde was completely open about his sexuality, but not in public.

Mufeeda: In the light of Jean Delay's observation that "Gide's sexuality remained 'infantile' arrested at a stage between narcissism and heterosexuality", how do you look at the link between narcissism and homosexuality?

Dollimore: Delay's view if Gide's sexuality is a classic instance of the psychoanalytic/heterosexist misreading of homosexuality.

Mufeeda: In many of his poems Wilde has used images from ancient Greek classics and myths to contrast the Christian world with the bright pagan world. For him Pagan world represents unrestricted sexual expression, where as the Christian world stands for social/moral values. But he always makes it a point to conclude the poem with a return from his imaginary flight to the real world. On this context could you explain your observation that, "Wilde's aesthetic was not so much a self-concealment as an attempted liberation from 'self'".

Dollimore: Again, go back to SD and you will see what I mean. Wilde realised that repression works in terms of many things including western concepts of self-hood. So to be liberated you have to refuse/transgress those concepts of self hood.

Mufeeda: You have rightly observed that, "The attempts to account for homosexual diversity have pushed psychoanalysis theory into inconsistency and even absurdity; this is most acutely the case in relation to the Oedipus complex". But, is it possible to define Oedipus complex from a gay perspective?

Dollimore: Yes, it is possible - see eg the writing of Guy Hocguinhem and Mario Mieli, both referenced in SD

Mufeeda: In his non fictional work, “The Portrait of Mr. W.H.” Oscar Wilde speaks about his passionate attempt to unravel the mysterious identity of Shakespeare’s ‘master-mistress’, W.H. how do you look at the observation that ‘Cyril’s quest to know Shakespeare’s mystery is a projection of Wilde’s own Unconscious’?

Dollimore: It may well be a projection of Wilde’s desires, but it certainly isn't unconscious.

Mufeeda: Thank you so much, Sir.