



A University of Sussex DPhil thesis

Available online via Sussex Research Online:

<http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/>

This thesis is protected by copyright which belongs to the author.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Please visit Sussex Research Online for more information and further details

**Nineteenth Century Concepts of Androgyny
with Particular Reference to Oscar Wilde**

Author: Dietmar Geyer

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Sussex

April 2012

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature:

Dietmar Geyer

Summary

Androgyny evokes nowadays a plethora of images and associations. In order to discover the meaning of 'androgyny' conveyed to authors of the so-called Decadent literature movement I found it necessary to give a brief history of the term. However, two androgynous images – 'hermaphrodite' and 'asexual' androgyny – have always co-existed and were especially in vogue in the literature of the Fin-de-Siècle period to denote an emerging homosexual identity and especially so in the works of Oscar Wilde.

In order to illustrate this I take a psychological approach in an analysis of androgynous literary figures based on R.D. Laing's theories. Particularly in *The Divided Self*, Laing shows what kind of behaviour patterns stigmatised individuals display, prone as they were to suffering from a heightened consciousness of the 'self'. In particular, characters not necessarily conforming to one or the other gender are determined by certain stages of ontological insecurity which can be traced in androgynous characters in Decadent literature.

In this context 'Camp' plays an important role, androgyny being one of its central images. Because signs of effeminacy in men were the first visible signs of homosexuality, I examine how 'camping it up' was a method of dealing with their stigma.

The first and most well-known male image associated with what we would now term 'Camp' is that of the dandy. There are several types of the dandy and each of them undergoes an analysis as to whether they contain psychological signs of stigmatisation.

The same procedure is applied to works of authors from the period of French Decadence of the nineteenth century and other literary works which influenced Oscar Wilde. It was there where an increasing psychologisation of protagonists, and especially also stigmatised characters first began to be recognised.

I will demonstrate how much Oscar Wilde was greatly influenced by the literary French Decadent tradition of shifting the outer plot to an inner plot. In particular in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, but also in his other works, this becomes clear by referring to R. D. Laing's categories of psychological character studies which display, as in Wilde's works, the effects of stigma caused by a gender non-conforming identity.

Acknowledgements

I would very much like to thank not only my supervisor Jenny Bourne Taylor, but also Anthony Gibbs for their encouragement and generous support. Without their additional help this doctoral thesis, initially instigated by Alan Sinfield, could not have been completed.

I would also like to give special thanks to my mother and sister Cornelia for the patience they continued to maintain during my work. They were kind enough to stand by my side especially in times of crises.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. A Short History of Androgyny	19
2.1 Androgyny in Ancient Greek and Roman myths	25
2.2 Plato's <i>Symposium</i> and the Tale of Aristophanes	26
2.3 The Influence of Plato's Complementary Model on Sexual Theory and Psychiatry	27
2.4 Ovid's myth of Hermaphroditus	38
2.5 Two forms of Androgyny: Hermaphrodite and Asexual Androgyny	42
2.5.1 The Two Types of Female Androgynes	48
2.5.2 The Two Types of Male Androgynes	56
2.6 The Dawn of a New Androgyny	68
2.7 Summary	72
3. A Psychopathology of Androgyny	76
3.1 A Psychological Approach: R.D. Laing back to Søren Kierkegaard	76
3.1.1 Introduction	76
3.1.2 The Different Pressures of Stigmatisation	78
3.1.3 <i>The Divided Self</i>	84
3.1.4 Søren Kierkegaard: <i>Sickness unto Death</i>	94
3.2 Camp: Androgyny in Action	99
3.2.1 The Emerging Meanings Behind the Word 'Camp'	99
3.2.2 The Four Parameters of 'Camp'	106
3.2.3 The Function of Camp Humour Protecting the True Self	107
3.2.4 High 'Camp' versus Low 'Camp'	117
4. The Dandy: Character and Personality	120
4.1 Beau Brummell	120
4.2 Jules Barbey D'Aurevilly: <i>Du Dandysme et du George Brummel</i>	125
4.3 Charles Baudelaire: The Bohemian Dandy	134
4.4 The Butterfly Dandies	144
4.5 Dandyism / Metrosexuality	149
4.6 Synopsis	154

5. Influences on Oscar Wilde	157
5.1 Defining Decadence	157
5.2 <i>À Rebours</i>	170
5.3 <i>Mademoiselle de Maupin</i>	177
5.3.1 Inside the Love Triangle	180
5.4 <i>Monsieur Vénus</i>	192
5.5 <i>Vivian Grey</i>	200
5.6 Walter Pater's Diaphanous Bodies	205
5.7 Summary	215
 6. Oscar Wilde	 217
6.1. <i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i>	217
6.1.1 John Gray: Le plus Décadent des Décadents	217
6.1.2 An Experiment in Self-Realisation	224
6.2 The Search for Identity in 'The Portrait of Mr W. H.'	237
6.3 <i>Salomé</i> : The Clash of the Androgynes	249
 7. Conclusion	 258
 8. Bibliography	 261
 9. List of Illustrations	 282

1. Introduction

The central figure which triggered off my research on androgyny was the literary persona of Dorian Gray in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* who, with his androgynous beauty, attracts both men and women alike. Dorian's main characteristic is his elusiveness which, I believe, has also been an integral part of his fascination for generations of readers and researchers. This fact spurred me on all the more to pin him down and to arrive at a conclusive interpretation of why Dorian was considered to have such a corruptive influence over other men. According to Alex Ross in his recent article for *The New Yorker*¹, this aspect shocked Victorian sensibility in particular and led to Wilde being cross-examined at his trial in 1895 as to whether or not his only novel was a 'sodomitical book'². More than 100 years later it still puzzles me why Dorian was considered to be such an evil character. It could not solely have been, as many critics superficially repeat, the fact that Dorian has affairs with men as well as women. If both partners have their share of fun and, as is usual with 'affaires', keep quiet about it, this would not result in Dorian becoming such a diabolical figure, even causing some of his partners to commit suicide. Will Self, in his novel *Dorian* - which can be regarded as a twenty-first century version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* - identifies Dorian as an evil psychopath but denies the reader any insight as to how this has come about.

The first interpretations of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* when taking a psychological approach used the 'Narcissus myth' as their basis. Wilde himself initiated this approach when he compares Dorian Gray to Narcissus: 'Once, in boyish mockery of Narcissus, he had kissed, or

¹ Alex Ross, 'Deceptive Picture: How Oscar Wilde painted over "Dorian Gray"', *The New Yorker* (August 8, 2011), p.64.

² Merlin Holland, *Irish Peacock & Scarlet Marquess: The Real Trial of Oscar Wilde* (London: Fourth Estate, 2003), p.97.

feigned to kiss, those painted lips that now smiled so cruelly at him'.³

Under the influence of Sigmund Freud, who saw narcissism as a typical trait in the development of any young homosexual, the narcissistic character of Dorian became inextricably linked with homoerotic inversion. It is not surprising, therefore, when W.H. Auden who, as a homosexual and an artist saw himself in a similar situation to Wilde deduces that 'the artist and the homosexual are both characterised by a greater-than-normal amount of narcissism'.⁴ However, Dorian Gray, through most of the novel being aware of the real 'picture' of himself, is more a case of self-loathing than of narcissism.

Until recently psychoanalytic interpretations of Wilde's works, as for example Melissa Knox's book entitled *Oscar Wilde: A Long and Lovely Suicide*⁵ or Ashley H. Robins⁶ attempting in the same vein to arrive at an explanation for Wilde's irrational behaviour, take the biographical details of Wilde's life as their starting point. In contrast, when I myself analyse androgynous characters in Wilde's works and also in other works of authors belonging to the literary Decadent movement, I try to avoid a biographical approach and keep first of all focussed primarily on what I find in the author's texts. Only when I feel it to be absolutely necessary or particularly enlightening do I make use of biographical information.

³ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray : An Annotated, Uncensored Edition*, ed. By Nicholas Frankel (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), p.164.

⁴ W.H. Auden, 'A Playboy of the Western World: St .Oscar, the Homintern Martyr', in *Partisan Review* 17 (1950), S. 391.

⁵ Melissa Knox, *Oscar Wilde: A long and lovely suicide* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1994).

⁶ Ashley H. Robins, *Oscar Wilde: The Great Drama of His Life* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2011).

In his book *Kunst und Krankheit in der Psychoanalyse*, Josef Rattner⁷ also begins his chapter on Wilde by trying his hand at psychoanalysing Oscar Wilde. He is the first to mention the concept of ‘ontologische Unsicherheit’ (Rattner, p.90), i.e. ontological insecurity in connection with Wilde and abandons the old Freudian cliché of narcissism. Indeed, the self-contained and often quite autistic impression one gets of androgynous characters in nineteenth century literature could very easily lead one to the premature conclusion of dealing with narcissistic traits. However, as I will explain, on the contrary, it has to do with the various aspects of stigmatisation and ontological insecurity. In contrast to Melissa Knox, I see no underlying death wish as the driving force in Wilde and his literary characters, but I do detect in the many androgynous characters in ‘Decadent’ literature a psychological mechanism maintaining the precarious ‘self’ of an individual.

Over the last decades, attempts to analyse Oscar Wilde’s literary oeuvre from a psychological point of view seem to have more or less petered out. In the latest overviews with regard to recent literary criticism on Oscar Wilde undertaken by Ian Small⁸, Melissa Knox⁹ and Frederick S. Roden¹⁰, no category featuring psychological or psychoanalytical interpretations is included. This is probably due to a lack of publications covering that topic. I locate my own research in a field covering aspects between psychological and queer theory, as I can detect behaviour patterns in works of authors even before Wilde which point to stigmatised forms of deviant sexuality. To me it seems that a psychological approach to Oscar Wilde is so closely

⁷ Josef Rattner, *Kunst und Krankheit in der Psychoanalyse*, ed. by Gerhard Danzer (München: Quintessenz Verlag, 1993), pp. 59-97.

⁸ Ian Small, *Oscar Wilde: Recent Research. A Supplement to ‘Oscar Wilde Revalued’* (Greensboro: ELT Press, 2000).

⁹ Melissa Knox, *Oscar Wilde in the 1990s: The Critic as Creator* (New York: Camden House, 2001).

¹⁰ Frederick S. Roden, *Palgrave Advances in Oscar Wilde Studies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

bound up with gay studies and queer theory that it can hardly feature any longer as a distinct category of its own.

In order to discover the meaning of androgyny conveyed by authors of the so-called Decadent literature movement in the nineteenth century, it is necessary to give a brief history of the term in the first chapter. Androgyny evokes nowadays a plethora of images and associations. It will then become obvious what coded references were conveyed by androgynous images in Oscar Wilde's time, when the word androgyny was hardly current. Homosexuality could not be and was not talked about in public and the word homosexual was not used then to identify any individual person. Nowadays, the most recent example of androgyny might be what is described as 'gender bending', visualised and popularised in the seventies by 'glam' rock stars, in the eighties exemplified in the New Romantic movement, and over the last two decades possibly personified in metrosexual media celebrities such as David Beckham.

It was Francette Pacteau, however, who pointed out that 'androgynie'¹¹ is an elusive abstract term often defying definition. It is up to the individual what he/she perceives as androgynous and what qualities can be associated with him/her.

In our present day reality when identifying the meaning of the term androgyny it is also important to differentiate it from hermaphroditism. Today both terms are often confused with one another, which has to do with the fact that in former times they were used interchangeably. In fact, whereas 'androgyny' relates to someone's psychological make-up,

¹¹ Francette Pacteau, 'The Impossible Referent: Representations of the Androgynie', in Victor Burgin & James Donald & Cora Kaplan (eds.), *Formations of Fantasy* (New York: Methuen, 1986), p.17.

‘hermaphroditism’ describes the genetical and physical appearance of an individual who, for example, to a certain degree displays both male and female genitalia.

In Ingrid Sell’s dissertation entitled ‘Third Gender’¹², in which she attempts to categorise real forms of androgyny, the nearest approach to visible androgyny are transsexuals or ‘transgender’ individuals. However, Sell emphasises that the outward combination of masculine and feminine characteristics tell the observer nothing about their gender identity (Sell, p.33).

The word androgyny itself is made up of ‘andro’ and ‘gyna’, which in Greek means ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’. In former times most concepts of androgyny used to rely on this simple gender binary. I will briefly quote examples which venture to move beyond this traditional bipolar concept of androgyny, such as, for example, Kate Bornstein, Leigh Bowery or the artist duo Eva & Adele.

But going back as far as the history of androgyny in ancient times is concerned, in his book *Sexual Ambivalence*¹³ Luc Brisson has undertaken intensive studies where he states that being dual-sexed was purely a prerogative of gods in ancient Greece. Thus in cases of human babies being born with both male and female genitalia, this was interpreted as a sign of divine anger (Brisson, p.147). Later, during the Roman Empire, this superstition was explained away and, as described in Petronius’s

¹² Ingrid Sell, ‘Third Gender: A Qualitative Study of the Experiences of Individuals who identify as being neither Man or Woman’(unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Ann Arbor (Michigan), 2001).

¹³ Luc Brisson, *Sexual Ambivalence: Androgyny and Hermaphroditism in Graeco-Roman Antiquity* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002).

*Satyricon*¹⁴, such intersexed individuals were often put on display for financial gain.

The first two myths that dealt more extensively with androgyny were described by Plato in the *Symposium*¹⁵ and by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*¹⁶. Plato's complementary model of androgyny was used, in the second half of the nineteenth century, as a basis for the theories of some of the first early sexologists. Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis and later on Heinrich Ulrichs identified homosexuality not as a same-sex practice, but as a form of psychic androgyny. Accordingly Krafft-Ebing coined the term 'inversion'¹⁷ implying that, in early puberty, an individual's brain centre had been inversely activated so that men felt themselves inwardly female and vice versa. However, Krafft-Ebing still regarded such inverts as 'sick', whereas Ellis¹⁸ adopted a more positive approach and did not regard such an anomaly as particularly pathological. He even went so far as to interpret this androgyny of the psyche as a sign of genius. Karl Heinrich Ulrichs¹⁹ was obviously influenced by Plato's *Symposium* as it was there that he got the idea for his novel term 'Uranian love'.

In *The Modern Androgyne Imagination* Lisa Rado²⁰ gives a comprehensive overview of all the above-mentioned early sexologists and their definition of psychic androgyny. Much earlier in a chapter entitled 'The Intermediate

¹⁴ Petronius, *The Satyricon*, transl. by P.G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹⁵ Platon, *Das Gastmahl oder Von der Liebe* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1979).

¹⁶ Ovid, *Metamorphosen*, Lateinisch/Deutsch (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994).

¹⁷ Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1892), transl. by Charles Gilbert Chaddock, 7th ed. (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1908).

¹⁸ Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1915), p.196.

¹⁹ Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, *Forschungen über das Räthsel der mannmännlichen Liebe: VI. Gladius furens, VII. Memnon.*, Vol.8 (Hamburg: Männerschwarm, 1994).

²⁰ Lisa Rado, *The Modern Androgyne Imagination: A failed Sublime* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), p.15.

Sex' in his book *Love's Coming-of-Age*, Edward Carpenter²¹ also discusses in detail Ulrich's nomenclature of the different forms of Uranian love. Carpenter also deals with homoerotic but nevertheless celibate relations between men which were known under the name of 'new chivalry' or 'higher sodomy'. These terms are useful when analysing homoerotic relations in works by Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde.

Such real life studies regarding these various forms of androgyny carried out by the first sexologists were, according to the first volume of Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, essential in constituting and defining a homosexual identity. Previously all kinds of abnormal sexual relations had been categorised as various forms of sodomy. The recognition of a form of psychic androgyny, 'a hermaphroditism of the soul'²² was central in defining a homosexual identity.

It was the next generation of 'sexual' academics or psychologists such as Otto Weininger and Sigmund Freud who separated androgyny from sexual practice. They regarded androgyny as an ancient basic human condition which certain individuals would occasionally revert to. It was finally C. G. Jung for whom androgyny became an ideal state of psychic wholeness where an individual integrates in his personality the ideal aspects of both femininity and masculinity. Such a 'Jungian' androgynous character became the ideal for feminists like Carolyn Heilbrun, who, in the early 1970s, in *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny*²³ voiced her hopes that it would free the individual from the constraints of traditional sex roles.

²¹ Edward Carpenter, *Love's Coming-Of-Age* (London: Methuen, 1914), pp.114-134.

²² Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality I: The Will to Knowledge* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998), p.43.

²³ Carolyn G. Heilbrun, *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* (New York: Knopf, 1973), pp.ix-x.

Particularly in her book *Vice Versa* it was Majorie Garber²⁴ who has unearthed all the traces of Plato's myth of 'completion' and 'wholeness' which are to be found in the field of modern psychology.

In contrast to Plato's *Symposium*, Ovid's myth concerning the nymph Salmacis and the young adolescent Hermaphroditus in his *Metamorphoses* is not about a new wholeness and a psychic androgyny but conjures up decadent and unhealthy notions of androgyny. According to Luc Brisson, both the two protagonists come across to the reader as sexually ambiguous individuals, even before their final forced physical union. However, Ovid's myth is also about competition, as Tracy Hargreaves in *Androgyny in Modern Literature*²⁵ and Achim Aurnhammer in his study *Androgynie*²⁶ point out. The struggle between Hermaphroditus trying to defend himself against Salmacis's embraces is more than simply a fight. For Aurnhammer it is also an internal struggle of an adolescent attempting to retain his pre-social, childlike, virginal innocence, whilst at the same time finding pleasure by being simultaneously desired by both men and women.

Ovid's myth depicting an unwholesome androgyny differentiates between two completely different kinds of androgyny. This is not explicitly stressed by either Marjorie Garber or Francette Pacteau. In the latter's article entitled 'The Impossible Referent' Pacteau only hints at the fact when she talks of 'dual sexual identity' and 'non-sexual identit[ies]'²⁷. We can appreciate the different kinds of androgyny more explicitly when we view

²⁴ Majorie Garber, *Vice Versa: Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1995), pp.207-236.

²⁵ Tracy Hargreaves, *Androgyny in Modern Literature* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp.1-2.

²⁶ Achim Aurnhammer, *Androgynie: Studien zu einem Motiv in der europäischen Literatur* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1986), pp.9-23.

²⁷ Francette Pacteau, 'The Impossible Referent', in James Donald & Cora Kaplan (eds.), *Formations of Fantasy* (New York: Methuen, 1986), p.62.

certain Pre-Raphaelite paintings such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Beata Beatrix* or his picture *Venus Verticordia*.

In my thesis I would like to define one type of androgyny uniting both male and female signifiers in equal shares on the physical body as 'hermaphrodite androgyny'. In contrast to this, what I call 'asexual androgyny' is determined by neutralising all male and female signifiers. However, what both types have in common is a self-sufficiency which renders them independent of sexual desire. Both terms can be applied to both males and females. The fact that androgynous figures in history seemed to have a self-sufficient aura about them gave me the idea to take a closer look on the topic of celibacy. And indeed, good examples for both forms of female androgyny throughout the ages I could find in Elizabeth Abbott's *History of Celibacy*²⁸ where she depicts different types of feminine androgyny amongst early Christian women, or portrays famous female characters such as Florence Nightingale or Joan of Arc. In nineteenth century decadent literature a prominent example for a female asexual androgyne would be the 'femme fragile' in contrast to the 'femme fatale'. As far as masculine androgynes are concerned, it is the asexual type which is far more prominent in fin-de-siècle nineteenth century painting and literature. Especially with Joséphin Péladan, who praises the ideal of being a male virgin adolescent. In art, particularly in paintings by Simeon Solomon, it is the male ephebes who are the most prevalent just as the protagonists in many of the works by the German 'decadent' writer Hugo von Hofmannsthal. In her book *Fin-de-Siècle*, Shearer West²⁹ points out that the male or female androgyne was a coded reference to what we nowadays call homosexuality. The asexual male androgyne could also be

²⁸ Elizabeth Abbott, *A History of Celibacy* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1999).

²⁹ Shearer West, *Fin de Siècle: Art and Society in an Age of Uncertainty* (London: Bloomsbury, 1993), pp. 76-79.

interpreted as a homoerotic but spiritualised celibate form of love between two men, better known at the time under the term of ‘new chivalry’.

I also want to show that both these two major forms of male and female androgyny display behaviour patterns symptomatic, to use Erving Goffman’s term, of a ‘discreditable stigma’³⁰, a stigma of social or sexual deviancy which is for the outsider not immediately visible. I will base my line of argumentation on R. D. Laing’s book *The Divided Self*³¹ where he analyses schizoid behaviour patterns which develop and serve as typical survival strategies of individuals living in untenable personal situations, i.e. for example suffering from a discreditable stigma. The effect of such a stigma is that a person cannot sustain a stable sense of identity, is unable to disclose his true identity in public and lacks a firm sense of personal autonomy. Laing terms such a condition ‘ontological insecurity’ and he detected three psychological processes which prevent a stigmatised individual from having close personal relationships: ‘engulfment’, ‘implosion’ and ‘petrification’. The outcome of all these three internal mechanisms is that an ontologically insecure individual develops a schizoid condition, that is a false ‘public self’ and a real ‘shut-up self’. As such an individual is increasingly living through his socially accepted but artificial self, his real self and with it his sense of being ‘alive’ diminishes. A vicious circle of all three mechanism ensues which can hardly be overcome.

For setting Laing in a wider context in the field of psychology and contrasting his approach with Freud, Daniel Burston’s book on Laing *The Crucible of Experience*³² proved to be invaluable. Burston as well as

³⁰ Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (London: Penguin, 1990), p.14.

³¹ Ronald D. Laing, *The Divided Self* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1975).

³² Daniel Burston, *The Crucible of Experience: R.D. Laing and the Crisis of Psychotherapy* (Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 2000).

Laing's son Adrian point out that Laing took over the concept of 'the false self' from Søren Kierkegaard's treatise *Sickness unto Death*³³ (1849).

Kierkegaard must have fascinated Laing, as he was the first to appoint the strive for an authentic selfhood to become a central issue in his studies, thus gaining the status of being the father of modern existentialism.

Kierkegaard had almost 100 years earlier detected a similar psychological process he divided into two principles: a 'feminine despair' of 'not wanting to be oneself' and a 'masculine despair' of 'wanting in despair to be oneself'. In both cases the individual is unable to generate an independent authentic self from within, but tries to live behind inauthentic masks.

Interestingly Thomas Wright in *Built of Books*³⁴, where he explores what kind of reading influenced Oscar Wilde, alludes to the fact that he was probably familiar with Kierkegaard's works as his mother read continental philosophers in their original language.

Another survival strategy for stigmatised individuals and a way for them to keep the self unharmed in a hostile environment comes in the form of 'camp humour'. Christopher Isherwood in 1954 was the first who referred in his novel *The World in the Evening*³⁵ to the fact that 'camp' is not only about style, but also about something which is much more serious and important to some individuals. While several publications, especially those under the auspices of Moe Meyer and Fabio Cleto proved that 'camp' was inextricably linked up with a gay identity and sensibility, it was Chuck Kleinhans³⁶ who realised that camp humour was instrumental for sustaining

³³ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death* (London: Penguin, 2008).

³⁴ Thomas Wright, *Built of Books: How Reading Defined the Life of Oscar Wilde* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2008), p.96.

³⁵ Christopher Isherwood, *The World in the Evening* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), pp.110-111.

³⁶ Chuck Kleinhans, 'Taking out the Trash: Camp and the Politics of Parody', in Moe Meyer (ed.), *The Politics and Poetics of Camp* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 187.

a positive identity in the face of a hostile society. Cynthia Morrill³⁷ went even further and tried to analyse camp humour by taking a Freudian approach, comparing it with gallows humour. For gaining however a deeper understanding what makes the ego so invulnerable it is necessary taking Sigmund Freud's treatise on *Jokes and their Relations to the Unconscious* into account. Freud there discovers what he calls 'tendentious jokes'³⁸, which comprise also gallows humour and are similar to camp humour, thriving on releasing psychic pressure. It will be shown that quite similar to Laing, Freud also explains the release of psychic pressure on the basis of a split psyche with the aim to ward off any possible discrimination and to make suffering induced by stigma bearable.

The figure of the dandy, especially in Oscar Wilde's works, has become one of the central images of 'camp', to a great extent for his special kind of camp humour. The fact that a typical feminine prerogative as 'dressing up' and elegance of behaviour is inextricably linked up with the image of the dandy was the reason why he became one of the first personifications of androgyny. Particularly since Oscar Wilde, a famous dandy himself, became after his prison sentence the first recognisable homosexual person in public, the figure of the dandy has become associated with sexually deviant behaviour. It was therefore interesting to take a closer look whether patterns of ontologically insecure behaviour could be discerned even before that time in the dandy prototypes, pointing to a possible stigma.

Ellen Moers's profound research in *The Dandy*³⁹ became the basis for differentiating the different types: The prototype dandy personified by Beau Brummell, the so-called 'Butterfly dandies' renowned for showing

³⁷ Cynthia Morrill, 'Revamping the Gay Sensibility', in Moe Meyer (ed.), *The Politics and Poetics of Camp* (London: Routledge, 1994).

³⁸ Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and their Relations to the Unconscious* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 102.

³⁹ Ellen Moers, *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1959).

off their outrageous clothes, and the intellectual dandy exemplified by Charles Baudelaire in France.

For taking a closer look at Beau Brummell, Ian Kelly's⁴⁰ biography proved to be indispensable and a corrective to Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly's early character study of Beau Brummell. When discussing the intellectual type of dandy exemplified first and foremost by Charles Baudelaire, it was Domna C. Stanton's analysis of the *Aristocrat as Art*⁴¹ who backed my theory that Beau Brummell, and to a much greater extent Baudelaire tried by dissolving their bodies to extinguish every signifier of gender and class. In such a way they represent regarding dandies the type of the male asexual androgyne. The 'Butterfly Dandies' however exemplified in the early nineteenth century the opposite category of the hermaphrodite male androgyne by uniting on their bodies male and female gender signifiers. As a twentieth century counterpart for them could be cited what we nowadays call metrosexuals, that is media stars like David Beckham who draw our attention by adopting male and female traits alike.

In the 5th chapter of my thesis it is important for me to show why the figure of the androgyne began to feature so prominently in nineteenth century art and literature of the Decadence. The Decadence was searching for new literary and artistic images which could shock the bourgeois middle-classes, making them thus aware of their self-righteous complacency. In particular what Barbara Spackman in her article in the book *Perennial Decay* calls 'interventions'⁴² were phenomena which challenged the basic structure of a society that thrived on absolute differences like for example

⁴⁰ Ian Kelly, *Beau Brummell: The Ultimate Dandy* (London: Hodder, 2005).

⁴¹ Domna C. Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

⁴² Barbara Spackman, 'Interventions', in Liz Constable & Dennis Denisoff & Matthew Potolsky (eds.), *Perennial Decay: On Aesthetics and Politics of Decadence* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp.35-49.

male/female. Androgyny was one of these hybrid constructs which Spackman had in mind evading the logic of difference. But apart from adopting the stance of ‘épater le bourgeois’ taken over from French authors like Charles Baudelaire, it was also a new definition of genius, of the true artist which paved the way for androgyny to be associated with sexual deviant behaviour. According to Richard Dellamora in his book *Masculine Desire*⁴³ it was first the art critic John Ruskin in England who completely revised his former moralistic stance regarding art and artist when realising his own unconventional feelings for a ten-year-old girl, and discovering that the mind of an artist like that of his much admired painter J.M.W. Turner was tinged with sexual or mental degeneracy. Later in 1873 Walter Pater in his book on *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*⁴⁴ explored also the quality of artistic genius praising artists like Leonardo da Vinci having a ‘unique temperament’ and thus portraying characters of a ‘strange beauty’ and of a ‘doubtful sex’. Pater also saw in the androgynous quality of da Vinci a prerequisite of artistic genius, thereby excusing his own homoerotic feelings.

Influenced by the brothers Edmond and Jules Goncourt, the authors of the fin-de-siècle strove to portray their characters not only as exact as possible, but also thought to uncover their ‘l’états d’âme’, the state of their soul and thus taking Realism onto a higher level. This so-to-speak ‘hyperrealism’ which Arthur Symons described as an ‘intense self-consciousness’⁴⁵, furthered in authors of the fin-de-siècle the strive to give their readers psychographs of their protagonists. The increasing interest of authors of the

⁴³ Richard Dellamora, *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), p.119.

⁴⁴ Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.74-75.

⁴⁵ Arthur Symons, ‘The Decadent Movement in Literature’, in Karl Beckson (ed.), *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890’s* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1982), p.135.

Decadence in individuals on the fringes of society together with their zeal of giving an exact insight into their souls resulted in the first psychological insights into stigmatised characters in nineteenth century literature.

The same interest must have dominated Oscar Wilde as he cites as the strongest influences upon him authors who portray androgynous characters in their works, displaying sexually deviant behaviour. These androgynes comprising effeminate men and masculine women would nowadays be labelled homosexual or at least perceived to display gender non-conforming behaviour. Wilde's own realisation of his homoerotic feelings must have played an important role in this and serves as a kind of compass detecting works of homoerotic content.

The most well-known androgynous type before Dorian Gray that also became the model for many other decadent characters in fin-de-siècle literature was Huysmans's protagonist Des Esseintes in his novel *A Rebours* (1884). Wilde himself named Huysmans's novel during his first trial when asked what book he had in mind that poisoned Dorian Gray. Although Wilde later admitted that it only gave him a basic idea, the character of Des Esseintes set the agenda of how to portray a decadent character, and since then a sexually deviant side belonged as a necessary ingredient to it.

When discussing the literary influences on Wilde, Gautier's novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin* is far more enlightening, because Gautier offers the reader much more insight into the psyche of his androgynous protagonists. It is astonishing how detailed in 1835 Gautier depicted the innermost feelings, the despair and insecurities of characters suffering from a stigma. The authoress Rachilde, a French novelist Oscar Wilde admired

and knew in person, attempted to do the same in her novel *Monsieur Vénus*. It is thanks to Diana Holmes's⁴⁶ first book-length study on Rachilde in English that it became possible for me to undertake a profound interpretation of that novel focussing on the issue of gender.

The obvious choice regarding literary influences on Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* might be Benjamin Disraeli's novel with the similar sounding title *Vivian Grey*, because Wilde took the famous portrait motif from this novel. I try to prove with the help of William Kuhn's latest biography on Disraeli that besides this ingenious motif Wilde was also inspired by the author and his flamboyant and homoerotic conduct which mirrored itself in the protagonists of Disraeli's first three novels.

Among critics there is no doubt that Wilde was fascinated by Walter Pater's theories and books, especially his book about *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*. Here Pater describes how the first wave of Hellenism brought into the Middle Ages an old forgotten sensualism that had vanished together with the antique Gods. When looking at the Renaissance Pater praised a renewed acceptance by artists of the beautiful body, including the male body. But in contrast to his praise of a liberated sensualism Herbert Sussman in his study on *Victorian Masculinities*⁴⁷ points out that for Pater, only a restrained passion for beauty was acceptable and, especially a repressed state of homoerotic passion in the artist was for Pater a pre-condition for genial works of art.

Oscar Wilde must in all probability have disagreed in that respect with Pater. By not only naming but also modelling his famous protagonist

⁴⁶ Diana Holmes, *Rachilde: Decadence, Gender and the Woman Writer* (Oxford: Berg, 2001).

⁴⁷ Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.183.

Dorian Gray on the real character of John Gray, he tried to show that a repressed homosexuality is not necessarily the way to lead a fulfilled life. On the contrary, Basil Hallward paints his masterpiece when he releases his passion and is letting it show in the picture of Dorian. In order to support my theory Jerusha Hull McCormack's biography on *John Gray: Poet, Dandy, & Priest*⁴⁸ proved indispensable, especially when describing what in Wilde's time went under the term of 'New Chivalry', a homoerotic but celibate relationship with another man.

When analysing Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* it turns out that the whole novel is a psychological area of tension. In the centre is Dorian, not being able or not wanting to become aware of his homoerotic passion but becoming the projection foil for others like Basil Hallward to realise their true sexual orientation. There is also Lord Henry Wotton who personifies the intellectual dandy, viewing society in his detached way as a clockwork and trying to undertake an experiment with Dorian by moulding him according to his hedonistic philosophies. And there is another ontologically insecure character such as Dorian in the shape of Sybil Vane – an 'homme fragile' meets his female counterpart, a 'femme fragile'. Similar to a chemical reaction Wilde lets Dorian interact with all these characters trying to arrive at outlining psychographs for all of them. The literary examples of other writers of the Decadence in France I have discussed above, might have influenced and possibly spurred him on in this undertaking. It is due to Nicholas Frankel, that researchers like myself have since 2011 Wilde's original and uncensored first manuscript for Lippincott's magazine of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*⁴⁹ at their disposal. It

⁴⁸ Jerusha Hull McCormack, *John Gray: Poet, Dandy, Priest* (Hanover & London: Brandeis University Press, 1991).

⁴⁹ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray: An Annotated and Uncensored Edition*, edited by Nicholas Frankel (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011).

was being restored in such a way that Wilde's own self-censoring changes, but also modifications and deletions by the editor J. M. Stoddart were reversed. In the original restored form, the homoerotic undercurrent, in particular regarding Basil Hallward's passion for Dorian, comes much better to the surface.

Wilde's story 'The Portrait of Mr W. H.' should be seen with regard to 'The Picture of Dorian Gray' as a first attempt of how to depict an unmentionable subject like homoerotic passion, before Wilde tried his hand at a full-length novel.

Whereas 'The Portrait of Mr W.H.' was the starting point, his drama 'Salomé' takes the theme of moral corruption and sexual deviance to new heights having as its central characters two powerful androgynes: Salomé and Jokanaan.

Although my dissertation culminates in Wilde, it is by no means about Wilde. Wilde used and cited so many cultural codes, for example those of the dandy and various images of androgyny, that it was indispensable to first decipher and explore the implications of these references.

2. A Short History of Androgyny

Whenever the topic of androgyny is mentioned, each individual approaches it from a different viewpoint thus indicating, on the one hand, how potent the term androgyny can be and on the other hand what confusion exists as to the exact meaning of the word. Over the generations up to the present time the term has been used to describe various certain ideals and fears, thus mirroring the then contemporary zeitgeist.

As Francette Pacteau has already observed, striving for an exact definition of androgyny “reveals an ever evasive concept which takes us to the limits of language”⁵⁰. Bearing this in mind, in my thesis I will only attempt to approach a definition with regard to the latter half of the nineteenth century, the so-called ‘fin-de-siècle’. It was at that time when there appeared a plethora of androgynous images in works by so-called ‘decadent’ authors such as Algernon Swinburne, Rachilde and Oscar Wilde. I will also attempt to analyse reasons why androgyny became so fashionable in the period of *The Yellow Book*, i.e. the ‘yellow nineties’.

One of the first difficulties which complicates a definition of androgyny is that ‘its appearance lies in the eye of the beholder’ and as such tends to be rather subjective:

Androgyny cannot be circumscribed as belonging to some being; it is more a question of a relation between a look and an appearance, in other words *psyche* and *image*. I do not encounter an ‘androgynous’ in the street; rather I encounter a figure whom I ‘see as’ androgynous. That is to say, the androgynous does not exist in the real (Pacteau, p.62)

⁵⁰ Francette Pacteau, ‘The Impossible Referent’, in James Donald & Cora Kaplan (eds.), *Formations of Fantasy* (New York: Methuen, 1986), p.62.

Pacteau is here describing a common discrepancy which occurs between the outward appearance of someone and their inner psychological self. For instance, an onlooker may observe this individual's androgynous looks but questions whether these mirror his true sexual identity. It is important to realise that in reality simply appearing androgynous does not necessarily have any deeper psychological significance. This was all too apparent in the seventies and in the New Romantic movement in the eighties when considering the fads and fashion accompanying pop music trends such as Glam Rock. Dedicated fans of stars like David Bowie and Boy George copied their 'androgynous chic'. But this fashionable gender bending and dressing-up in an androgynous style was only skin-deep. David Bowie, in a *Guardian* newspaper article looking back on Glam Rock and the 70s described what he was doing in the world of pop as 'pretension':

Pretension, or the 'School of Pretension' as I pretentiously dubbed Brian Eno and myself in 1978, was a quick-fix category for it all. By 1970 the knock-on effect of The Dice Man, Warhol's culture-flattening and the breakdances of Derrida and Foucault had changed the notion of 'the absolute', of reality. It was no longer possible to take seriously the history of things as stage-managed by the media and the education system. Everything we knew was wrong. Free at last – or, if you like, at sea without a paddle – we were giving ourselves permission to reinvent culture the way we wanted it: with great big shoes.⁵¹

Nowadays the lives of David Bowie and Boy George do not reflect an androgynous image. David Bowie is now a conventional father of a family; Boy George is an icon of the gay scene. Their original images belong to the

⁵¹ Mick Rock, 'Look back in Glamour: Ziggy and the Glitter Years', in *Guardian Weekly* (April 12-18, 2001), p.16.

past: Bowie's alien-like appearance as Ziggy Stardust or as the 'Man Who Fell to Earth' or the attention Boy George attracted by leaving the audience guessing as to whether he was a girl or a boy. Both Bowie and Boy George could or would not keep up their apparent androgyny. However, the fact that so many, especially young people feel attracted to pop stars in this way is important. Stars who create an image in the media by appearing sexually ambiguous betrays, on the one hand, how ineffective the old stereotyping of masculinity and femininity has become and, on the other hand leads on to

the real question about 'androgyny' [...] how it comes to mean both sexlessness and sexiness at once. What's sexy about crossover gender cues, or sexual misreading, or undecipherable gender? How can people who are also attracted to exaggeratedly 'male' or 'female' figures be turned on by persons of uncertain, or transgressively double-signed, gender and sexuality?⁵²

What often turns out to be the most attractive face in advertisements and fashion shows is the exact blend of 50% male and 50% female, thus resembling either the sexless beauty of Marlene Dietrich or Mia Farrow's boyish looks in her early days as an actress. In everyday life, however, identifying persons who would qualify as real androgynes is difficult. An attempt has been made by Ingrid Sell in her dissertation where she attempts to define a third gender, i.e. describing individuals who seem neither man nor woman. She begins her study by approaching androgyny from the outward visible point of view where she describes five categories of hermaphrodite all of whom each display to a certain degree some aspects of

⁵² Marjorie Garber, *Vice Versa: Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1995), p.233.

both female and male genitalia. She bases her research on the findings of geneticist Anne Fausto-Sterling who even discovers

‘true hermaphrodites’, a medical category indicating the presence of one testis and one ovary.⁵³

Note that the term ‘hermaphrodite’ instead of ‘androgyne’ is here used for the following reason:

The fusion of male and female is anatomically expressed through the presence, or partial presence of both sets of genital organs”.⁵⁴

To simplify matters it is now common practice to use two categorical terms. For a medical or anatomical condition: ‘hermaphroditism’ or ‘intersex’; when considering the psychic or psychological aspect: ‘androgyny’. As research has proved, a hermaphrodite individual is not necessarily bisexual or possesses an androgynous psyche. Ingrid Sell states that ‘most researchers agree that gender identity results from a combination of nature and nurture - which factor is more important is a matter of controversy’ (Ingrid Sell, p.11). From the outwardly visible point of view androgynes are often imagined to be transvestites. However, to quote Ingrid Sell again, transvestites are ‘primarily heterosexual men who cross-dress for the pleasure it affords them (out of a variety of reasons), but who have no desire to give up their male identities or change their bodies’ (Ingrid Sell, p.27). Other groups of individuals who, by cross-dressing, give an impression of androgyny might nowadays be called ‘drag queens’. Their desire to dress up as women has more to do with fitting into a subculture and their present institutionalised role in the gay male community. This

⁵³ Ingrid Sell, ‘Third Gender: A Qualitative study of the Experiences of Individuals who identify as being neither Man nor Woman’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2001), p.9.

⁵⁴ Wayne R. Dynes (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Homosexuality* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), p.56.

subculture lends the gay community a great deal of its 'camp' flavour, a genre and taste centring round a certain sense of glamour, artifice and theatricality. Transsexuality, of course, is another instance of cross-dressing. But here it only marks one stage on the road to a person's final identity as a female or male heterosexual.

Of course, there are also some individuals who do not wish to go the whole way, as it were; they cross-dress but do not wish to undergo an actual sex-change operation. Their wish to stop halfway through this transitional process can have many reasons. In some cases their basic biological gender may tend towards androgyny as they see themselves as neither man nor woman and wish to demonstrate to the outside world that neither of these stereotypical categories is appropriate, for them to describe their gender identity. However, the onlooker may be misled by such outward signs. In such cases Ingrid Sell offers the following advice:

Some create their own image without the use of surgery or hormones; others partake of medical technologies to reshape their bodies, and yet are not interested in crossing all the way into the opposite sex. The boundaries between transgender and transsexual are blurry; some transsexuals as well choose not to use hormones or surgery. It is here, where the borders between transsexual and transgender, and male and female, become hazy, that Kessler and McKenna's (1978) admonition is clearest: "The only way to ascertain someone's gender identity is to ask (Ingrid Sell, p.33)

There are even some people who see themselves as 'a-gendered' or go so far as to call themselves 'gender outlaws', like 'transgendered writer and performer' Kate Bornstein⁵⁵, who aims for a real world with honest gender fluidity on a daily basis, making traditional gender meaningless. But it

⁵⁵ Kate Bornstein, *My Gender Workbook* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

remains to be seen whether it is possible to fully maintain such a post-modernist (perhaps better post-gender) stance by daily reinventing yourself and your gender, because one would have to negate any reference point of gender identity in order to overcome the normal gender binary. With Kate Bornstein, one also have to ask oneself what is simply theatrical performance and what, to use her word, is 'reality'. Whether it makes sense to label Bornstein herself androgynous raises a critical point as the term 'androgyny' itself consists of the two opposing poles of *andro* and *gyna*, that is femininity and masculinity. It is exactly this gender binarism which Bornstein is trying to overcome. In my first chapter here when discussing different forms of androgyny all rely on a bipolar idea of gender. There are only a few exceptional cases which venture to move beyond this concept.

So far we have looked at androgyny from a visual perspective, that is we have taken a closer look at individuals who display both feminine and masculine characteristics at the same time. Unfortunately, it is still very common to place an individual's sexual orientation with direct reference to an individual's sexually ambiguous appearance. Thus androgyny is often confused with bisexuality. However, by using the word bisexuality, one is still affirming the masculine/feminine binary structure, whereas with the word androgyny one is trying to combine the characteristics of both sexes hinting at a third gender. Bisexuality, as the word indicates, is best described as 'an indecision or alternation between two given or persisting forms;'⁵⁶

It is interesting that Ingrid Sell draws attention to the fact that the word androgyny in the lesbian community has also been adopted as a defining identity,

⁵⁶ Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century* (London: Cassell, 1994), p. 164.

as a way of distancing themselves from the more negative connotations associated with butch, among them negative societal stereotypes (the “bulldagger” and “manhater”) as well as the charges of 1970s lesbian feminists that butches (and their “femme” counterparts) were simply imitating heterosexual roles. (Ingrid Sell, p.34)

Note that once more the word ‘androgyny’ is used here to define an identity attempting to be located outside the common masculine/feminine binary structure.

2.1 Androgyny in ancient Greek and Roman myths

Before taking a closer look at the two most influential myths regarding androgyny, it would be useful to consider what was meant by the word hermaphrodite and the place of dual sexuality in antiquity. In ancient Greece or Rome when a baby was born with both male and female genital organs it ‘was interpreted as a sign of divine anger that heralded the extinction of the human race, since it had become alien to itself and incapable of reproduction.’⁵⁷ Such infants were very soon put to death as they called into question certain social structures and, indeed, the very survival of the whole human race. Occasionally, however, primitive surgery was used to turn them into sexually unambiguous males or females. Later during the Roman Empire and under the influence of philosophers and historians, the births of such hermaphrodites and the superstitions connected with them could be explained away as biological phenomena or simply flukes of nature. Alas, these dual-sexed individuals still experienced discrimination and were often displayed to the general public as curious exhibits at fun-fairs such as described in Petronius’s *Satyricon*. In ancient times dual sexuality was

⁵⁷ Luc Brisson, *Sexual Ambivalence: Androgyny and Hermaphroditism in Graeco-Roman Antiquity*, transl. by Janet Lloyd (London: University of California Press, 2002, p. 147.

solely the prerogative of the gods for they were seen in those days as important archetypes:

In very general terms, simultaneous dual sexuality, that is, possession of both sexes at once, expresses the total coincidence of opposites that characterizes the origin of all things. (Luc Brisson, p.72)

Both Plato and Ovid described the myths surrounding adult metamorphoses into dual sexuality. The former's ideas have come to symbolise the achievement of an ideal new wholeness; in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* on the other hand there is a sense of unwholesome competition. When considering fin de siècle decadent literature Ovid was by far the greater influence.

2.2 Plato's *Symposium* and the tale of Aristophanes

The initial reference point for research into androgyny must be the myth of the existence of three sexual beings as told by Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium*. These sexual beings consist each of two spheres: male and male; female and female; male and female. Plato describes these 'spherical' creatures, the first prototypes of human beings as becoming too arrogant and overpowering. Zeus considers how to punish them, but without extinguishing them completely. He thus 'slices' these three 'double beings' into two, causing each of them to experience the loss of the other half. In the *Symposium* Aristophanes tells this story in order to explain the background to erotic and sexual attraction. The 'male-female', the androgynous couples turn out to be a procreative heterosexual couple. Apart from illustrating the erotic attraction between men and women, however, this archaic myth embodies two other important images. The first is that of a new spiritual wholeness of an individual who succeeds in integrating both male and

female aspects into his/her personality in equal shares. The second concerns homosexuality. Aristophanes tells us about the ‘male-male’ couple after Pausanias has broached the topic of pederasty where he relates the story of the love of an older man for a young adolescent boy. In fact we must not forget that the *Symposium* was the first text where homosexual love was mentioned openly. It became one of the oldest reference texts for discussing and explaining homosexuality.

2.3 The Influence of Plato’s Complementary Model on Sexual Theory and Psychiatry

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Plato’s *Symposium* was for a large part responsible for the misapprehension of homosexuality in academic circles. Linda Dowling’s *Hellenism and Homosexuality* states that ‘Greek Studies’ operated as a ‘homosexual code’⁵⁸. In E.M. Foster’s posthumously published novel *Maurice*, Clive Durham asks Maurice:

‘You’ve read the Symposium?’[...] No more was said at the time, but he was free of another subject, and one he had never mentioned to any living soul. He hadn’t known it could be mentioned, and when Durham did so in the middle of the sunlit court a breath of liberty touched him.⁵⁹

The fact that the *Symposium* was, and still is a reference text for both androgyny and homosexuality, must be why these two concepts are often conflated. In the *Modern Androgyne Imagination* Lisa Rado mentions one of the first modern sexual scientists, Richard von Krafft-Ebing and his seminal 1892 book *Psychopathia Sexualis* and says:

⁵⁸ Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality* (London: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. xiii.

⁵⁹ E.M. Forster, *Maurice* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p.50.

Interestingly, he and others identify homosexuals (and their so-called pathology) not so much by their practice of same-sex attachments as by a kind of psychic androgyny (hence the term 'inversion'): the men are [according to Krafft-Ebing] 'females in feeling; in women, males'. In 1895 Richard von Krafft-Ebing then came up with the term 'inversion' as he claimed to have found out that in effeminate men and masculine women the 'brain centres' had been incorrectly – as it were inversely – activated during puberty. Such characteristics are here considered anything but appealing; while the males of this class are described as effeminate, impotent, and weak, females are regarded as unattractively masculine and oversexed⁶⁰.

Moreover, Krafft-Ebing and his disciples claimed that 'psychic androgyny' found its corporal expression also in such anatomical deformities of the sex organs mentioned above, but not in a hermaphroditic way. Inverts, according to Krafft-Ebing would 'approach the opposite sex anthropologically.'⁶¹ Generally speaking, the Krafft-Ebing school placed individuals displaying 'psychic androgyny', or so-called sexual inverts, in the same category with masochists, paedophiles or other sexual freaks. It is worth mentioning here that masculine-acting 'gay' men or feminine-acting lesbians were apparently quite unknown to nineteenth century sexologists. Such academics focused not on the characteristic of homosexual same-sex attraction but solely on the androgynous nature of homosexuals.

A few years after Krafft-Ebing, in 1897, Havelock Ellis, the most prominent sex theorist in Britain at the turn of the century began to publish his seven-volume work *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*. That one of the first volumes bore the title *Sexual Inversion* betrays the importance of this topic for him.

⁶⁰ Lisa Rado, *The Modern Androgyne Imagination: A Failed Sublime* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), p. 15.

⁶¹ Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1892), translated by Charles Gilbert Chaddock, 7th ed. (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1908), p. 304.

What he portrays here are different cases of gender inversion but, again, not precisely, homosexuality. For example, Havelock Ellis describes androgynous female inverts as women ‘whose masculine qualities render it comparatively easy for them to adopt masculine vocations.’⁶² The overall tone and emphasis of his studies is not one of sickness and perversion as with Krafft-Ebing. Inversion for Ellis is still an anomaly, but not a pathological one. Admiringly, he draws attention to the fact that more than half of his cases ‘possess artistic aptitudes of varying degree’ (Ellis, p.294) and as examples cites many creative artists through the ages such as Sappho, Michelangelo, Christopher Marlowe, Walt Whitman and Oscar Wilde etc. Gender nonconformity it seems, is the prerequisite for genius. It is worth noting, that writers like Walter Pater of the ‘decadent school’ and sexologists like Edward Carpenter and John Addington Symonds held the same view.

The first to give sexual inverts sympathetic treatment was a German lawyer, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, in 1868, in a lengthy pamphlet entitled *Die Geschlechtsnatur des mannliebenden Urnings. Eine naturwissenschaftliche Darstellung*. Ulrichs took the name ‘Urnig’ for his male invert from Plato’s *Symposium*. It is Pausanias who describes two kinds of love: firstly, the goddess Venus Pandemos symbolises a love that is practised by both men and women and is governed by sexual lust; secondly the goddess Venus Uranus (Ulrichs’s Urning) represents the noble and dignified love practised between two men. This love then came to be known as ‘Uranian’. Ulrichs was the first to realise that one’s biological sex did not necessarily cancel out one’s inner sexual identity. In his pamphlet he did not deal with hermaphrodites. By quoting many biographies of ‘Urnings’ Ulrichs proves that ‘soul-sex is [not] indissolubly connected and inevitably derived from

⁶² Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1915), p.196.

body sex.’⁶³ Ulrichs’s conception of sexual inversion is elucidated in detail by John Addington Symonds in his essay ‘A Problem of Modern Ethics’ (1896). For Ulrichs

[...]the body of an Urning is masculine, his soul feminine, so far as sex is concerned. Accordingly, though physically unfitted for coition with men, he is imperatively drawn towards them by a natural impulse. (Chris White, p.78)

Surprisingly, it is interesting to note that Ulrichs, already by 1900 had set up a nomenclature of different homosexual types prevalent in the second half of the nineteenth century. His list is, in parts, still valid today and describes feminine acting male homosexuals, as well as paederasts and bisexuals. Thus John Addington Symonds goes on to explain Ulrichs’s model in his above-mentioned essay by recounting that

The normal man he calls Dioning, the abnormal man Urning. Among Urnings, those who prefer effeminate males are christened by the name of Mannling ; those who prefer powerful and masculine adults receive the name of Weibling; the Urning who cares for adolescents is styled a Zwischen-Urning. Men who seem to be indifferently attracted by both sexes, he calls Uranodioninge. (Chris White, p.76)

It is clear that, in his system, Ulrichs had forgotten that there are also masculine acting gays who prefer men of the same type. Lesbians do not feature in his categories either. However, he was the first sexologist to pave the way in order for Carpenter and Symonds to paint a favourable picture of Uranian men who, ‘while possessing thoroughly masculine powers of mind and body, [combine with these features] ...the tenderer and more emotional

⁶³ Chris White (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century Writings on Homosexuality: A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1999), p.78.

soul-nature of the woman.’⁶⁴ Lisa Rado points out that in Carpenter’s book on *Intermediate Types among Primitive Folk*⁶⁵ he (Carpenter)

invoke[s] positive historical precedent to argue that in indigenous societies ‘effeminate men are frequently believed to be versed in magic’[and he] insists that Uranian men possess an ‘instinctive artistic nature’ owing to ‘the swift and constant interaction between [their brains’] masculine and feminine elements’. (Lisa Rado, p. 17)

She continues : ‘rather than a sign of hereditary degeneration, this psychic hermaphroditism is read as a sign of superior abilities’(Lisa Rado, p.17). On the other hand, however, Ulrichs does not completely exclude the body in discovering the reason for sexual inversion, namely in the human physique. For him, ‘up to a certain stage of embryonic existence all living mammals are hermaphroditic’, and he blames nature for not fully developing ‘the proper differentiation of that portion of the physical being in which resides the sexual appetite’, namely in the embryo. So for Ulrichs ‘there remains a female soul in a male body’. (Chris White, p. 77)

Ulrichs’s view that the original state of all living creatures is hermaphroditic is taken up in Freud’s postulate of universal childhood bisexuality. It remains a matter of debate, however, - according to Suzanne Lilar whether Freud was more influenced by the Berlin doctor Wilhelm Fließ ‘who[...] discovered the bisexual character of all living cells’⁶⁶ or whether Freud got the original idea from Ulrichs. At any rate, in his book *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud came to believe that all living organic matter had an innate tendency ‘compelling it towards the

⁶⁴ Edward Carpenter, *Love’s Coming-of-Age* (London: Methuen, 1907), p.152.

⁶⁵ Edward Carpenter, *Intermediate Types among Primitive Folk: A Study in Social Evolution* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1919).

⁶⁶ Suzanne Lilar, *Aspects of Love in western society* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965), p.132.

reinstatement of an earlier condition, which it had to abandon under the influence of external disturbing forces' (Suzanne Lilar, p.132-133). For Freud, Aristophanes' speech in the *Symposium* represents an early philosophical explanation of humanity's both latent bisexuality and homosexuality. In his book *Sex and Character*, published in 1906, Otto Weininger went even further. He proclaimed a universal androgyny where 'there exist[s] all sorts of intermediate conditions between male and female'⁶⁷, and not simply two pure categories of male and female. He believed that each cell in the human body contains different amounts of male plasm and female plasm and thus 'sexual differentiation...is never complete' (Weininger, p.5). Thus for Weininger there exists only a 'male' or a 'female' condition, but no such individuals as 'man' and 'woman' (Weininger, p.8). Freud and Weininger, with their concept of androgyny, took a new direction separating androgyny from sexual practice and expanding it to become a universal condition. For example, for Freud, according to Elisabeth Badinter, 'the homosexual is an 'abnormal man' who is not sick.'⁶⁸ Lisa Rado, in her book *The Modern Androgyne Imagination* summarises all the different scientific schools of thought revolving around the concept of androgyny:

For the Krafft-Ebing school, androgyny is a psychic and physical anomaly that characterizes an individual with homosexual and deviant tendencies. For Carpenter and his colleagues (and to a lesser extent, Ellis), it is a primarily psychic condition also characterizing a third, predominantly homosexual, sex, but with particularly transcendent (mainly artistic) abilities. Finally, for Freud and Weininger, androgyny (divorced from sexual orientation) becomes a universal physical condition that explodes the notion of any pure sexual or gender categories. All

⁶⁷ Otto Weininger, *Sex and Character* (London: William Heinemann, 1906), p.7.

⁶⁸ Elisabeth Badinter, *On Masculine Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p.154.

three theories of androgyny and the sexual body spread quickly through academic and non-academic circles. (Lisa Rado, p.19)

Sexual scientists of the above-mentioned first two schools emphasized feminine behaviour patterns in case studies of inverted men and, when it came to women their masculine qualities. Same-sex attraction remained in the background. From this fact, in the late twentieth century, Michel Foucault deduces that for the formation of the homosexual identity, not the signs and the sins of the flesh were crucial, but an amalgamation of both feminine and masculine character traits:

We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized [as] a certain way of inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself. Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.⁶⁹

For sexual scientists such as Freud and Weininger androgyny had no direct connection any more to homosexuality. It was this generation of sexual scientists who influenced C.G. Jung. The latter turned his concept of androgyny into a new kind of psychological androgyny which, and this is important, at its core contained a process of *individuation*. This entails a man becoming conscious of his feminine qualities, his *anima*. For a woman this meant correspondingly becoming conscious of her masculine side, her *animus*. According to Marjorie Garber, for Jung the ‘androgynous or hermaphrodite (for this purpose he uses the two terms interchangeably)

⁶⁹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality 1: The Will to Knowledge* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1998), p.43.

represent the ideal integration of masculine and feminine in the psyche of the individual, a state he calls “wholeness” or “individuation” (Garber, p.211). Thus, whenever we find someone attractive, he or she evokes one’s inner or ‘other’ self which we can easily project onto this person. But as Marjorie Garber rightly observes, however, for Jung ‘the relation between the conscious and the unconscious is always heterosexual’. On the whole Jung is in favour of simple gender stereotypes as the *anima* or *animus* should always be kept in the background: ‘If one lives out the opposite sex in oneself one is living in one’s own background, and one’s real individuality suffers. A man should live as a man and a woman as a woman’ Jung declared in an essay entitled ‘Woman in Europe’ in 1927 (Garber, p.212). For Jung, obviously, androgyny is only a theoretical construct for becoming a real and healthy man or woman, but in reality it should be avoided. Marjorie Garber even argues that for Jung the

androgyny was an ‘idea’, an ‘ideal’, a ‘vision’, a ‘doctrine’, a ‘mind’, or a state of mind – anything but a concrete reality. Once it *became* a reality – walking down the street hand in hand with its mirror twin, capitalizing on sexual ambiguity to seduce and entrance an audience – it was sullied, misinterpreted, and not what they meant at all. (Garber, p.214)

The fact that Jung regarded ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ as constant qualities and as universal god-given traits led his disciples (especially feminists in the early 1970s when androgyny came into fashion again), to create an ideal androgynous person. These qualities united in one individual his/ her best characteristics, which were regarded as either typically male or female. It was especially Carolyn Heilbrun’s book *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* (1973) which paved the way for an androgynous ideal which was seeking to liberate the individual from the strictures of prescribed sex roles. Furthermore Heilbrun states that ‘androgyny suggests a spirit of

reconciliation between the sexes' and promising 'a full range of experience open to individuals who may as women, be aggressive, as men tender.'⁷⁰ Heilbrun's concept first – forty years ago - met with enthusiasm. It reflected the then present zeitgeist, a time when a generation of 'hippie' men let their hair grow, explored their soft feminine attributes and a time when women in the streets started to wear trousers, breaking down bastions of masculinity and taking on jobs which had always been considered typically male. In the fashion world this dawn of a new generation found its expression in the unisex style when, for example, in the 1970s Yves-Saint Laurent dressed his models in male suits and the so-called 'partner look' hit the high street fashion shops. Feminists, however, soon became disenchanted with this new wave of androgyny. For them it was too vague a term and was being exploited, as it were, for the most unsuitable contrary ideas. It was the radical feminist Mary Daly who, after a time of infatuation with androgyny, exposed it as a 'vacuous term which not only fails to represent richness of being. It also functions as a vacuum that sucks its spellbound victims into itself.'⁷¹ For Daly, the constant navel-gazing which exploring one's other side involved, simply led to, as she says, narcissistic 'pseudo-wholeness'. Furthermore, Heilbrun's claim that androgyny was also about women was countered by feminist academics Catharine Stimpson and Barbara C. Gelpi. They cited examples showing that historically, and in present reality, androgyny only concerned men. Stimpson, as cited by Majorie Garber, went even further in her criticism and became anxious that

'androgyny' as an ideal could also displace the more disturbing fact of homosexuality in political and academic discourse, offering the fantasy of a union of 'masculine' and 'feminine' traits in a securely heterosexual context. Men should be 'caring' and do the dishes; women could have

⁷⁰ Carolyn Heilbrun, *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), p.x.

⁷¹ Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), p.xi.

professional careers. The 'sensitive man' and the 'woman-who-could-have-it-all' emerged as new idealizations, and, on the surface at least, were imagined within the context of the old social ideal of marriage and the family. What they did in bed was not discussed. (Garber, p. 217)

Although the behaviour patterns of these new androgynous types were similar to those of homosexuals nevertheless, under the influence of Jung, in the early 1970s this fact was played down by Heilbrun and her fellow feminists. Androgyny lost more and more of its appeal to feminists but it still survived as an aspiring condition in the socio-cultural field. In *Psychological Androgyny*, published in 1985 this is demonstrated by Ellen Piel Cook. She bases her book on former gender stereotypes in the Jungian fashion when she claims that

Certain sets of psychological characteristics have been typically associated with each sex in our society. The pattern and level of those characteristics adopted and exhibited by an individual is the sex-role identity, which is developed by the sex-typing process. Feminine characteristics involve emotionality, selflessness, interrelationships with others, and sensitivity (expressive/communal). Masculine characteristics have been described as involving assertive activity, self-development, separation from others, and goal orientation (instrumental/agentive). Traditionally, a feminine sex-role identity for men (with expression of few characteristics of the other dimension) have been considered ideal.⁷²

According to Piel Cook a person becomes psychologically 'androgynous' when he/she is able to blend positive masculine and feminine characteristics within him or herself. The outcome of such blending is not typified as either masculine or feminine, it is indeed 'androgynous'

⁷² Ellen Piel Cook, *Psychological Androgyny* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1985), pp.33-34.

behaviour. Moreover, Cook employs her concept of androgyny in the context of the work-place and building up a career. She sees it as an ideal model of how males, and indeed females, should fit into a highly industrialised society and accordingly, how women can adapt to a patriarchally structured work environment: 'For example, such individuals can be independent and capable of leading others (traditionally masculine), yet nurturant and sensitive of others (feminine)' (Cook, p.70). The advantage for a nonsex-typed person is that he or she is more flexible regarding behaviour. Furthermore, Cook illustrates her argument by pointing out the needs and dynamics of a quickly changing present-day economy. She does state, however, that masculine characteristics are valued much higher, reminding us that we are still living in a patriarchal society. As a consequence men who adopt feminine qualities do still suffer not only from lower self-esteem but they also feel insecure in situations where traditional male behaviour is expected. They have greater inhibitions displaying their feminine side as they are always in danger of not being seen as a 'real man'. This all has to do with the fact that

masculinity must be acquired, and at a high price. The man himself and those who surround him are so unsure of his sexual identity that proofs of his manliness are required. [...] Duty, proofs, trials – these words indicate that there is a real task to be accomplished to become a man. Manhood is not bestowed at the outset; it must be constructed, or let us say 'manufactured' (Elisabeth Badinter, p.2)

Women, on the other hand, seem to have fewer problems in embracing male characteristics as these are valued much higher in a society and economy dominated by traditionally masculine values. Not only that, a woman can always fall back on her traditional roles based on nothing more than passivity. This makes it easier for her to take the risk of adopting

male characteristics. Not only women but also men who show behaviour patterns discrepant of their sex or, regardless of their sexual orientation, act in a nonsex-typed way, suffer, according to Piel Cook, from ‘unique problems’ (Cook, p.121-122) regarding feelings of insecurity in their personal psyche. Such typical psychological problems will be discussed later on in more detail in this thesis.

2.4 Ovid’s myth of Hermaphroditus

Aristophanes’ tale in the *Symposium* of two powerful spheres was used by sexual scientists and feminists alike. It evoked for them both an image of complementation as well as a new and restored wholeness. On the other hand, Ovid’s myth of Hermaphroditus became the reference point for a different set of ideas all associated with androgyny. As Tracy Hargreaves states in *Androgyny in Modern Literature* these ‘two significant, but different, myths of a violent metamorphosis sit side-by-side – one of complement, one of competition.’⁷³ What, however, Ovid depicts in the fourth book of his *Metamorphoses* is an actual struggle culminating in the rape of Hermaphroditus by Salmacis, a female nymph. Thus the myth is characterised by a complete reversal of gender roles. Here Hermaphroditus is depicted as an effeminate youth resembling an ivory statue, a fact which is emphasised by his soft white skin. That Hermaphroditus is not a stereotypical male runs in the family: his mother, Aphrodite, also always evoked a sexually ambiguous image. She is, as classicists well know, the reincarnation of Uranos’s masculinity, namely his penis. On the island of Cyprus, for example, she was revered as *Venus barbarta*, wearing female clothes but also having a beard and male genitals.

⁷³ Tracy Hargreaves, *Androgyny in Modern Literature* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p.1.

Hermaphroditus's masculinity can be questioned even more when one considers the following fact. In contrast to the traditionally active role attributed to a masculine man, Hermaphroditus is attacked by a female nymph and is seen adopting the passive role which is normally reserved for women of the species. When referring to sexual ambivalence in antiquity, Luc Brisson points out that

to be a man was to play an active role; to be a woman was to play a passive role. Despite the fact that homosexuality as such had nothing to do with dual sexuality, passive homosexuals and also homosexual women who behaved like men, both were assimilated to androgynes. (Luc Brisson, p.41)

For Brisson 'Ovid was the first to recount the myth of Hermaphroditus and the only writer to establish specific links between dual sexuality and masculine homosexuality of the passive kind' (Luc Brisson, p.42). This surely leads to the conclusion, that for someone in ancient Rome reading about that myth, Hermaphroditus must have symbolised the sort of degraded character that was generally shunned by society. Similarly, if we take a closer look at Salmacis it is only at first sight that she adopts the traditional female role. On the one hand, she is part of the individuals surrounding the virgin goddess Diana. They excelled in the sport of hunting which was considered both in Greece and in Rome 'as war, a war between man and the wild beasts' (Brisson, p.59) and thus a typical masculine activity. On the other hand, however, she is not a full member of Diana's entourage because she refuses to use a spear or a bow and arrow, thus avoiding the physical hardships of a hunt. Instead, her behaviour appears overly feminine for not only does she enjoy picking flowers, but she also 'enjoys' her beautiful body in a thoroughly narcissistic fashion, dressed as she is in transparent robes. Nevertheless

when she tries, in such a violent way, to embrace Hermaphroditus, she is indeed taking an active, if not aggressive role. Such behaviour would have appeared utterly shocking and unnatural to the inhabitants of ancient Rome. Ovid's myth considered in its time from the point of view of 'gender roles' thus depicts a feminine lesbian attempting to assault a passive homosexual. Well over a thousand years later, in 1870, Burne-Jones depicted a similar rape scene in his painting *Phyllis and Demophoön*, which he exhibited at the Old Watercolour Society. This thoroughly provoked the indignation of the critics. For them the picture was objectionable because Phyllis, the princess, insists on pursuing Demophoön, her unfaithful lover who refuses to be seduced by her, a woman. The fact that it was again a woman, as in ancient Rome, who initiated sexual contact was, in 1870, still considered unnatural and disgusting. Germaine Greer, in her book about 'The Boy' commenting on Burne-Jones's picture, concludes that

Any woman who actively desired sex, instead of simply submitting to it, was a bad lot and unfit to be seen about her unnatural business in public. [...] Public art could not be seen to encourage either male submissiveness or female sexual desire.⁷⁴

Nowadays, when it comes to sex, the idea that women can take a more active role is much more acceptable. However, passive submissiveness in males is still heavily ridiculed.

If we return to ancient Rome and Ovid's myth, it is interesting to note that after the physical bodies of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus have seemed to melt into one another Salmacis, the female nymph, disappears, alas, from the story. Hermaphroditus continues to exist but as an even more

⁷⁴ Germaine Greer, *The Boy* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2003), p.125.

effeminate character – he is depicted having developed the nymph's breasts. According to Achim Aurnhammer⁷⁵, an expert on androgyny, Ovid's myth is even more multi-layered than described above.

Aurnhammer considers that both protagonists appeared to be thoroughly 'self-involved' in that they indulged themselves narcissistically in their own appearance. Hermaphroditus's innocent self-perfection, however, is under threat: not only by Salmacis's violent infatuation with him, but also from the fact that age and the passage of time seem to have affected him. When the nymph first approaches him and begins to flirt with him, his cheeks blush like 'apples hanging in sunny orchards'. This symbolises the beginning of his sexual maturity for he is now made aware of any form of sexual impact and is thus about to adopt the social role of any grown-up man. Thus Hermaphroditus, is, in fact, in danger of losing his androgynous completeness, which is determined by a pre-social, i.e. virgin or innocently child-like perfection. The physical union with Salmacis causes him to recover his androgynous self-sufficiency although in a sexually more mature form. Aurnhammer sees in the Hermaphroditus myth a psychological model for a similar crisis in adolescence. A young man values his natural wholeness and his identity as a complete and independent being. This leads him to reject any socially prescribed 'mature', masculine role model as that would also entail forfeiting his feminine side. The crisis is caused, then, according to Aurnhammer, by this heightened form of 'self-mirroring' (Aurnhammer, pp.20-21), thus marking out Hermaphroditus as a typically egocentric character, experiencing every change, however positive, as a loss. He thus, says Aurnhammer, resembles Narcissus. In Ovid's Narcissus myth there is also a female nymph, by the name of Echo, who falls in love with Narcissus.

⁷⁵ Achim Aurnhammer, *Androgynie: Studien zu einem Motiv in der europäischen Literatur* (Köln & Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1986).

He, in the myth, is described as androgynously beautiful because he is desired by both young men and young women alike. However, in contrast to the Hermaphroditus myth, the nymph Echo does not express her desire by attacking Narcissus. In fact, eventually they both physically wither away. Echo is ‘consumed’ by her unfulfilled love for Narcissus and, in turn, Narcissus is, as it were, punished by Echo for ignoring her. In the end he is also ‘consumed’ for admiring his beautiful image mirrored in the still waters in a nearby pond. In complete contrast to Narcissus, however, Hermaphroditus does in fact make the transition to adolescence and enters the grown-up world although, as we have seen, through force. He survives albeit without adopting any form of traditional ‘masculine’ gender.

2.5 Two forms of androgyny: Hermaphrodite and Asexual Androgyny

In order to understand better what arbitrary images might be conjured up by Ovid with his myth it is essential to take a closer look how he depicts the outcome of the melting together of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis:

As when one grafts a twig on some tree, he sees the branches grow one, and with common life come to maturity, so were these two bodies knit in close embrace: they were no longer two, nor such as to be called one, woman, and one, man. They seemed neither, and yet both.⁷⁶ (*Metamorphoses* IV 375-379)

Other translations such as that by Luc Bresson are more explicit. They describe the result of the union as one single body that appeared ‘to have no sex and yet to have both’ (Luc Bresson, p.42). A whole different set of contradictory concepts of androgyny evolve around this ambiguity ensuing

⁷⁶ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, translated by Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Loeb Classical Library, 1984).

from attempts to depict the outcome of Hermaphroditus's fate. Roughly speaking, such concepts fall into two broad categories. One category includes concepts that unite all male and female signifiers; the other contains attempts to discard all signifiers. With regard to the dual nature of androgyny, Francette Pacteau points to the 'vertiginous possibility of a dual sexual identity – vertiginous in that from dual sexual identity to non-sexual identity, in effect non-identity, there might be only one step' (Francette Pacteau, p.62.). Especially during the fin-de-siècle period which I am focussing on in my thesis – in the nineteenth century these two different concepts of androgyny existed side by side: both feature prominently in art and literature. As I concentrate mainly on Decadent Literature it is not a distinction between 'good' and 'bad' androgyny. Marjorie Garber stresses this fact when she points out that

there were [...] really two kinds of androgyny, the good kind, which was spiritual, mythic, 'archetypal', and productive of intrapsychic oneness, and the bad kind, which was physical, sexy and disturbing, and which was likely to lead to bisexuality, group sex, the 'hapless confusion of the sexes', and the 'superabundance of erotic possibilities' for which Eliade disparaged the work of decadent authors from Oscar Wilde to Théophile Gautier and A.C. Swinburne. (Marjorie Garber, p.218)

I agree with Marjorie Garber to the extent that 'androgyny' in fin-de-siècle literature represented aspects which in those days were regarded as unhealthy and taboo. However, we must not forget one fact which is often underrated: the works of many decadent writers contained topics relating to aberrant or aggressive sexuality as they wanted to take advantage of the 'shock' value of such writing, leading to them being talked about and thus achieving higher sales figures! What Garber calls 'good androgyny' did not exist as a concept at the end of the nineteenth century as this is linked

to C.G. Jung. However, something she does not deal with in detail but only glosses over in her phrase ‘hapless confusion of the sexes’ is a second kind of androgyny which gives an ethereal image of the body in an attempt at desexualisation. I feel sure that Garber would classify this other variant of androgyny as ‘bad androgyny’ for, as I will point out later, it does not represent a healthy and integrated personality.

As we have seen, early sexual theorists such as K.H. Ulrichs, Edward Carpenter and, to a certain extent Havelock Ellis, in their attempts to invoke a positive image of homosexual men, also dealt with androgyny. They claimed that the androgynous nature of homosexuals rendered them superior to heterosexuals in that the former combined the best of both masculine and feminine traits. This positive image of a noble and uniquely gifted homosexual was far removed from the ideas contained behind Ovid’s myth which conjures up the old negative perceptions of the male homosexual, namely as a purely effeminate being.

Having mentioned the two types of androgyny we find in nineteenth century decadent literature, the problem now is to find appropriate terms to describe these two variants. In her book *Sexual Personae*⁷⁷, Camille Paglia tries to solve the problem by referring to Friedrich Nietzsche. In his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy* of 1871, he uses the two contrasting terms: *Apollonian* and *Dionysiac*. Paglia interprets the Dionysiac principle as representing a whole host of ideas and qualities: energy, anarchy, rapture, hysteria, promiscuity and, last but by no means least, losing one’s identity in a state of ecstasy. On the other hand, for her, the Apollonian principle implies the following: individuation, categorisation, fascism, being a

⁷⁷ Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

rational individual and thus highly intellectual as well as living in a solipsistic state of asexuality. Neither of these categorisations are particularly impressive. As Marjorie Garber rightly observes, Paglia had to weaken the Nietzschean categories so much that she seems thoroughly confused. For example, in chapter 19 when she is writing about decadent art in general, she claims that the androgyne decadent rejects sexuality. She sees this as an example of the Apollonian principle. Of course, Paglia is right in her observation that the androgyne decadent repudiates sexuality but, alas, nowhere in *The Birth of Tragedy* does Nietzsche equate asexuality with the Apollonian condition. Paglia also draws attention to the fact that in their paintings Edward Burne-Jones, Dante Gabriel Rossetti as well as John Everett Millais and Holman Hunt use the same type of androgynous face for both men and women – both sexes resembling the looks of Elizabeth Siddal and Jane Morris, these painter's models. By blurring the gender boundaries and crowding their paintings over and over again with the same type of individual Paglia points out that these gentlemen create an 'incestuous impression' on the onlooker. She is thus acknowledging that there is a certain chthonic undercurrent in Pre-Raphaelite art and ascertaining that decadent art is not wholly Apollonian but contains many Dionysian elements. This is the reason why I am mentioning Camille Paglia in my thesis for, at the same time she is implying that the Nietzschean categories of Apollonian and Dionysiac are not appropriate to differentiate the two forms of androgyny in late nineteenth century fin-de-siècle art and literature.

Because of the comparative irrelevance for my purpose of the Dionysiac and Apollonian categories as discussed by Camille Paglia with reference to Nietzsche, it seems to me more appropriate now to consider another approach to these concepts of androgyny, namely by considering how

males and females are portrayed in Pre-Raphaelite art in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The strong presence in Pre-Raphaelite painting of the models Elizabeth Siddal and Jane Morris had a great influence on how painters perceived the female face. Elizabeth Siddal, in fact, influenced Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood on a much wider scale than was formerly thought possible. Her impact was so strong on Rossetti, leading him and his fellow painters to concentrate on medieval subjects such as King Arthur. Rossetti seems to have found Siddal's influence so overpowering that he even went so far as to suppress her ideas, often declaring them and the ensuing sketches as generally inferior. Afterwards, however, he did not hesitate to declare them as his own work. This was a time when intellect, as such, was thought to be unnatural in a woman, menacing the status of masculinity in men. In fact, it was thought that only males could be valued for their inherent 'intellectuality'.

This quality in men can be seen projected in the masculine stern postures assumed by Pre-Raphaelite women, confidently gazing with large staring eyes into the face of the onlooker. On the other hand, however, the type influenced by Siddal and Morris was characterised by long flowing hair and sensuous lips, symbolising female passion and sexual power, characteristics which, again in Victorian times, were seen as threatening and unhealthy in a woman. All sexual signifiers, both male and female, come together simultaneously on the faces and bodies of these women, giving them a powerful presence. One prime example is Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Venus Verticordia* of 1864-8 (Fig. 1). Others are *The Lady Lilith* of 1868 (Fig.2), where he depicts Adam's first wife, and also *Astarte Syriaca* (Fig.3) which he painted in 1877. All these goddesses are

prototypes for the emerging fin-de-siècle images of the menacing *femme fatale*.

What a contrast, however, when the Pre-Raphaelites painted faces resembling Elizabeth Siddal or Jane Morris for their male characters. For example, let us take the picture *Perseus and the Sea Nymphs* Edward Burne-Jones painted in 1877 (Fig. 4). Perseus's hair is short and with his finely drawn face, high cheekbones and large eyes clothed in his metallic armour he very much resembles Joan of Arc. Despite the armour, the overall effect on the observer is that he looks desexualised. An even greater and more blatant contrast is apparent when we compare Elizabeth Siddal's images both at the beginning and at the end of her modelling career for the Pre-Raphaelites. At first, for them, she represents strong goddesses such as in the paintings I have already mentioned above. But her life was cut short 1862 because of her increasing dependence on laudanum, naively prescribed by doctors at the time for a whole variety of illnesses. However, towards the end, she made the transition in paintings to an androgynous and otherworldly *femme fragile*. First, in *Ophelia* by John Everett Millais (Fig. 5) and again in Rossetti's *Beata Beatrix* (Fig. 6) where she appears ephemeral, resembling a virgin adolescent girl.

As a final point, it is important to mention that, as Camille Paglia suggested, both androgynous types - the type that contains both feminine and masculine sexual signifiers and the other, which is devoid of any sexual signifiers – both exist in a solipsistic state of self-sufficiency. In most Pre-Raphaelite paintings that feature the Siddal/Morris type of protagonist, even with eyes apparently staring straight at the observer, he/she nevertheless appears not to be looking straight ahead but, like a

dreaming somnambulist, to be peering inwards, and with his/her open eyes, giving the viewer an introverted or even autistic impression.

2.5.1 The Two Types of Female Androgynes

Elizabeth Abbott in her *History of Celibacy* provides good examples of both female androgynous types and their self-containment when she describes the lives of the first Christian martyrs and church mothers in a time when ‘even the poorest of Christians were offered the virginity of their bodies as vehicles to carry them to an angelic life.’⁷⁸ The first category of women – those striving to live a holy life, and eventually to attain sainthood - lived like hermits, wasting their bodies away by fasting like modern-day anorexics. In this category Abbott describes early-Christian women such as Pelagia, Marina or Amma Sarah who, by fasting and penitentials, turn themselves into thin, gaunt, hollow-eyed ascetics who thereby eradicate all signs of femininity and thus transcend their gender and who thereafter lead lives as eunuch monks. A second generation of celibate women, however, emerged in early Christianity who were not docile, self-annihilating, female monk-like creatures. This group of women were independent and free-spirited each with an indomitable will. Abbott points out that ‘Thecla’s independent and interesting lifestyle was much more appealing to many Christian women than the self-effacing virgins touted by the Church Fathers’ (Abbott, p.92). This much more aggressive form of virginity was used by these women to protect them very much like a shield. It also empowered them because it liberated them from the usual constraints women had to endure, namely marriage and childbirth, giving them important privileges which at that time were only reserved for men. Elizabeth Abbott mentions a certain church mother,

⁷⁸ Elizabeth Abbott, *A History of Celibacy* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1999), p.48.

Melania, who even founded a community of women without any hierarchical authority and which appeared to be a form of a strong matriarchy. Abbott also distinguishes between two contrasting types of celibate women by pointing out that : ‘Alexandra and Melania were a study in contrasts. While the virginal Alexandra martyred herself inside a tomb, the confident, resourceful, privileged and formerly wealthy Melania wore her celibacy like armor against danger’(Abbott, p.95). Both these female types prevalent in early Christianity represent ‘androgynes’ because they have either discarded all signifiers - whether male or female - or display both signifiers simultaneously. As a result, we cannot say they are representative of stereotype females.

These two contrasting variants of androgyny will play an integral part in my thesis. It will be indispensable, therefore, for me to condense their complete meaning into simpler terms. From now on the androgynous type that unites all typical male and female signifiers on him/herself and comes across in his or her behaviour as an extremely active individual I will define as a ‘hermaphrodite androgyne’. The reverse category, which negates all sexual signifiers and tends to be more passive in his/ her demeanour I will allude to as an ‘asexual androgyne’. When I talk about typical male and female signifiers, these are not only the so-called primary gender signifiers, as for example smooth skin, small feet etc. for women, but they also include secondary signifiers describing character traits typically associated with both men and women.

The third column of the chart below shows sex-specific items which appear to belong to the traditional male and female stereotypes. Janet Spence and her colleagues who collected the data in 1974 claim that it

reflected the overall present- day reality.⁷⁹ Spence points out that only the occupational role had a major effect on traditional male and female roles. As far as my thesis is concerned, however, we must not forget that in the nineteenth century fewer women than men had any form of occupational employment:

Stereotypes, attitudes, and personal attributes

Table 2.3 Items from the Personal Attributes Questionnaire

18 Female-valued items	23 Male-valued items	12 Sex-specific items
Aware of others' feelings	Active	<i>Female</i>
Considerate	Acts as leader	Cries easily
Creative	Adventurous	Excitable in major crisis
Devotes self to others	Ambitious	Feelings hurt
Does not hide emotions	Competitive	Home-oriented
Emotional	Does not give up easily	Needs approval
Enjoys music and arts	Feels superior	Need for security
Expresses tender feelings	Forward	Religious
Gentle	Good at sports	<i>Male</i>
Grateful	Independent	Aggressive
Helpful to others	Intellectual	Dominant
Kind	Interested in sex	Likes maths and science
Likes children	Knows ways of the world	Loud
Neat	Makes descisions easily	Mechanical aptitude
Strong conscience	Not easily influenced	
Tactful	Not excitable in minor crisis	
Understanding	Not timid	
Warm to others	Outgoing	
	Outspoken	
	Self-confident	
	Skilled in business	
	Stands up under pressure	
	Takes a stand	

Source: Based on Spence et al. (1975).

The above table gives, it seems only a superficial impression of both male and female-valued items as well as those which seem particularly sex-specific. Similarly, as will be shown later, it is only a superficial cliché that

⁷⁹ Janet Spence et al., The Personal Attributes questionnaire: a measure of sex role stereotypes and masculinity-femininity. JSAS Catalog of Selected Documents in Psychology, 4:43 (MS 617) in: John Archer & Barbara Lloyd, *Sex and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.23.

only an 'asexual' androgynous individual attempts to efface his/her body, and that only a 'hermaphrodite' androgynous individual attempts to manoeuvre his/her body into the foreground. In fact both facts are true for both asexual and androgynous individuals. Moreover, it will become apparent that both androgynous categories have the following in common: they are both self-sufficient and neither has sexual desire for another person, let alone is willing to expose his/her own body or be penetrated sexually. Furthermore, a considerable number of both androgynes consider themselves as 'objets d'art'.

Two of the most outstanding personalities that could be cited for these two contrasting types of female androgynes are Jeanne d'Arc and Florence Nightingale. Jeanne d'Arc would be a prime example of a hermaphrodite androgyne. As is well-known, she often wore male attire and, to quote the above table of male-valued stereotypes, 'act[ed] as leader' when she commanded the French troops against the English in 1429. However, as is equally well-known, she was a very attractive 'feminine' woman. It was not only the fact that Jeanne obeyed God's requirement for her to remain a virgin – her troops would not have respected her otherwise – but there was also something in her nature which radiated an innate sense of self-sufficient chastity which kept men at a distance. Elizabeth Abbott points out that 'the soldiers uniformly believed it was impossible to desire her, so much so that in her presence, they ceased to desire any woman at all' (Abbott, p.257-258). Jean II, Duc d'Alencon confirms this view when he writes that

Sometimes, when we were in the field, I slept with Joan and the soldiers 'on the straw', and sometimes I saw Joan get ready for the night, and sometimes I looked at her breasts, which were

beautiful. Nevertheless I never had any carnal desire for her. (Abbott, p.257)

Florence Nightingale, too, 'seemed to lack a sensual dimension' (Abbott, p.281). In contrast, however, to Jeanne d'Arc she had a subdued nun-like appearance. No military armour here; Florence's clothing consisted simply of plain black dresses and, befitting her role as an army medical attendant, on her head she wore a prim nurse's cap. Like those first female Christian martyrs, she wore herself out by following abstemious diets, and had a quiet melancholy about her which probably stemmed from her witnessing so many men dying in the Crimean war. Her contemporary, the novelist Elizabeth Gaskell, Abbott says, compared her character to that of a

cold near-saint. Her soft voice and gentle mannerisms belied her unyielding character and her irresistible force of personality. She had causes rather than friends, and she hovered, Gaskell concluded, somewhere between God and the rest of mankind. (Abbott, p.281)

It would lead to pointless speculation to discuss whether Jeanne d'Arc or Florence Nightingale had any lesbian or bisexual tendencies. If they had they probably suppressed them. Far more relevant for our present discussion is that, although one was always very much aware of their physical bodies, these ladies apparently radiated a certain aloofness, warning others that they were not to be touched. They achieved this either by a certain amount of aggression or by attempting to make themselves invisible.

Asexual androgynes such as Florence Nightingale or the first female Christian martyrs were, of course, not the ideals of patriarchal societies, where the traditional place for a woman was in the home. Her first duty

was to bear and bring up children. This type of androgyne, however, presented no threat to conventional masculinity. In the first part of her life, as we know, Florence Nightingale was extremely active; her later years she spent reclining on a sofa or a bed, but nevertheless still focussed on and dealt with her many philanthropic causes. One important aspect throughout her whole life is that she never rebelled against the politics of the time, which were dominated by men, but she was seen, in her comparatively docile way, to serve her male contemporaries by trying to diminish the hardships caused by war.

It is interesting to point out that, in general, as was the case with the first female Christian martyrs, in extreme cases, female asexual androgynous figures such as Nightingale can be projections of a misogynist male imagination which sees in the female, per se, only a sinful temptress who must be silenced and stripped of any kind of sexual signifiers conjured up in male lustful thoughts. Such women, they thought, should be converted into the obedient creatures we often find in patriarchal societies.

A more recent example, where the distinction between hermaphrodite and asexual androgyny regarding women becomes even more evident, is Sally Potter's 1993 film *Orlando*. This is based on Virginia Woolf's novel with the same title in which, in the character of 'Orlando', she writes a fictional biography of Vita Sackville-West. The major criticism against the film was directed towards Potter's choice of actress Tilda Swinton to play the initially male Orlando. The fragile Tilda Swinton looked nothing like Sackville-West and, after the screening of her film at the University of Sussex, Sally Potter defended herself by explaining that she thought Virginia Woolf's intention in the novel was that the Orlando/Sackville-West character should discover something innately essential and yet

transcendent about him/ and later herself. Marjorie Garber comments here that '[in other words...] a bland and inoffensive androgyny [...] is substituted for ambiguous, ambivalent, transgressive sexuality' (Garber, p.232). In fact, when we consider Orlando from this point of view, it seems that Potter had more the persona of Virginia Woolf in mind than that of Vita Sackville-West. Indeed, Tilda Swinton's gaunt and delicately fragile appearance reminds one very much of Virginia Woolf. Both give/gave an adolescently ephemeral impression whether as a man or a woman, or rather a boy or a girl. Both Swinton and Woolf are asexual androgynous types, whereas Sackville-West represents a more aggressive androgyny, which I am now calling 'hermaphrodite androgyny'. Indeed, Virginia Woolf, too, noticed how different both in character and appearance she was compared to Vita Sackville-West when, in an entry for Monday 21st December 1925, she confesses in her diary:

Vita for 3 days at Long Barn, from which L[eonard] & I returned yesterday. These Sapphists *love* women; friendship is never untinged with amorosity. In short, my fears & refrainings, my 'impertinence' my usual self-consciousness in intercourse with people who mayn't want me & so on – were all, as L. said, sheer fudge;[...] I like her & being with her, & the splendour – she shines in the grocers shop in Sevenoaks with a candle lit radiance, stalking on legs like beech trees, pink glowing, grape clustered, pearl hung. [...] Anyhow she found me incredibly dowdy, no woman cared less for personal appearance – no one put on things in the way I did. [...] What is the effect of all this on me? Very mixed. There is her maturity & full breastedness: her being so much in full sail on the high tides, where I am coasting down backwaters; her capacity I mean to take the floor in any company, to represent her country, ...; her motherhood (but she is a little cold & offhand with her boys) her being in short (what I have never been) a real woman. Then there is some

voluptuousness about her; the grapes are ripe; & not reflective. No. In brain & insight she is not as highly organised as I am. But then she is aware of this, & so lavishes on me the maternal protection which, for some reason, is what I have always most wished from everyone. [...] How much, for example, shall I really miss her when she is motoring across the desert?⁸⁰

On the one hand, Woolf admires Vita as a full-blooded woman and praises her maternal qualities but, on the other hand, does not fail to acknowledge her male qualities, once describing her lovingly as ‘mustached’⁸¹. Despite Virginia’s fears that Vita’s love for her might involve sex, it remained a platonic, primarily intellectual love affair. In reality, Vita always made a powerful impact on people for she was a combination of so many male and female characteristics. However she did not particularly yearn for contact. She was much more self-sufficient than one might have thought. Her son, Nigel Nicolson, in *Portrait of a Marriage*, where he draws on his mother’s secret diaries, depicts her as

...by no means frigid, but she came to look upon the ‘normal’ act of love as bestial and repulsive. In one of her novels, *Grand Canyon* (1942), she gives expression to this feeling: ‘One wonders how they ever brought themselves to commit the grotesque act necessary to beget children.’⁸²

In reality, in his mother’s love affairs with women it was the spiritual and intellectual element that was far more important.

⁸⁰ Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, edited by Anne Olivier Bell, Vol. 3 1925-30 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), pp. 51-52.

⁸¹ Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, edited by Anne Olivier Bell, Vol.2 1920-24 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), p.216.

⁸² Nigel Nicolson, *Portrait of a Marriage* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), p.139

2.5.2 The Two Types of Male Androgynes

When it comes to androgynes of the male sex, it is more difficult to employ the two simple categories of hermaphrodite and asexual androgyny. This has very much to do with the fact that ‘masculinity’ as such, has to be acquired and is not automatically a man’s primary natural state. Elisabeth Badinter, writing on masculine identity says that a boy has to undergo

duty, proofs, trials [...] to become a man.
Manhood is not bestowed at the outset; it must be
constructed, or let us say ‘manufactured.’⁸³

Every boy has to overcome his own ‘feminine’ passivity to be recognized as a genuine man. This is not necessarily the case with girls. A girl has no need to fight for her ‘female’ identity, for on the very day of her first period she can be declared ‘a woman’.

In the context of decadent literature for the categorisation of androgynes, this means that the overwhelming majority of male androgynes are defined by a passive determinant which, according to Badinter, is typically associated with femininity. Fin-de-siècle literature was primarily interested in the deviant, the abnormal male and not in stereotypical masculine men. What one might call ‘passive’ male figures feature prominently in works by Ronald Firbank, Oscar Wilde etc. In general, in literature and other creative works, active male hermaphrodite androgynes would have approached the image of boldly masculine and aggressive ‘drag queens’ or transvestites resembling, for example, Dr. Frank-N-furter in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. The reason why such examples of hermaphrodite

⁸³ Elisabeth Badinter, *On Masculine Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p.2.

androgyny in men did not feature prominently in art and literature at the end of the nineteenth century is that, even for the decadent art standards at the time, it would have seemed too outrageous and, in all probability, against the law. However, one does find aggressive drag queens in the late nineteenth century in those crude and vulgar Christmas pantomimes where corpulent, bearded men played traditional characters such as ‘Widow Twanky’. These pantomime characters, with their all-too-obvious goal of trying to make people laugh were completely inoffensive – certainly not against the law!

Somewhat later in 1918, a book issued in the United States by the Medico-Legal Journal entitled *Autobiography of an Androgyne* under the pseudonym of Earl Lind claimed that it was relating the ‘inner history’ of classical Greek hermaphrodite sculptures. (This book, by the way, for some unknown reason was only available by mail order to medical scientists and lawyers!) In the book one can see a photograph of Earl Lind posing as *The Sleeping Hermaphrodite*, a famous statue on display in the Louvre. One can note here that, like Freud, Lind uses the terms ‘androgyne’ and ‘hermaphrodite’ interchangeably - the usual practice at the end of the nineteenth century not only for sexual scientists but also for creative writers. Accordingly, in his book, Lind claims

[...]that he is all of a woman’s soul in a body which he believes to be one-third female and thus only two-thirds male.⁸⁴

At night Lind transforms himself into ‘Jennie June’ and becomes, in fact, passive transvestite ‘fairy’. It is difficult to discover whether Lind would fit into the category of a genuine ‘hermaphrodite androgyne’. In his book it seems that he tries to impersonate a woman as perfectly as possible and to

⁸⁴ Earl Lind, *Autobiography of an Androgyne*, edited by Alfred W. Herzog, reprint of the 1918 edition (Amsterdam: Fredonia Books, 2005), p.xi.

erase all signs of masculinity, culminating in having an operation where his penis is amputated. However, such a feminine-acting homosexual can be termed only a 'hermaphrodite androgyne' insofar as he actually combines the nature and function of the two different sexes, or indeed both their psychological and physical characteristics. What makes Lind's transformation appear so vivid to us, according to Tracy Hargreaves, might be the fact that 'Lind's narrative is different from other narratives of an imaginary androgyny in so far as he understands the androgyne to have an embodied status and a sexual identity.'⁸⁵ Hargreave's statement is important for us as the type of androgynes that have been, and will be discussed in this thesis always contain fictional, mythological and quite often mysterious elements in them as well as the autistic aura that surrounds them. However, apart from claiming to be a living Hermaphrodite sculpture, this is not the case with Earl Lind. I personally think it is more appropriate to regard him as a 'feminine homosexual' or even a transsexual trying to come to terms with his socially discordant identity for which he can find no name.

Decadent literature at the end of the nineteenth century was much more concerned with the male asexual androgyne in the form of a young ephebe. In this context we must not forget the writer Joséphin Péladan, who was obsessed by the idea of the androgyne as a virgin adolescent. At the time his ideas were very influential:

Sexuality seems to be identified by Péladan with matter and androgyny with the unity of the spirit; so that if the hermaphrodite is an angel in whom spirit and matter are harmoniously synthesized, a sexual man or woman is a dual being in whom the

⁸⁵ Tracy Hargreaves, *Androgyny in Modern Literature* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p.31.

body, the beast, constantly triumphs over the spirit.⁸⁶

Péladan succeeded in bringing together in his salon painters and writers such as Schwabe, Hodler, Vallotton, Khnopff etc. Like Oscar Wilde in America, Péladan, often dressed up somewhat flamboyantly, went on lecture tours all over Europe to preach his philosophy. For him art has the same duty as religion, that is to render God comprehensible to mankind. Beauty for him is simply sublimated reality. These principles were central and close to the heart of the aesthete movements at that time. On 26th August 1891 Péladan founded a branch of the 'Ordre du Temple de la Rose-Croix' with the aim of bringing together people who sought enlightenment and a new spirituality in order to escape the profane nature of the world and society in general.

When Péladan opened his novel *L'Androgyne* he did this with a long panegyric in eight stanzas on the asexual androgyne.

II

Junger Mann mit den langen Haaren und fast
begehrtswert, den das Verlangen noch nicht
berührt hat; Bartloser, der von den nahen
Gelegenheiten noch nichts weiß, vielleicht bleibst
du stolz, vielleicht besudelst du dich; Schüler, der
die Stimmen der Schlaflosigkeit hört, schlechter
Bursche oder Gelehrter, künftiger Ritter der
Malteser oder der Dirnen! Lob sei dir!
Junges Mädchen mit den kurzen Haaren und fast
jünglingshaft, deren Herz noch nicht gesprochen
hat; Knospe, die sich vor dem sinnlichen
Aufblühen verschließt; vielleicht wirst du
sündigen, vielleicht bleibst du tugendhaft; schöne
Maid, die das Leben im Gesang des Windes
buchstabiert; Landstreicherin oder Edelfräulein,

⁸⁶ A.J.L. Busst, 'The Image of the Androgyne in the Nineteenth Century', in Ian Fletcher (ed.), *Romantic Mythologies* (London: Routledge, 1967), p.69.

die sich bald Maria oder Venus weihen wird! Lob
sei dir!

VIII

[...] O ursprüngliches Geschlecht, endgültiges
Geschlecht, unabhängig von der Liebe,
unabhängig von der Form, Geschlecht, welches
das Geschlecht leugnet, Geschlecht der Ewigkeit!
Lob sei dir, Androgyn!⁸⁷

In English these lines could be translated as follows:

II

Young man with such long hair that I almost long after you,
who has not yet desired anyone
nor been aware of anyone's yearning for you.
Beardless, not yet knowing anything of tempting opportunities,
perhaps you'll remain proud, perhaps you'll disgrace yourself.
Schoolboy, who hears the sounds and voices
emerging from sleepless nights,
naughty boy or learned scholar,
future knight of Malta or seducing all those attractive lasses!
All praise to you!

Young woman with short hair, almost like a youthful lad,
whose heart has not yet been promised anyone.
A wee bud who is avoiding sensuously blooming -
perhaps you'll commit a sin, perhaps you'll stay virtuous.
Beautiful maiden, whose life is spelt out
in the melodious sound of the wind.
Country vagrant or noble lady
who will soon commit herself to St. Mary or Venus!
Oh! All praise to you!

VIII

(...) Oh, original human species, oh final decisive species,
independent of love, independent of form or gender,
defying his or her own species, - everlasting species!
Praise be to you, you androgynous being!⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Joséphin Péladan, *Der Androgyn* (München: Georg Müller, 1924), p.11-15.

⁸⁸ As there does not exist an English translation, I translated these lines myself.

Here Péladan celebrates both the male and female asexual androgyne. The aesthetes at the end of the 19th century, however, valued the beauty of the male androgyne much more than that of its female counterpart. Although it was Péladan who popularised the image of the asexual androgyne in the fin-de-siècle he was basing its ideas on the French Romantic Tradition, especially on Balzac and Gautier, both of whom had already equated androgyny with a virgin-like condition. When Péladan's androgyne is first sexually active and loses his virginity, he descends, as it were, like an angel from heaven and, on earth, becomes either a man or a woman: 'L'androgyne n'existe qu'à l'état vierge: à la première affirmation du sexe, il se résout au male ou au feminine.'⁸⁹

As we have seen, male asexual androgynes encapsulate a very brief period of time when a child is on the verge of adolescence. Germaine Greer, in *The Boy*, writing about male beauty, indirectly hints that an androgynous quality of the asexual kind is a precondition for a 'boy beautiful':

He has to be old enough to be capable of sexual response but not yet old enough to shave. This window of opportunity is not only narrow, it is mostly illegal. The male human is beautiful when his cheeks are still smooth, his body hairless, his head full-maned, his eyes clear, his manner shy and his belly flat.[...] Artists straight and gay have always known this, at least until the nineteenth century. Women too have known it and know it still. Girls and grandmothers are both susceptible to the short-lived charm of boys, women who are looking for fathers for their children less so.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Joséphin Péladan, *L'Androgyne* (Paris 1891), p.38.

⁹⁰ Germaine Greer, *The Boy* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), p.7.

A striking feature of the male asexual androgyne is that he appears childlike and innocent but, at the same time, as Greer points out, he is very attractive, although not in a particularly sexual way. Roland Barthes defined this 'neuter gender which is neither masculine nor feminine' as a sexed nothingness.⁹¹ These androgynes seem to reflect the very moment before they have to become either male or female, but they are trying to hold back time in order to delay the move towards unambiguity and maturity. This process is very unnerving and possibly explains why the androgyne always radiates the impression of hidden tension. Francette Pacteau it seems, has found an explanation for the attractiveness of asexual androgyny when she argues that

the wish correlative to the androgynous fantasy would be attached to archaic memoirs of early childhood; the disavowal of sexual difference therefore represents the fantasized re-enactment of an early pleasurable perception. (Francette Pacteau, p.63)

It is clear now that the special kind of eroticism with regard to asexual androgynes is part of the auto-eroticism of late childhood indicating a state of self-sufficiency.

One of the most prominent authors of the decadent movement in Vienna was Hugo von Hofmannsthal. He, too, just like Péladan, was fascinated by the image of the male asexual androgyne and came up with a very similar description in a late essay called 'Ad me ipsum' (1916-1929)⁹². Here, amongst other matters, he explains the 'inner' state of his androgynous male protagonists - such as Andrea or Gianino - in one of his early works entitled *Der Tod des Tizian* ('Titian's Death'). The 'inner' state

⁹¹ Roland Barthes, 'Le Désir de neutre', 1978 lecture, in *La Règle du jeu*, no.5 (August 1991), pp. 36-60.

⁹² Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Gesammelte Werke: Rede und Aufsätze III 1925-1929* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1980), pp.599-627.

Hofmannsthal is referring to here is what he calls 'Präexistens', in English 'pre-existence'. Such a 'state', he explains, is typical for young aesthetes and enables them to view the world around them not only in a contemplative way, but above all in totalities, rather than everything and everyone singly and individually. Viewing the world thus, from a distance, furthers a human condition which, Hofmannsthal says, might be called 'living out of this world'. Existing in this way means that such young aesthetes gain wisdom at an early age. Furthermore, they are completely self-sufficient in their innocent world but the very moment they become actually involved in the world around them, they will automatically mentally drop out of their 'pre-existence' - the way they had been living - and become trapped in mental inactivity. At the same time they lose what Hofmannsthal perceives as their supreme knowledge. However, they will still intuitively hang on to their former wisdom and all their lives strive to regain their early androgynous state.

With this concept of 'pre-existence' Hofmannsthal, in contrast to Péladan, is much closer to a healthy esoteric wholeness. The former, together with other authors of the decadent movement was particularly interested in an idea of male androgyny that overwhelmingly possessed typically female attributes. The fact that this type of male androgyny did not correspond with acceptable active masculinity can, on the one hand, be explained by such authors' interest in anti-bourgeois characters on the fringes of society and, on the other hand, by the fact that this representation of the asexual male androgyne was also used by fin-de-siècle artists to sublimate the idea of homosexuality which, at that time, was socially unacceptable. Far more preferable was an innocent child-like image. The English painter, Simeon Solomon was especially renowned for his young and innocent-looking asexual androgyne figures and, together with Burne-Jones, was one of the

first artists to ‘employ’ androgyny as his very own aesthetic expression (Fig. 7). Solomon, however, suffered public disgrace by being arrested for sodomy. But up until 1873 his paintings were held in high esteem either as emblems of the neo-Platonic idea of the perfect soul or as futuristic visions of the Saint-Simonian ideal, of an androgynous society which entailed sexual equality.

There was also a third possibility as to how Solomon’s androgynous figures were interpreted in some circles because

art allowed a tolerance for implicitly homosexual themes, but it did not entirely mask those themes. Androgyny thus became an acceptable code for homosexual expression, but it also came to be used to undermine the idea that homosexuality and sodomy were equivalent states. In fact, the use of androgyny in art became a means of expressing a new aesthetic and an idealist philosophy in which love between men was seen as a *higher* form of experience than heterosexual love. Although homosexuality was publicly considered both an aberration and a crime, writers and artists began to use the androgyne as a code for the exalted nature of homosexual union.⁹³

In this passage taken from her book *Fin de Siecle*, Shearer West seems to sum up the idea behind the male asexual androgyne such as depicted in Solomon’s paintings. She attempts to elucidate that an asexual androgyne could either symbolise homosexuality as we understand it today or it could be interpreted as a purely spiritual or platonic form of love between two men, designated at the time ‘New Chivalry’ or ‘Higher Sodomy’. For instance, in the 1890s Charles Kains-Jackson as editor of the periodical ‘The Artist and Journal of Home Culture’ campaigned for a purer,

⁹³ Shearer West, *Fin de Siècle* (London: Bloomsbury, 1993), pp.76-77.

intellectual and spiritually beautiful love between men. It was Kains-Jackson who also called this idealised male relationship ‘New Chivalry’ and maintained it was especially aesthetic as it did not lead to procreation. One of ‘New Chivalry’s’ most ardent supporters was Marc-André Raffalovich. He, incidentally, was the companion of the author and later Catholic bishop, John Gray, Oscar Wilde’s real-life model for his fictional character Dorian Gray. In one of his critical works *Uranisme et unisexualité: étude sur différentes manifestations de l'instinct sexuel*⁹⁴, for instance, Raffalovich tried to show in 1896 that homosexual men, when trying to find an expression for their erotic affection were not restricted to sodomy.

But also in the creative literature towards the end of the nineteenth century, the figure of the asexual androgyne became more prominent. Shearer West points out that

poems and essays devoted to androgynous male icons such as Antinous (the Greek youth who was reportedly the lover of Emperor Hadrian) or Hyacinthus (the beautiful boy loved by the God Apollo) appeared frequently in published writing. [...] Coded references to ancient Greek sculpture were later exposed by Havelock Ellis’s *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* of 1897 as being more than innocent allusions to the ‘love of souls’. (Shearer West, p.147)

It is important here to note how much creative writers admired and were fascinated by the male asexual androgyne. This aesthetic taste in the artists was also present, it seems, in their audience and bound together a first early male homosexual community and became a signifier for an initial

⁹⁴Marc-André Raffalovich, *Uranisme et unisexualité: étude sur différentes manifestations de l'instinct sexuel* (Paris, 1896).

homosexual identity. However, the asexual androgyne sufficient, as he is, unto himself denies any traces of sexuality. In literature, the male asexual androgyne turns out to be an image of repressed homosexuality. Bearing this in mind, my foremost aim in this thesis is to show that, in Decadent literature, both a hermaphrodite androgyne as well as an asexual androgyne, reveal psychological mechanisms of repressed homosexuality.

To find definite living embodiments of the asexual androgyne in real life is difficult because they always avoid the actual 'here and now'. They seem to thrive on artifice, idealisation and fictionalisation. A rare example of a once living asexual androgyne is Michael Jackson. Not only did Jackson undergo various operations to erase any obvious signs of his racial identity, with these operations any signs of his masculinity were also removed. With his nose now pointed and his chin now narrower, he appeared less masculine and much more refined and feminine. However, he had so many sexual determinants eradicated that, in fact, to most of his audience he appeared strangely bland but, like any common-or-garden figure of pure plastic, nevertheless radiated eternal youth. It is not surprising, therefore, that a studio boss in Hollywood is reported to have said that Jackson never had any real film potential. He claimed that

[h]e doesn't have a distinct persona that translates into movies,[...] I think he would have been a very good Peter Pan. Other than that, I don't know what you'd do with him.⁹⁵

The very image Jackson was trying to convey was indeed that of a Peter Pan - for our time, as it were - living on his Neverland Ranch and surrounding himself with young children. Whether there is any truth in the accusation against him of child abuse is mere speculation. Jackson himself

⁹⁵ Dana Kennedy, 'Time to Face the Music', *Entertainment Weekly* (December 17, 1993), p.30.

at the time, however, did seem to give the public the impression that he was simply asexual, an eternal child as it were. With this example of Michael Jackson, it becomes obvious that asexual androgyny is not a case of adopting a new whole personality where such a well-balanced human being has perfectly integrated male and female aspects within himself.

So far we have only dealt with asexual androgyny that relied on a child-like image. But there is another not so wide-spread image which is also much more related to reality that has the same significance - illness. When talking about the Pre-Raphaelites we had already touched upon the subject when looking at how Dante Gabriel Rossetti portrayed his model and later wife Elizabeth Siddal. First he painted her as a powerful hermaphrodite androgyne but later under the influence of her illness she made the transition in his works to an asexual androgyne and thereby her image turned into a child-like 'femme fragile'.

A better example would be Lytton Strachey, who was an author and intellectual in the Bloomsbury circle. Although Strachey sported a long beard his masculinity was neutralised by his fragile looks caused by his neurasthenic condition. His often eccentric and achingly colourful clothes enhanced the androgynous effect and made him look like a large insect. For him this illness did not only made him look asexual, it provided him also an escape from normative masculinity which entailed professional activity and brought him nearer to a passive female state which he enjoyed, although J.A. Taddeo points out in her book that it would be wrong to draw the conclusion from these factors that Strachey wished to become a woman. 'Strachey seemed almost relieved that his illness allowed him to be passive: "Don't you see, a woman need only say yes or

no.””⁹⁶ He simply cherished his asexually androgynous condition which left him in a passive state of limbo. But although Strachey was a disciple of ‘Higher Sodomy’ he confessed to Leonard Woolf in a letter of 27th May 1909 that despite

he occasionally sunk in the mud of [his] passion, he continued to write papers for the Society on the need for ‘restraint’. The tension between the spiritual and physical, or the higher and lower sodomy, became quite obvious in a number of Strachey’s relationships at Cambridge. (Taddeo, p.28)

Again the first innocent and self-sufficient impression of a male asexual androgyne, that is Lytton Strachey, proves wrong and underneath the outward image we find a personality which is battling with a deviant sexuality that is socially stigmatised.

2.6 The Dawn of a New Androgyny

So far when discussing art and literature of the fin de siècle the asexual and hermaphrodite androgynes were still differentiated according to their biological sex which is in a way a contradiction in itself. This was due to the fact that there were still minor sexual determinants visible which gave away their biological sex.

The first to overcome the biological signifiers when describing androgyny must have been Charles Algernon Swinburne when he published in 1866 the poems ‘Hermaphroditus’ and ‘Fragoletta’ in his first volume of *Poems and Ballads*, which brought the first wave of Decadence to England. It was

⁹⁶ Julie Anne Taddeo, *Lytton Strachey and the Search for Modern Sexual Identity* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2002), p.129.

obviously no coincidence that he juxtaposed in his volume a poem describing hermaphrodite androgyny with another symbolising asexual androgyny. When presenting the figure of ‘Hermaphroditus’, the lyrical I depicts the presence of all male and female sexual signifiers asking ‘To what strange end hath some strange god made fair / The double blossoms of two fruitless flowers?’⁹⁷ In order to indicate the self-sufficiency of Hermaphroditus the metaphor of ‘barrenness’ is cited repeatedly in the poem.

Swinburne took the name ‘Fragoletta’ for the following poem most definitely from Hyacinthe de Latouche’s novel of the same name published in 1829. According to A.J.L. Busst the hero-heroine of the novel had been

certainly one of the most famous French hermaphrodites during the nineteenth century, not only is [she] loved by both a man and a woman; she herself also loves passionately but ineffectually members of both sexes.(Busst, p.76)

On the contrary in Swinburne’s poem the central figure Fragoletta is described as an asexual fragile being. The lyrical I wonders: ‘Being sexless, wilt thou be Maiden or boy?’ (Swinburne, p.82) Accordingly Fragoletta is at one instance addressed as a maiden: ‘Ah sweet, the maiden’s mouth is cold’(Swinburne, p.83). At another instance the lyrical I complains that Venus cannot offer him a girl: ‘Say, Venus hath no girl, No front of female curl, Among her Loves’(Swinburne, p.83). Both images, that of the maiden and that of the boy point to a virginal, pre-pubescent state. Again the self-containment of Fragoletta, just like in the case of Hermaphroditus, is indicated by metaphors of barrenness. Interestingly enough, Swinburne

⁹⁷ Charles Algernon Swinburne, *Swinburne’s Collected Poetical Works*, Vol. I (London: William Heinemann), 1935, p.80.

endows Fragoletta with a Medusa's head. 'Thou hast a serpent in thine hair, In all the curls that close and cling' (Swinburne, p.84). It seems that Swinburne tries his hand at probing deeper into the psyche of this figure. As will be shown, a typical trait of androgynes in nineteenth century literature is that they often have a petrifying gaze, like that of a Medusa, to protect their inner self. Swinburne had already achieved in his two early poems to sum up the two archetypal species of androgynes, that is the hermaphrodite and the asexual androgyne in such a pure form, that the reader cannot make out their biological gender when contemplating them.

However, in recent times there has turned up on the art scene a category of total or complete asexual androgynes where it is absolutely impossible to make out whether their biological sex is male or female. These are artists who combine their art with their life. An art form that instantly comes to the mind would be 'body art'. For example the artist Leigh Bowery transformed his own body in such a way that it was impossible to determine his gender. Bowery tried to opt out of the gender binary of male and female and turned himself into a living piece of art. A step further go the artist duo Eva & Adele when they proclaim: 'Wherever we are is museum'. These two artists who regularly turn up at public art exhibitions look like identical alien twins and have a smiling angelic appearance, sometimes their identical costumes have even wings sewn on them. Eva & Adele (Fig. 8) see themselves as a public work of art and when looking at them the observer gives up thinking about whether this is a man or a woman, it simply does not matter any more. The categories of male and female are not valid any more. Also Renate Puvogel in one the few essays about Eva & Adele sees this couple as asexual angels

appearing from nowhere like extraterrestrial
beings,[...] Like angels, they are without history,

without a past. They have no biography and, like angels, are of puzzlingly indeterminable gender. And it is precisely in these characteristics that the core of their message lies. The realization that neither Eva nor Adele wanted to define themselves expressly as male and/or female was seized by both of them as a chance to implement “gender self-identification as a socio-political factor”. The idea of art being life and one’s own life already being art runs like a thread through Eva’s and Adele’s entire work. Indeed, it is the guiding principle of their constant striving for liberation from those power structures which turn the subject into the object, from those mechanisms and processes which eventually exercise complete control over the lives of human beings. [...] Eva & Adele want to inspire people with courage, to render given hierarchies powerless in order to be able to live and work in their own self-determined way. [...] The fact that Eva & Adele permanently appear as art figures, and are always recognizable as such, differentiates them from the artist duo Gilbert & George who, whilst leading the way as self-styled “living sculptures”, appear in normal everyday attire and approach the problem from the other, normal side. Moreover, Gilbert and George openly admit to being homosexual, and they more or less recede into the background behind their artefacts.⁹⁸

By erasing as many signifiers of their personalities as possible Eva & Adele escape the classification and pressure by sexual and social hierarchies. The method they use to achieve this is similar to the asexual and hermaphrodite androgynes in decadent literature. These characters are also often marked as somehow out of place and they do not fit their time nor do they fit their sex. They either belong to the future and have an alien-like quality about them or they live in the past but they always avoid living

⁹⁸ Neuer Berliner Kunstverein (ed.), *EVA & ADELE: Wherever we are is museum* (Stuttgart/Ostfildern: Cantz Verlag, 1999), pp. 37-38.

in the here-and-now and seem to have fallen out of their time. Moreover they appear to come from nowhere because frequently they are orphans or it seems they had no earthly parentage. The most intrinsic feature is an aura of coldness that surrounds them, but these androgynes thrive on this distance to other persons. Whereas other people need love to keep them alive they need their inaccessibility to keep their personality intact. Ironically enough it is a contradiction in itself that Eva & Adele do not want on the one hand to become an object in social hierarchies but willingly turn themselves into art objects to escape just that.

2.7 Summary

In the real world, people who appear androgynous to the outsider do not necessarily feel and act in an androgynous way as far as their personality is concerned. Similarly, the medical condition of a hermaphrodite does not necessarily cause ambiguous gender behaviour. In the second half of the nineteenth century, for the first sexologists such as Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, Edward Carpenter and, to a certain degree, Havelock Ellis, the concept of androgyny was bound up with homosexuality. It was, as we have seen, also influenced by Aristophanes's tale in Plato's *Symposium*. It was Sigmund Freud and later C. G. Jung who separated androgyny from homosexuality and saw in it a more archetypal and universal condition to which certain human beings reverted.

The two images of androgyny that predominate in this thesis are the hermaphrodite and the asexual androgyne, both of which are based on the myth of 'Salmacis and Hermaphroditus' as told by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*. Here Ovid defines the androgyne as displaying neither male nor female sex, and yet, paradoxically both. Historically, Ovid's

Hermaphroditus stands for the decadent androgyne, for the feminine-acting male homosexual. In modern times a parallel to Ovid would be contained in Earl Lind's *Autobiography of an Androgyne*, where he depicts himself as a 'fairy' and uses the statue of Hermaphroditus as a metaphor when claiming to describe 'his/her' inner life. We must remember that, in the nineteenth century, the terms androgyne and hermaphrodite were used interchangeably.

In fin-de-siècle 'decadent' literature there is a prevalence of representations of both the asexual and the hermaphrodite androgyne. This 'decadent' literature was concerned with anti-bourgeois themes and topics which had hitherto been taboo or were only to be found on the fringes of society. Such androgyny could be defined as 'unhealthy' and is symbolised by a hermaphrodite statue where, instead of a uterus there is a penis. The statue is 'barren', and cannot beget children.

Aristophanes's myth in Plato's *Symposium*, which is more concerned with a new and healthy 'wholeness', did not play a prominent part in decadent literature. This myth was more important for sexologists such as Edward Carpenter or Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, both of whom were trying to unearth a more positive archetypal image for the homosexual.

In order to define both types of Ovid's historical androgyny more closely, I apply a Freudian construct which Freud explores in his treatise entitled *Group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego*⁹⁹ (1921). Here he distinguishes between the two categories of a 'desire-for' and a 'desire-to-be'. Thus in

⁹⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego*, transl. & edited by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1959).

Freudian taxonomy, asexual and hermaphrodite types of androgyny are defined according to the following model:

A male or female **hermaphrodite** androgyne:

1. desire-to-be male and female simultaneously
2. desire-for-neither - a male nor female individual (i.e. self-sufficient)

A male or female **asexual** androgyne:

1. desire-to-be neither male nor female
2. desire-for-neither - a male nor female individual (i.e. self-sufficient)

The desire of both the male and female hermaphrodite androgynes to be simultaneously both male and female means that, as far as physical appearance and personality are concerned, they unite all male and female signifiers. In contrast to this, the asexual androgyne negates or neutralises all male and female determinants. Both types of androgynes, however, have one thing in common: they both tend towards self-sufficiency and radiate an aura of innocent autism.

This was one of the reasons why both kinds of androgynes were often employed in nineteenth century Decadent literature as a socially safe image in order to convey repressed homosexuality. The soul and inner lives of individuals with a deviant sexuality such as homosexuality were portrayed in the literature of the up-and-coming fin-de-siècle art movements, in particular in Symbolism. Such creative artists were particularly interested in psychological aspects of the human being, the conditions of an

individual's 'soul' and what lay beyond his/her consciousness. Thus it seems obvious to interpret the inherent self-sufficiency of both types of androgynes from a psychological perspective. Furthermore, as will be shown in the next chapter, particularly enlightening as far as androgynes in Decadent literature are concerned will be the kind of psychological approach adopted by R. D. Laing in *The Divided Self*.

3. A Psychopathology of Androgyny

‘You don’t know what it is to fall into the pit, to be despised, mocked, abandoned, sneered at – to be an outcast!...afraid every moment lest the mask should be stripped from one’s face.’¹⁰⁰

(from: *Oscar Wilde’s Lady Windermere’s Fan*)

3.1 A Psychological Approach: R. D. Laing back to Søren Kierkegaard

3.1.1 Introduction

After having depicted the realities of ordinary and outcast folk, the naturalistic novelist in France became more and more interested in the darker sides of life, in aberrations of behaviour and in depicting characters outside the norm. Although it might not appear so at first sight, Symbolism was the logical conclusion of Realism and Naturalism in modern literature as authors strove to explain not only motives of a protagonist’s actions but tried to make visible what was going on inside his/her mind or at least tried to convey the state of the soul of the protagonist. They did this by charging objects or animals with a higher meaning, specifically things the characters strongly identified with, thus turning them into psychological symbols.

In this way Symbolism took Realism and Naturalism onto a higher plane, an inner psychological stage. Edmond de Goncourt’s novel *La Faustin* plays an important role in this development because it stands at the crossroads of the two movements. In the introduction of his novel, Edmond de Goncourt says that the emphasis will not be placed on the plot but that he is attempting to outline a psychograph of a young girl in a big city.

¹⁰⁰ Oscar Wilde, *The Complete Plays* (London: Methuen, 1988), p.77.

Je m'explique: Je veux faire un roman qui sera simplement une étude psychologique et physiologique de jeune fille, grandie et élevée dans la serre chaude d'une capitale, un roman bâti sur des documents humains.¹⁰¹

But Goncourt's novel, published in 1881 is not simply about any young lady, but must have caught in particular Oscar Wilde's attention because it is about a successful actress, allowing the reader to share in her difficulties reconciling her public career and her private life. Richard Ellmann, in his up-to-now ultimate and unsurpassed biography about Oscar Wilde, observes the following:

La Faustin contributed to the story of Sibyl Vane in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; Sibyl loses her powers as an actress by falling in love, reversing *La Faustin*'s behaviour. More precisely, both possibilities are mustered by *La Faustin*: she feels the need to be in love in order to play Phèdre, but warns her lover that, if she should leave the stage, he would cease to love her in six months. A contrary impulse makes her renounce her career for his sake, only to find that without it life is drab. A husband may be good, but a theatre audience is better. Wilde found in such tensions between life and art a source of dramatic excitement, and developed them variously in the next fifteen years.¹⁰²

Wilde, as we will see, did indeed find in Goncourt's novel the same psychological structures which had also fascinated him in *Mademoiselle de Maupin* by Théophile Gautier, Rachilde's *Monsieur Vénus* and, to a lesser extent, in Joris-Karl Huysmans' *A Rebours*. In contrast to these other novels, the decisive aspect which influenced Wilde regarding

¹⁰¹ Edmond de Goncourt, *La Faustin* (Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1899), p.11.

¹⁰² Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (London: Hamisch Hamilton, 1987), p. 217.

Goncourt's novel is that he, Goncourt, specifically emphasises that it is a psychological study. *La Faustin* can be categorised as what in German is called a *Künstlerroman* - that is a novel which portrays an artist as its central character, dealing with his art in relation to his life. According to Richard Ellmann, particularly in *La Faustin*, Wilde's interest evolved around the question as to what an artist experiences when he transforms the world around him as well as himself into *objets d'art*. But, most important of all, what the protagonists of the above novels have in common is that they do not find their place in society. In some way or other they are all outsiders and seem to belong nowhere at all. Uprooted and living in such a vacuum, the reader cannot categorise them. Their situation forces them to construct their own identity, thus appearing to belong to the post-modern age.

In the case of the actress La Faustin, her precarious situation is quite obvious as it is linked to her social status as an artist. She is neither part of the bourgeoisie nor simply working-class, but is part of a bohemian world which is made up of artists, eccentrics and social drop-outs. She is fully aware that in the opinion of many people there is actually not much difference between being an actress and a common-or-garden courtesan. Moreover, the time she spent as a child in an orphanage adds to her sense of insecurity.

3.1.2 The Different Pressures of Stigmatisation

In fact, all the protagonists in the novels mentioned above which influenced Oscar Wilde possess some form of stigma. However, in his book on *Stigma*, Erving Goffman differentiates between two kinds of stigma:

The term stigma and its synonyms conceal a double perspective: does the stigmatised individual assume his differentness is known about already or is evident on the spot, or does he assume it is neither known about by those present nor immediately perceivable by them? In the first case one deals with the plight of the *discredited*, in the second with that of the *discreditable*.¹⁰³

La Faustin is the only protagonist who would fall into the former category as she carries out her stigmatised profession in front of a public audience. All the others bear a 'discreditable' stigma: an observer would not be able to discern such a stigma from the outside simply from the character's behaviour in public. As opposed to real life, the advantage of literature is that we can penetrate the mind of the characters, via a narrator, making it possible for the reader to realize that certain protagonists possess a hidden, a 'discreditable' stigma. It is important, however, that Goffman suggests that the nature of the 'discreditable' stigma, from a psychological perspective, might be much more challenging than an immediately obvious stigma. In real life, he says, it is especially in an encounter with another person that the

issue is not that of managing tension generated during social contacts, but rather that of managing information about his failing. To display or not to display; to tell or not to tell; to let on or not to let on; to lie or not to lie; and in each case, to whom, how, when, and where" (E. Goffman, p.57).

Bearing these psychological aspects in mind, such a person may be under a great deal of pressure from not knowing what people around him really think of him:

¹⁰³ Erving Goffman, *Stigma* (London: Penguin, 1990), p.14.

Further, during mixed contacts, the stigmatised individual is likely to feel that he is 'on', having to be self-conscious and calculating about the impression he is making, to a degree and in areas of conduct which he assumes others are not" (E. Goffman, p.25).

The continual compulsion to create in public an artificial image of oneself and to negate one's true character cannot lead to a secure and integrated personality. Goffman chooses the term 'passing', for instance, for someone who, in order to conceal an invisible stigma and not to be too conspicuous, only deliberately makes a faint impression on the outside world. The reasons why someone with a 'discreditable' stigma resorts to this method are fairly obvious. The pressures in our society to adjust to a common standard of what is regarded as normal are very strong. Furthermore the benefits of 'passing' simply help one to avoid troubles.

Bearing this in mind it becomes obvious why Ronald D. Laing, strongly influenced by Goffman, saw the process of 'passing' as a common form of self-alienation. Being 'normal' was for Laing 'a kind of pseudo-sanity masquerading as the real thing'¹⁰⁴. But also, according to Laing, individuals without a stigma and with a secure, confident sense of themselves sometimes need their 'false self' to handle the rituals and vicissitudes of daily life. Laing went even further and blamed the pressures of a normative society for destroying creativity and extinguishing an artistic person's 'inner light' - their special natural gift of being able to expose their originality and individuality. In this connection lies Laing's fascination in his later career with 'rebirthing' practices and why, all his life, he was interested in the topic of 'madness as a sign of genius'.

¹⁰⁴ Daniel Burston, *The Crucible of Experience: R.D. Laing and the Crisis of Psychotherapy* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000), p.7.

However it is Goffman's ground-breaking book on stigmas and the ways to deal with them where one will find numerous references to his classic example of a 'discreditable' individual, namely that of homosexuals. In the early 1960s this was somewhat daring in a time when homosexuality was still a punishable offence.

All the novels which strongly influenced Oscar Wilde, apart from *La Faustin*, have at their centre a character who suffers from the 'discreditable' stigma of gender-nonconformity. In his study on gay men and their development, Richard A. Isay sums up the heavily stigmatised situation of gay men and women as follows:

The development of a gay identity, which begins in the earliest years of childhood with same-sex erotic fantasies, usually carries with it, in our culture, the burdens of guilt and self-loathing that may impede or delay its consolidation and integration. Social stigmatisation is particularly damaging to the adolescent and young adult because of the importance of peer acceptance in the task of separation from parents. Such stigmatisation and the internalisation of social bias often lead to further lags in the formation of a healthy sexual identity by encouraging conformity to prevailing social conventions such as marriage and to the denial of inherent sexual and attendant psychological and social needs.¹⁰⁵

Erving Goffman sees homosexuality from a sociological point of view and simply describes the various ways a spoiled identity caused by stigma can be managed. R.D. Laing took this a step further and tries to explain how and in which way an individual can deal with his stigma from a psychological perspective. After having studied over one hundred cases,

¹⁰⁵ Richard A. Isay, *Being Homosexual: Gay Men and Their Development* (New York: Farrar-Straus-Giroux, 1989), p.66.

Laing and his colleagues discovered that individuals living in an untenable personal situation, most of them with a 'discreditable' stigma, all developed the same schizoid patterns of behaviour in order to make their lives tolerable.

...it seems to us that without exception the experience and behaviour that gets labelled schizophrenic is a special strategy that a person invents in order to live in an unliveable situation. In his life-situation the person has come to feel he is in an untenable position. He cannot make a move, or make no move, without being beset by contradictory and paradoxical pressures and demands, pushes and pulls, both internally, from himself, and externally, from those around him. He is, as it were, in a position of checkmate.¹⁰⁶

What made Laing's attitude in the field of psychology so revolutionary, especially regarding homosexuality, was that his primary goal was not to 'cure' the patient, but to help him return to a state of confident 'wholeness', freed from the threats of a normative society. Laing's first two books, *The Divided Self* and *Self and Others*, appeared at the beginning of the 1960s, when homosexuality was still considered by many psychiatrists as a kind of illness or even madness. Bearing this in mind, Laing's approach was very revolutionary as he implicitly claimed that not the homosexual was sick, but the conditions he had to endure: a homophobic society had made life unbearable for him causing symptoms of schizoid behaviour and, in the long run, as a survival strategy, causing him to act unconsciously in a schizophrenic way.

It was no surprise that Laing with his revolutionary arguments achieved the status of a counter-culture icon although, Laing admitted himself that his ideas were not particularly avantgarde but went back to a view shared

¹⁰⁶ R.D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience and the Bird of Paradise* (London:Penguin, 1967), p.95.

by most psychiatrists at the turn of the century. He reminded us that ‘many senior psychiatrists still said that if all schizophrenic patients were cared for respectfully in good-enough surroundings, one-quarter to one-third of them would eventually recover without the benefits of shock, drugs, or lobotomy’ (Daniel Burston, *Crucible of Experience*, p.70). Moreover, Laing was seen as an ‘anti-psychiatrist’, as his theories did not correspond to those psychiatrists of the Freudian school. He regarded Freudian psychoanalysis only as a means of uprooting those elements in the human psyche unfavourable for living in a normative society. And indeed Laing never denied his anti-psychiatric leanings but at the same time he fully repudiated the accusations that he glamorized schizophrenia:

I have never idealized mental suffering, or romanticized despair, dissolution, torture or terror. I have never said that parents or families or society ‘cause’ mental illness, genetically or environmentally. I have never denied the existence of patterns of mind and conduct that are excruciating. I have never called myself an anti-psychiatrist, and have disclaimed the term from when first my friend and colleague, David Cooper, introduced it. However, I agree with the anti-psychiatric thesis that by and large psychiatry functions to exclude and repress those elements society wants excluded and repressed. If society requires such exclusion then exclusion it will get, with or without the aid of psychiatry. Many psychiatrists want psychiatry to bow out of this function.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ R.D. Laing, *Wisdom, Madness and Folly* (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics), 1998, p.9.

3.1.3 *The Divided Self* (1960)

Although *The Divided Self* was well-received by the critics and praised as a ‘thoroughly professional and original approach to understanding psychosis and in particular schizophrenia’¹⁰⁸, at first sales were disappointing. It was only some years later when the book came out in a Penguin edition that it became a bestseller. This was probably due to the different social climate at the end of the so-called ‘Swinging Sixties’ and the new generation which was much more open to new and challenging ideas in the field of psychology. Ronald Laing’s son Adrian reminds us in his biography of his father that the latter was correct in his prophesy that the importance of the *The Divided Self* would eventually be recognised: ‘the *British Journal of Psychiatry* finally reviewed *The Divided Self* in 1982’¹⁰⁹.

In my thesis, to a large extent I will be concentrating on Laing’s *The Divided Self* because it is the first work which serves best my aim in explaining the psychological make-up of the two major forms of androgyny I have already outlined in my first chapter, both of which feature prominently in Decadent literature.

Laing’s first and foremost aim with *The Divided Self* was to ‘make madness, and the process of going mad, comprehensible’ (Laing, *Divided Self*, p.9). His starting point is when he claims that a mentally healthy person must necessarily possess what he defines as primary ontological security. In order to qualify as an ontologically secure person one must have a confident and stable sense of identity, the ability to disclose one’s

¹⁰⁸ Bob Mullan, *R.D. Laing: A Personal View* (London: Duckworth, 1999), p.73.

¹⁰⁹ Adrian Laing, *R.D. Laing: A Life* (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing, 2006), p.60.

true identity in front of others and a firm awareness of personal autonomy. All these aspects are necessary for maintaining functional interpersonal relations and in particular for having an intimate relationship with another person. Moreover, in situations when society demands authenticity, an ontologically secure individual does not feel threatened as far as his identity is concerned when he assumes a mask to achieve his own ends. He can comfortably alternate between ‘being-for-himself’ and ‘being-for-others’, without any fear that the false self he is assuming will obliterate his true self. By contrast, an ontologically insecure or schizoid individual is not able to fulfil these conditions mentioned above and, as a consequence, is wary of close relationships with other people.

In general, Laing specifies three psychological processes which describe the anxieties that prevent an ontologically insecure person from disclosing his true self: ‘engulfment’, ‘implosion’ and ‘petrification’. Engulfment is for Laing the fear that a schizoid person suffers when someone approaches him too closely, particularly in an emotional way. As he has a shaky sense of his personal autonomy he experiences this closeness as though his identity is being ‘engulfed’ to be finally replaced by the other person’s identity. He loses himself, as it were, in the other’s identity which, as Laing points out can be welcome if you ‘hate yourself’, if you cannot accept yourself as you are, however this is a situation to beware of.

Engulfment is felt as a risk in being understood (thus grasped, comprehended), in being loved, or even simply in being seen. To be hated may be feared for other reasons, but to be hated as such is often less disturbing than to be destroyed, as it is felt, through being engulfed by love”. (Laing, *Divided Self*, p.44)

With severe cases of schizophrenia, when one is simply looking at such a patient this gives him, the patient, the feeling that what he thinks is a penetrating stare will extinguish his very soul. It is interesting that here Laing also draws attention to the fact that being hated or always misunderstood in a paradoxical way helps the ontologically insecure person much more to preserve his threatened identity. Being hated or misunderstood is therefore much less feared than being loved and 'understood'.

By the term 'implosion' Laing is describing the mental state of a schizoid individual, in so much as he gradually experiences himself as a vacuum. This occurs because the ontologically insecure person being afraid of engulfment creates a false personality for the general public and directs most of his emotional and intellectual dealings through this mask. As a consequence, the schizoid person comes increasingly to depend on his false self and is convinced that he can only disclose his 'real' self when he is alone, completely disengaged from his public self. The classic example for such a situation would be a 'closeted' gay person, concealing his real self because he is afraid of being rejected by a homophobic society. In order to make this situation at all tolerable, he acquires a false self to adapt to false realities. This whole process gathers momentum by the fact that the 'false' self is always present in a physical body, but not the hidden 'real' self. In the end the real 'shut-up self, being isolated, is unable to be enriched by outer experience, and so the whole inner world comes to be more and more impoverished, until the individual may come to feel he is merely a vacuum (Laing, *Divided Self*, p.75). In such a way the mask becomes increasingly powerful and eventually there are two selves, the real 'shut-up self' and a false public self. And it is here, at this point, that a schizophrenic situation arises because the two contradicting selves spy, as

it were, on each other and thus the schizoid person becomes even more self-conscious. 'The individual in this position is invariably terrifyingly 'self-conscious' [...] in the sense in which this word is used to mean the exact opposite, namely, the feeling of being under observation by the *other*', that is the other self (Laing, *Divided Self*, p.74). The individual conducts with himself what Laing calls a 'pseudo-interpersonal relationship'. Judged from outside such self-enveloped individuals, seem to give the impression that they are being narcissistic, but in reality quite the opposite is true because from 'within, the self now looks out at the false things being said and done and detests the speaker and doer as though he were someone else' (Laing, *Divided Self*, p.74).

The third and most important psychological aspect defining the mechanism of becoming schizoid is 'petrification'. It is not so much a state of anxiety but a defence mechanism which helps to preserve the threatened identity of the ontologically insecure individual. When doing research on his patients Laing found out that those anxious that their shaky sense of their own subjectivity would be 'swamped, impinged upon, or congealed' by another person, such individuals tried to react in the same way to the other's person's subjectivity. This process works like a Medusa's head, in other words 'turning' the other person to stone. This means that the schizoid individual regards the other person simply as an object with no feelings thus, in the end, completely depersonalising him. Although Laing did admit that the partial depersonalisation of others was a necessary technique in everyday life to deal with the people around you, especially in a professional context, the complete depersonalisation of others is a characteristic of schizophrenia which backfires thus entangling the schizoid person in a vicious circle. Laing says:

The more one attempts to preserve one's autonomy and identity by nullifying the specific human individuality of the other, the more it is felt to be necessary to continue to do so, because with each denial of the other person's ontological status, one's own ontological security is decreased, the threat to the self from the other is potentiated and hence has to be even more desperately negated. (Laing, *Divided Self*, p.52)

At first glance it seems illogical that the 'petrification' of the other person's identity does not increase the ontological security of the schizoid individual. However, when trying to maintain a sense of identity, the other crucial factor is that the schizoid's existence has to be acknowledged by others, usually by the piercing glances he in fact most fears. The schizoid individual needs confirmation by another person in order that he can have faith in his own existence. By reducing another person to an 'object', in other words when 'depersonalising' him, at the same time he is lessening the attention he thrives on to feel alive. The 'depersonalised other' is no longer experienced by him as a human being. But a mere object cannot confirm anyone's presence. This places a schizoid person in a most paradoxical situation.

There is a failure to sustain a sense of one's own being without the presence of other people. It is a failure to be by oneself, a failure to exist alone.[...] This appears to be in direct contradiction to the aforementioned dread that other people will deprive him of his existence. (Laing, *Divided Self*, p.52)

These two conflicting attitudes are characteristic of a schizoid psyche. There seems to be only two options left for such a person: either complete isolation or a vampire-like attachment, a clinging relationship where the schizoid person is trying to take over the other's identity. As a result,

Laing points out, the schizoid individual fluctuates between two poles: ‘the polarity is between complete isolation or complete merging of identity rather than between separateness and relatedness. The individual oscillates perpetually, between two extremes, each equally unfeasible’ (Laing, *Divided Self*, p.53). This process is also present inside the psyche. When explaining the term ‘implosion’ in the last paragraph I have already described how the real self detests the false self. But the false self, in order to win the upper hand petrifies the real self by dissecting and controlling it as though it was a mere object. The schizoid person begins to observe himself from the outside thus becoming, as it were, his own ‘spectator’. Such an unembodied self watches minutely what the body is doing and eventually becomes too hyper-conscious in the end. Nowadays, scientists know that, in schizophrenic patients, this has to do with a surplus of the second messenger dopamine.

Again, the superficial impression might be that of a narcissistic character, but Laing denies this:

Self-scrutiny is quite improperly regarded as a form of narcissism. Neither the schizoid nor the schizophrenic is narcissistic in this sense. [...] The schizoid individual exists under the black sun, the evil eye, of his own scrutiny. The glare of his awareness kills his spontaneity, his freshness; it destroys all joy. Everything withers under it. And yet he remains, although profoundly *not* narcissistic, compulsively preoccupied with the sustained observation of his own mental and/or bodily processes. [...] That is to say, he turns the living spontaneity of his being into something dead and lifeless by inspecting it. This he does to others as well, and fears their doing it to him (petrification). (Laing, *Divided Self*, p.112)

But just as in interpersonal relationships, the false self will not fully petrify the real self, for that would dissolve the self-consciousness which gives the schizoid individual a sense of being alive.

In this context when discussing how Laing depicted the schizoid mechanism of petrification, it also reveals the way Laing approached his patients. He was much influenced by the works of Martin Buber, especially by *I and Thou*, published in 1923¹¹⁰. In this book Buber discusses the two antithetical ‘modes of relatedness’ he had discovered: the ‘I-Thou’ and the ‘I-It’ attitudes. Like Laing, Buber favoured the former as it meant accepting a person as a whole human being, with all of his or her uniqueness. From the very beginning, it is important that the ‘other’ must feel accepted and respected simply for his or her own personality. The ‘I-It’ attitude, however, entails a reifying process which depersonalises an individual either as a means of or an obstacle to achieving one’s goal. A human being is simply turned into a quantifiable machine which can be numerically judged biologically, chemically or mathematically, etc. This would result in a Freudian approach to psychoanalysis, where the psychological assessment divides the patient into the id, ego and superego. However, Buber did not completely dismiss Freudian psychoanalysis but for him:

it oversteps its limits and overestimates its strengths. In the clinical encounter, argued Buber, it is just not possible for a healer to really *know* a patient deeply and humanly if the healer’s experience is filtered through the medium of theories or categories that fragment the person into a plurality of interacting systems – an id, ego, and superego, for example. And if one doesn’t genuinely “meet” the other, one cannot change (or

¹¹⁰ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, transl. by Ronald Gregor (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937).

be changed) by the encounter. (Daniel Burston,
Crucible of Experience, p.26)

Petrification is central to a consideration of schizophrenia. It thus becomes quite obvious why Laing avoided the 'I-It' approach when dealing with schizoid patients for it is just this depersonalising effect they would have feared most.

These three mechanism: 'engulfment', 'implosion' and 'petrification' play an essential role in keeping a person at a certain distance combined with a desire to win the other's life-giving attention. The schizoid individual finds himself in such a precarious condition that it is impossible for him to endure the closeness of an ontologically secure person, as not only would he be overwhelmed by his personality but his own subjectivity would be annihilated:

The schizoid individual fears a real live
dialectical relationship with real live people.
He can relate himself only to depersonalized
persons, to phantoms of his own phantasies
(imagos), perhaps to things, perhaps to animals.
(Laing, *Divided Self*, p.77)

Accordingly, in the fin-de-siècle literature that will be researched in this thesis, it very often turns out that one schizoid character attracts another character with a shaky sense of being, simply because they both readily join in this alternating process, sensing that the other will not completely obliterate their own identity. This does not mean that such a relationship would be successful, or that two schizoid individuals would be able to become really close, let alone fall in love with each other. But, due to their psychological make-up, there is a certain amount of magnetism between them. It has already been explained that when individuals had to endure

untenable situations they tend to develop a schizoid identity in order to survive. At the end of the nineteenth century in particular, gender-nonconformity was one of the most serious and psychologically challenging situations a person might face.

Let us now go back to the two variants of androgynes I have already defined who often feature prominently in decadent literature, namely the hermaphrodite and asexual androgyne. These two types of androgynes do not conform to a stereotypical image of a complete male or female gender and thus one can assume that they represent homosexuals. Yet the fact that both types seem wholly self-sufficient marks them out as special cases. I consider those self-contained types as homosexuals because I follow Michel Foucault who defines homosexuality as a ‘hermaphroditism of the soul’. For him it was not so important whether a gender-nonconformist had an active sex life or not, it was far more important that he or she displayed noticeable characteristics not in accordance with his or her biological sex. Both androgynous types I have defined do not seem necessarily effeminate, but at least not masculine because, according to Elisabeth Badinter, true masculinity has to be actively constructed, as it were, by meeting certain social norms. Masculinity itself is not necessarily natural to one’s being.

In the major part of my thesis I will be taking a closer look at the behaviour patterns of these types of androgynes and will show that their schizoid identities are the cause of their self-containment. Even today, in a social climate that is far more permissive, there is still enough social pressure which, I believe, is still to blame for schizoid tendencies in homosexuals. Ironically enough the pressure is exerted not only from outside the gay community but also from within it. Over the last few years

a cult of hyper-masculinity has emerged in the gay community and the most ardent followers of this trend resemble to their former heterosexual oppressors. Christopher Kendall and Wayne Martino observe that nowadays ‘corporeal masculinity emerges as the linchpin for many gay men with a normative force of performativity that appears to signify a disavowal of the abnormal and the perverse that historically constituted the gay male as a woman in a man’s body.’¹¹¹ What Leo Bersani has termed a heterosexualising of homosexuality or ‘De-Gaying gayness’¹¹² is an ever increasing trend with gays to internalise hetero-normative gender hierarchies and gender binaries. For many this is a sad development when remembering that it was just these issues that gay liberation had fought against. Associated with the introduction of a hierarchical gender binaric system is the devaluation of the feminine side and, as a result, gay men especially are now prone to suppress their feminine side, wishing to appear even more masculine than any heterosexual man. As examples of the most visible form of this phenomenon might be the so-called ‘bear-scene’ (men proud of showing off their hairy chests) and ‘leather’ gays with a penchant for provocative items of military uniforms. One explanation for this trend might be that being in a position of power is in itself sexy and more attractive to obvious gays as they are not normally able to exert power in a dominant heterosexual culture. Homosexuals in so-called male drag (styled and clothed in a very masculine way) often complain about those camp and effeminate ‘queer’ artistes in the media they, as gay men, fear they might be associated with. However when these male drag hunks themselves behave and move about in a very feminine fashion, the observer may get the impression that such gay people must have a warped perception of themselves. It is now a matter of debate whether gay men

¹¹¹ Christopher Kendall & Wayne Martino (eds.), *Gendered Outcasts and Sexual Outlaws* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2006), p.8.

¹¹² Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), p.5.

trying to imitate culturally dominant images of masculinity, whether these attempts betray signs of schizoid tendencies. Behaving in a masculine way makes the homosexual not so visible in public. He cannot then be ‘petrified’ and ‘depersonalised’ by curious onlookers. Or does acting ‘masculine’ make a gay guy’ simply more attractive and sexy? My suspicions are confirmed by Anthony Lambert when he claims that increasingly gay men are more and more using ‘machine’ metaphors when describing themselves on dating websites or outlining their sexual experiences. ‘The idea of man in numerical terms again reinforces the man-as-machine trope. [...] ‘Cock’, ‘prick’, ‘hard-on’, ‘pecker’, and ‘tool’ all contribute to the man/machine construction in language.”¹¹³ Although gay men in this respect are actually here imitating heterosexual men, it cannot explain away the fact that seeing yourself and others as a piece of ‘machinery’ is a schizophrenic feature and part of the petrification process.

3.1.4 Søren Kierkegaard: *Sickness unto Death* (1849)

The crucial question which remains now is whether it is legitimate or does it even make sense to apply Laing’s psychological approach to the decadent literature of the nineteenth century. Adrian Laing¹¹⁴ points out that his father took the concept of ‘the false self’ from Søren Kierkegaard’s treatise *Sickness unto Death*, published in 1849, and that he was more indebted to Kierkegaard’s work than he would admit. Kierkegaard was called the father of modern existentialism because he was the first to focus on the individual and his quest for authentic selfhood. He emphasised the meaning of personal being. Another common denominator regarding the

¹¹³ Anthony Lambert, ‘Stats Please: Gay Men As Mimics, Robots, and Commodities in Contemporary Cultural Spaces’, in C. Kendall & W. Martino (eds.), *Gendered Outcasts and Sexual Outlaws* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2006), p.68.

¹¹⁴ Adrian Laing, *R.D. Laing: A Life* (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing, 2006).

philosophical principles of existentialism was discovered by Peter Lomas, namely the fact that 'the person is more than a thing and cannot be adequately formulated in the terminology of natural science.'¹¹⁵ Along with focussing on the human individual in the here and now goes a consciousness of the finiteness of human existence which means that existentialists try to make use of all their potential and be responsible for their own existence. Existentialism centres increasingly around the archaic emotional conditions of human life conjectures Bob Mullan:

Existence ends in death. Perhaps, then it is not surprising that existentialism, unlike all other major philosophical systems, focuses on the *emotional* dimensions of human existence. Indeed, from Kierkegaard to Heidegger and Sartre, the existentialists have provided brilliant analyses of states such as anxiety, despair, boredom and nausea. (Bob Mullan, 1999, p.91)

All the above mentioned characteristics of existentialism are also true for Laing, but what fascinated Laing most in Kierkegaard's *Sickness unto Death* was his claim that the basis of a meaningful and fulfilled existence was authenticity. As far as Kierkegaard is concerned nobody can completely shed his self-consciousness. So when someone tries to set up a 'false' self and displays a false façade to the world - in order to conform to the normative conventions of society and blend into it, for example – he cannot suppress his own self-consciousness completely as he would then lose all hope in life.

A person in despair wants despairingly to be himself. But surely if he wants despairingly to be himself, he cannot want to be rid of himself. Yes, or so it seems. But closer observation reveals the contradiction to be still the same. The self which, in his despair, he wants to be is a self he is not

¹¹⁵ Peter Lomas, 'Psychoanalysis – Freudian or Existential', in Charles Rycroft (ed.), *Psychoanalysis Observed* (London: Penguin, 1968), p.119.

(indeed, to want to be the self he truly is, is the very opposite of despair); that is, he wants to tear his self away from the power which established it. But despite all his despair, this he is incapable of doing. Despite all his despairing efforts, that power is the stronger, and it compels him to be the self he does not want to be.¹¹⁶

Laing depicted the same schizoid condition and designated it 'implosion', that is when the 'real' self and the 'false' self spy upon each other. When the schizoid individual continually fosters and strengthens the false façade he tries to show to the outer world, he becomes more and more depleted and dreads losing his real identity. Laing as well as Kierkegaard agree that a true interior life can only be enlivened by authentic interaction with other people. If 'self-consciousness' is predominantly aware of the true self and so-to-speak in harmony with it, only then can one's real identity grow stronger. Accordingly Kierkegaard writes that

what is decisive with regard to the self is consciousness, that is to say, self-consciousness. The more consciousness, the more will; the more will, the more self. Someone who has no will at all is no self. But the more will he has, the more self-consciousness he has too. (Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, p.30)

Interestingly enough Kierkegaard outlines the same oscillatory process Laing also discovered in schizoid patients. A process which they used to stabilise their precarious sense of self. Kierkegaard, however, divides this process into two principles: a feminine and a masculine form of despair. The principle of 'not wanting to be oneself' Kierkegaard calls feminine and weak because for him that meant self-abandonment, which he associated with stereotypical feminine qualities of the nineteenth century such as devoting oneself fully to one's family or, alternatively, to the

¹¹⁶ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death* (London: Penguin, 2008), pp.18-19.

church. The opposite to ‘feminine’ despair is consequently the ‘masculine’ despair he defines as ‘wanting in despair to be oneself’ and characterises it as more assertive. As mentioned above, ‘masculine’ despair does not actually mean wanting to be your true self, but wanting to be somebody else otherwise, according to Kierkegaard, it would not be despair. In both cases, though, the individual stubbornly refuses to generate an independent authentic self from within, but relies on receiving an inauthentic self, a mask formed by society around him.

Comparing these two definitions of despair to Laing’s schizoid conditions, the feminine attitude resembles the ‘engulfment’ process where an individual merges his own self with another identity. On the other hand, the more aggressive masculine principle tries to defend the precarious true self by concealing it behind a mask. And, similar to Laing, both kinds of despair condition one another and in many ways are related to each other. According to Kierkegaard the

despair described [...] was over one’s weakness, the despairer does not want to be himself. But if, dialectically, just one single further step is taken, then the person who despairs in this way comes to the consciousness of why he does not want to be himself. Then the whole thing turns around, defiance is there, just because now he wants in despair to be himself. (Kierkegaard, p.81)

When juxtaposing Kierkegaard and Laing it becomes obvious that Kierkegaard set the groundwork for Laing. But it was up to Laing, about one hundred years later, to explain what kind of psychological processes were at work behind Kierkegaard’s philosophical postulates. Considering that Kierkegaard wrote the treatise *Sickness unto Death* in 1849 it is likely that writers such as Wilde, Rachilde, Huysmans and later on Firbank, all

authors associated with the Decadence Movement at the end of the nineteenth century were conscious of Kierkegaard's philosophical theories and influenced by them. Moreover, Thomas Wright when doing research on how Oscar Wilde was influenced by his reading discovered the interesting fact that his mother who was better known under the name of Speranza read continental philosophers, such as Schopenhauer, in their original languages. Wright suggests that

it is likely that she was also familiar with thinkers, such as the German Friedrich Nietzsche and the Dane Søren Kierkegaard, who were not yet translated (or but little translated) into English during her lifetime. This opens up the intriguing possibility that she may have introduced her son to the electrifying writings of these two philosophers.¹¹⁷

At the end of this chapter I would again like to point out that it is predominantly Laing's research into schizoid conditions of individuals which are the linchpin in my thesis. It explains the self-containment of those many protagonists who appear in a gender-nonconforming, androgynous fashion in Decadent literature at the turn of the last century.

¹¹⁷ Thomas Wright, *Built of Books: How Reading Defined the Life of Oscar Wilde* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2008), p.96.

3.2 Camp: Androgyny in Action

It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances.

Oscar Wilde

(from: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*¹¹⁸)

3.2.1 The Emerging Meanings Behind the Word ‘Camp’

One way to deal with a social or sexual stigma is, as we have seen regarding Laing, to develop schizoid patterns of behaviour to come to terms with a hostile society. Another way is to ‘camp it up’, a method of dealing with your outsider status in particular when the signs of a deviant sexuality, such as effeminacy are too obvious.

An ephemeral phenomenon demands months of profound research in order to clarify its meaning. Attempts are often made to describe ‘camp-ness’ in obscure academic books. However, I discovered an issue of the gay magazine *Attitude*, in which a certain Rupert Smith, writing an article entitled ‘A Brief History of Camp’ gives a definition which, to a great extent, anticipates the conclusions drawn by this present chapter:

Camp is shaped by the experience of being gay in a straight world, and it’s our way of processing a culture that we don’t really fit in. It’s about masquerade and wish-fulfilment, about projecting ourselves into situations from which we’ve been excluded.¹¹⁹

Many attempts with quite contradictory outcomes have been made to define ‘camp’ since Susan Sontag published her essay ‘Notes on Camp’ in the mid-60s. The most striking feature when essayists, authors and academics have dealt with ‘camp’ turns out to be that it cannot easily be

¹¹⁸ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray: An Annotated, Uncensored Edition*, edited by Nicholas Frankel, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), p.99.

¹¹⁹ Rupert Smith, ‘A Brief History of Camp’, *Attitude Magazine* (London: Vitality Publishing Ltd, July 2010), p.68-69.

directly classified. Fabio Cleto, in his all-comprising anthology about 'Camp' writes in his introduction that 'the slipperiness of camp has constantly eluded critical definitions'¹²⁰ and has thwarted all efforts to find a stabilising core of meaning. However, androgyny has often been closely associated with 'camp-ness' and this causes me to try and discover what it involves. Susan Sontag in 'Notes on Camp':

The androgyne is certainly one of the great images of Camp sensibility. Examples: the swooning, slim, sinuous figures of Pre-Raphaelite painting and poetry; the thin, flowing, sexless bodies in Art Nouveau prints and posters, presented in relief on lamps and ashtrays; the haunting androgynous vacancy behind the perfect beauty of Greta Garbo. Here Camp taste draws on a mostly unacknowledged truth of taste: the most refined form of sexual attractiveness (as well as the most refined form of sexual pleasure) consists in going against the grain of one's sex. What is most beautiful in virile men is something feminine; what is most beautiful in feminine women is something masculine[...] Allied to the Camp taste for the androgynous is something that seems quite different but isn't: a relish for the exaggeration of sexual characteristics and personality mannerisms.¹²¹

Although Sontag has repeatedly and rightly been accused of reducing camp to a mere sensibility, she acknowledges, however, that 'camp' is not exclusively a feature of the world of art but can also be used to refer to a person's individual characteristics. It is also to her credit that she was the first to single out one of the most essential of these characteristics in 'camp' people when she observed that

¹²⁰ Fabio Cleto (ed.), *Camp* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), p.2.

¹²¹ Susan Sontag, *A Susan Sontag Reader* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), pp.108-109.

to perceive Camp in objects and persons is to understand 'Being-as-Playing-a-Role'. It is the farthest extension, in sensibility, of the metaphor of life as theatre. (Sontag, p.109)

Unfortunately, when explaining 'camp', Sontag's essay does no more than scratch the surface and in the end turns out gradually to become a purely subjective itemization of what she herself perceives as 'camp'. This is also the case when Sontag merely recognizes an affinity between 'camp' taste and homosexuality. Among the other critics, David Bergman seems justified in reproaching Sontag for not explaining why and how camp is linked to a homosexual subculture. He says that 'she did not indicate how the "erotics" of such a literature was related to the sexuality of its creators and audience.'¹²² Moe Meyer goes even further and accuses Sontag of degayifying and depoliticising 'camp' and thus turning it into a mainstream 'commodity' called 'Pop Camp'¹²³. The common denominator for everyone dealing with 'camp', however, is that they see it as a subversive counter-culture negating dominant bourgeois values. Andrew Ross, in his essay 'Uses of Camp' cites some of the anti-bourgeois forms such as

anti-industry, pro-idleness; anti-family, pro-bachelorhood; anti-respectability, pro-scandal; anti-masculine, pro-feminine; anti-sport, pro-frivolity; anti-decor, pro-exhibitionism; anti-progress, pro-decadence; anti-wealth, pro-fame."¹²⁴

¹²² David Bergman, 'Strategic Camp: The Art of Gay Rhetoric', in David Bergman (ed.), *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), p.92.

¹²³ Moe Meyer (ed.), *The Politics and Poetics of Camp* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.13.

¹²⁴ Andrew Ross, 'Uses of Camp', in Fabio Cleto (ed.), *Camp* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p.317.

Ross classifies these qualities as ‘aristocratic affectations’ which represent ‘the deceased power of the aristocrat.’ When modern intellectuals or bohemian circles adopt these attitudes, for society this indicates their marginal status and ‘remoteness from power’ (Ross, p.317), which is non-threatening and has no political impact. There is, however, one ingredient of ‘camp’ which over the last decades has had a lasting political effect, namely a pro-feminine stance. Up until then, Western patriarchal society could not prevent feminist ideas gaining more recognition. It is in the context of homosexuality, that the aspect of feminism becomes most obviously political. Only those homosexuals who actually openly display their feminine side make themselves visible to the general public. It is the feminine, not the masculine acting homosexual who has to carry a social stigma and to bear the brunt of discrimination and rejection by society. The outward indication of a ‘feminine’ gay man is his camp behaviour. According to Moe Meyer, up to the 1950s, before the Kinsey report revealed that there also existed masculine acting men having sex with other men, camp conduct was the sole indicator of homosexuality. Moe Meyer claims that before that time, what he terms ‘Low Camp’ or ‘Bottom Camp’ was ‘the social performance of gay social identity accomplished through performance of specific signifying codes – gesture, posture, speech, and/or costume.’¹²⁵ But these were purely superficial signifiers of being gay, not connected to an individual’s basic sexuality.

When it comes to defining this behavioural pattern making a person appear feminine, an adequate description is offered under the heading of ‘Camp’ in J. Redding Ware’s 1909 dictionary of Victorian slang: *Passing English of the Victorian Era*. This dictionary was highly regarded at the time. Its

¹²⁵ Moe Meyer, *An Archaeology of Posing: Essays on Camp, Drag, and Sexuality* (LaVergne (USA): Macater Press, 2010), pp.99-100.

aim was to document and introduce new expressions of English to a wider audience. 'Camp' was defined here as 'Actions and Gestures of exaggerated emphasis. Probably from French. Used chiefly by persons of exceptional want of character.'¹²⁶ 'Exaggerated gestures' was obviously meant here to compare with the bourgeois norm of male behaviour. Most noticeable are the exaggerated gestures and postures in those males imitating females. These theatrical movements are an integral part of so-called 'drag' performances consisting, to a large extent, of physically complementing and accentuating the spoken word, using the whole body as well as hand movements.

Interestingly enough, Thomas A. King finds the first traces of camp behaviour, or what he calls 'proto camp gestures'¹²⁷, when reading reports on the eighteenth century so-called 'molly houses' and in the context of the aristocracy. Why aristocrats and especially courtiers started to use empty gestures and perform, as King has it, 'akimbo', that is placing your hand on your hip or affecting a dangling limp wrist, becomes obvious when we consider the historical and political situation in Western Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The aristocracy at that time had been losing more and more political power and had to conceal this fact behind a façade of feminine refinement - a sign of superiority in those days. The dwindling significance of their social position had to be compensated for, not only by pompous baroque architecture and extravagant clothing fashions, but also by overtly feminine gestures, indicating some form of cultivated superiority.

¹²⁶ J. Redding Ware, *Passing English of the Victorian Era* (New York: Dutton, 1909), p.61.

¹²⁷ Thomas A. King, 'Performing "Akimbo"', in Moe Meyer (ed.), *The Politics and Poetics of Camp* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.24.

As far as the ‘mollies’ were concerned, they had a different problem. Their feminine gestures and deportment were not in accordance with their naturally inborn masculinity. However, it was these non-sexual performative gestures, comprising also posture, costume and speech which displayed an honesty as to their conception of themselves. Their true gender identity, which was feminine, did not conform to their biological sex. This incongruity gave the impression that as men they lacked substantial character. I think it is important to stress here again that it is mainly these performative or theatrical gestures that constitute a homosexual identity, or, according to Philip Core: ‘Camp is a lie which tells the truth’ (Cleto, p.81). To present-day society it is still these gestures that render homosexuals visible, and not necessarily any private sexual act which is hard to prove anyway.

In this context it is interesting to point out what Moe Meyer describes as a ‘shift from a gender-based to a sex-based definition of homosexuality’ (Moe Meyer, *Archeology of Posing*, p.75). If homosexual identity was to be reduced simply to the mere sexual act and thus becomes the sole criterion for defining a homosexual, problems arise. This somewhat naive trend towards simplicity, which I see developing nowadays above all in the treatment of homosexuality by the mass media, means that celibate gay men, even those behaving effeminately, would not necessarily be considered gay. As a consequence it is debatable whether ‘straight-acting’ homosexuals are at all representative of the gay identity? It is perhaps now irrelevant to go any deeper into this discussion but I hope it has become clear as to what an important role ‘camp’ plays when defining the gay identity. Richard Dyer, for instance, argues that camp

...is just about the only style, language and culture that is distinctively and unambiguously gay male. In a world drenched in straightness all the images and words of society express and confirm the rightness of heterosexuality. Camp is the one thing that expresses and confirms being a gay man.¹²⁸

When now comparing our two early examples of 'camp', that is of the aristocrat/courtier and the molly, the latter example, namely the man in 'drag' will make a stronger impact. For Esther Newton, for example, the 'drag queen' is the foremost symbol of 'camp'¹²⁹. But both proto-camp icons tried to sustain a façade by adopting a role. But whereas the aristocrat/courtier strove to maintain his superior social status, the molly or what nowadays would be equivalent to a 'drag queen' or transvestite lowers himself in status. The 'drag queen' revels so-to-speak in self-humiliation and doesn't take himself too seriously.

Masculinity, as Elisabeth Badinter has pointed out, is not a naturally given gender identity but has to be achieved by various initiation rites and is therefore rated higher in a patriarchal society. This fact, makes it all the more difficult for a man openly to confess to not fulfilling his superior social role his biological sex has prescribed for him. For the heterosexual man, but equally for the masculine gay man, the drag queen symbolises their worst fears: i.e. the former not to have achieved acceptable manhood and for the latter, whilst knowing he is gay, not to be accepted as a straight-acting individual and thus politically correct. Such fears of gay men not to come across as straight-acting 'hunks' but as drama 'queens' is often

¹²⁸ Richard Dyer, 'It's Being so Camp as Keeps Us Going', *Body Politic* 10, 1977, p.11.

¹²⁹ Esther Newton, 'Role Models', in David Bergman (ed.), *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality* (Amherst:University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), p.41-45.

underestimated. This is not only so for those in the closet, but also for those who are openly gay, as can be seen on popular internet dating sites.

The effect of personal self-debasement, strongly associated with ‘drag queens’ is a vital ingredient of ‘camp’ which becomes obvious when contrasting them with females impersonating males. Peter Ackroyd observes that:

The male impersonator, the actress in trousers, seems...to lack depth and resonance...[and] is never anything more than what she pretends to be: a feminine, noble mind in a boy’s body. It is a peculiarly sentimental and therefore harmless reversal. The female impersonator, on the other hand, has more dramatic presence – the idea of a male mind and body underneath a female costume evokes memories and fears to which laughter is perhaps the best reaction.¹³⁰

Boyishness in women is smilingly accepted in a patriarchal society where masculine characteristics are favoured, but not the reverse, and that makes drag queens so unacceptable.

3.2.2 The Four Parameters of ‘Camp’

When examining all the literature about ‘camp’ four parameters, which turn up repeatedly appear to act as common denominators defining ‘camp’: ‘irony’, aestheticism, ‘theatricality and humour¹³¹’. It is important to filter out and discuss these camp qualities separately because ontologically insecure characters such as defined by R.D. Laing are prone to demonstrate

¹³⁰ Peter Ackroyd, *Dressing Up: Transvestism and Drag: The History of an Obsession* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), p.102.

¹³¹ Esther Newton, ‘Role Models’, in David Bergman (ed.), *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), p.46.

all these four elements of 'camp'. When later referring to androgynous characters in the literary works of the Decadence, these camp qualities will also feature prominently.

Camp irony is often brought about by a stark contrast, that is when two incongruous elements clash. This can occur in one and the same character. The most incongruous contrast would be that of 'masculine / feminine', but there are other typical juxtapositions you will find in 'camp' such as 'youth / old age' or 'virginity / promiscuity', etc. Aestheticism is also an important element because style in 'camp' is everything. With 'camp' the content or character of a work seems only to be found on the surface in the form of style or a performance. Thus style conveys a certain meaning. It adds to the impression that camp persons lack character. Closely linked to aestheticism is, of course, theatricality, which represents one of the most essential ingredients of 'camp'. These seemingly artificial and somewhat unreal 'camp' human characters seem to act the whole of their lives as if on stage.

3.2.3 The Function of Camp Humour Protecting the True Self

One important aspect that will be analysed in more detail here concerns humour. As far as this last element is concerned, Chuck Kleinhans agrees with Jack Babuscio and describes it as

a strategy for reconciling conflicting emotions: it is 'a means of dealing with a hostile environment and, in the process, of defining a positive identity'Camp humor relies on an involvement, strongly identifying with a situation or object while comically appreciating its contradictions. In this it is

different from the detachment that facilitates mockery.¹³²

On the one hand humour furthers an indirect and subtle unravelling of the true identity, but on the other hand it is the very element that keeps the 'I', the 'ego' of an ontologically insecure person intact. As early as in 1954 Christopher Isherwood, himself an outsider because of his homosexuality, in his novel 'The World in the Evening' said that 'camp' is only superficially about 'a swishy little boy with peroxided hair, dressed in a picture hat and a feather boa, pretending to be Marlene Dietrich.'¹³³ But Isherwood must have realised, from his own experience, that 'camp', or what he defined as 'High Camp' has an underlying seriousness.

You can't camp about something you don't take seriously. You're not making fun of it; you're making fun out of it. You're expressing what's basically serious to you in terms of fun and artifice and elegance. (Isherwood, p.110)

In this definition, Isherwood already senses that 'camp' has a psychological dimension. However, it was thirty years later, when Mark Booth with the help of R.D. Laing's book *The Divided Self* detected an analogy between camp behaviour and personalities with a shaky sense of selfhood. Booth recognised camp traits when R.D. Laing describes a self-conscious exhibitionist. Like any camp person, he was 'constantly drawing attention to himself and at the same time drawing attention *away* from himself'.¹³⁴ However, Booth did not take the trouble to explain in his book

¹³² Chuck Kleinhans, 'Taking out the Trash: Camp and the politics of parody', in Moe Meyer (ed.), *The Politics and Poetics of Camp* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.187.

¹³³ Christopher Isherwood, *The World in the Evening* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p.110.

¹³⁴ Mark Booth, *Camp* (London: Quartet Books, 1983), p.115.

why camp characters show all the psychological defects of an ontologically insecure person and how these defects arise.

Eleven years later, in 1994, Cynthia Morrill tried to elucidate the psychological side of 'camp' by comparing camp humour to Freud's analysis of gallows humour. In her article, Morrill observes that Freud particularly regarded gallows humour as a way for the humorist's ego, driven by the pleasure principle, to be rescued 'from unpleasant confrontations with the material world'¹³⁵ by means of an economy in expenditure of affect. However, it is a pity that Morrill does not explain what sets the whole process in motion making the ego, particularly in camp characters, so invulnerable. I guess the reason might be that Morrill did not take Freud's work *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* into account which he had written as long ago as in 1905. She based her line of argument solely on his essay on 'Der Humor'¹³⁶, which he published 22 years later. In *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* Freud was preparing the ground for his psychological analysis of humour. He specified a second group of jokes he called 'tendentious jokes' which he said 'have sources of pleasure at their disposal besides those open to innocent jokes, in which all pleasure is in some way linked to their technique'¹³⁷. An essential feature of tendentious jokes is that they create pleasure by unleashing 'inhibitions and repressions' (Freud, p.134). The mechanism of the technical and non-tendentious jokes makes rational judgements ineffective and this aspect supports

¹³⁵ Cynthia Morrill, 'Revamping the Gay Sensibility', in Moe Meyer (ed.), *The Politics and Poetics of Camp* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.122.

¹³⁶ Sigmund Freud, 'Der Humor', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XXI (1927-1931), transl. by J. Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1995), p. 160-166.

¹³⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and their Relations to the Unconscious*, transl. & ed. by James Strachey (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), p.102.

major purposes which are combating suppressions, in order to lift their internal inhibitions by the 'principle of fore-pleasure'. Reason, critical judgement, suppression – these are the forces against which it fights in succession; it holds fast to the original sources of verbal pleasure and, from the stage of the jest onwards, opens new sources of pleasure for itself by lifting inhibitions. (Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, p.137-138).

The fact that tendentious jokes are fuelled by another source of pleasure - that is by releasing psychic pressure - is also useful when unravelling how humour works. In the case of humour, the psychological linchpin is again that repressions and inhibitions cannot be completely dispelled in the psyche and thus, cynical as it may sound, they can still serve as sources of pleasure. Freud writes accordingly that

Defensive processes are the psychical correlative of the flight reflex and perform the task of preventing the generation of unpleasure from internal sources. In fulfilling this task they serve mental events as an automatic regulation, which in the end, incidentally, turns out to be detrimental and has to be subjected to conscious thinking. I have indicated one particular form of this defence, repression that has failed, as the operative mechanism for the development of psychoneuroses. Humour can be regarded as the highest of these defensive processes. It scorns to withdraw the ideational content bearing the distressing affect from conscious attention as repression does, and thus surmounts the automatism of defence. It brings this about by finding a means of withdrawing the energy from the release of unpleasure that is already in preparation and of transforming it, by discharge,

into pleasure. (Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, p.233)

As the title already suggests, in Freud's treatise on 'Humour', written in 1927, he expanded his research results in more depth. A new aspect, which will be important when comparing Freud's theory with R.D. Laing's, is that

the humorous attitude – whatever it may consist in – can be directed either towards the subject's own self or towards other people; it is to be assumed that it brings a yield of pleasure to the person who adopts it, and a similar yield of pleasure falls to the share of the non-participating onlooker. (Freud, 'Der Humor', p.161)

Conjuring up a humorous situation by poking fun at yourself implies that you become your own spectator. It means looking at yourself from the outside, which inevitably involves a splitting of the personality. This schizophrenic self-observation is accompanied by little expenditure of feeling which might result in the typical British 'stiff-upper-lip' attitude. When Freud referred earlier to humour, he had already discovered that 'failed repressions' played a major part in the whole process. Later on in his essay on 'Humour' he must have realised that if a person is conscious of his inhibitions, traumas, obsessions and abnormal behaviour, these will inevitably clash with the societal norms of reality. Thus Freud had to find another factor as to how the ego could assert itself and remain invulnerable in the face of all kinds of reality. Freud thus concludes that

the ego refuses to be distressed by the provocations of reality, to let itself be compelled to suffer. It insists that it cannot be affected by the traumas of the external world; it shows, in fact, that such traumas are no more than occasions for it to gain pleasure. This last feature is a quite

essential element of humour” (Freud, ‘Der Humor’, p.162)

Freud repeatedly singles out two driving forces when analysing humour and they are first and foremost the pleasure principle, and secondly, a ‘rejection of the claims of reality’ (Freud, ‘Der Humor’, p.163). Both forces contribute to a ‘triumph of the ego’ and both reactionary mechanisms give humour its ‘rebellious’ character while bringing

humour near to the regressive or reactionary processes which engage our attention so extensively in psychopathology. Its fending off of the possibility of suffering places it among the great series of methods which the human mind has constructed in order to evade the compulsion to suffer – a series which begins with neurosis and culminates in madness and which includes intoxication, self-absorption and ecstasy. (Freud, ‘Humour’, p.163)

It is interesting to discover that Freud too - not only R.D. Laing – explains humorous camp behaviour on the basis of a split psyche. When, for Freud, a person adopts a ‘humorous attitude towards himself in order to ward off possible suffering’ (Freud, ‘Humour’, p.164), it seems to Freud that this person is treating himself like a child but, at the same time is playing the role of a superior adult towards that child. Freud explains this process again in a more psychological way by stating that sometimes the ego splits itself into an ego and a super-ego, which would be the equivalent to a parent-child relationship. The humorous attitude occurs when the super-ego becomes increasingly inflated because the humorist has

withdrawn the psychical accent from his ego [...] having transposed it on to his super-ego”. From the perspective of the “super-ego thus inflated, the ego can appear tiny and all its interests trivial; and, with this new distribution of energy, it may become an easy matter for the super-ego to

suppress the ego's possibilities of reacting.
(Freud, 'Humour', p.164)

In Freudian theory regarding humour, it is the oversized super-ego which brings about the 'liberating and elevating' effect for the intimidated and stigmatised ego by shrinking the world around it to a comically small size and saying to the ego 'Look! here is the world, which seems so dangerous! It is nothing but a game for children – just worth making a jest about!' (Freud, 'Der Humor', p.166) So in practice, for a closeted homosexual, according to Freud that would mean that he would poke fun at his repressed gender-nonconforming ego by making jokes about it or by putting on female drag. But making fun of his normally secretive ego is only possible because his super-ego, which normally acts as a controlling force, has become so inflated that it underestimates the strictures of a homophobic society.

In R.D. Laing's terminology this would mean that the self has so vehemently turned those people surrounding it into stone that for a short humorous moment it cannot be petrified any more. It can only come fully alive in its true form before the pendulum of petrification swings back and the self is turned by the eyes of the observers into a simple object again. The only weakness in Freud's line of argument is that he cannot thoroughly - and as a consequence - convincingly explain why the super-ego starts to expand. When he tries to outline this process he becomes vague and indirectly admits that, for the moment, he has no ready answer for this phenomenon and refers to the still provisional character of his theory:

In order to remain faithful to our customary phraseology, we shall have to speak, not of transposing the psychical accent, but of displacing large amounts of cathexis. The question then is whether we are entitled to picture extensive

displacements like this from one agency of the mental apparatus to another. It looks like a new hypothesis constructed ad hoc. Yet we may remind ourselves that we have repeatedly (even though not sufficiently often) taken a factor of this kind into account in our attempts at a metapsychological picture of mental events. (Freud, 'Der Humor', p.164)

R.D. Laing also splits the psyche of an ontological insecure person into a false embodied and a true disembodied self. Roughly speaking, however, in Laing's model there are other scenarios where the true self could gain the upper hand over the false self. In the first scenario, the true insubstantial self can display itself under the pretence that it is a public performance. The claim to be doing a performance acts like a shield. Accordingly Laing observes that

those people who suffer from intense anxiety when performing or acting before an audience are by no means necessarily 'self-conscious' in general, and people who are usually extremely self-conscious may lose their compulsive preoccupations with this issue when they are performing in front of others – the very situation, on first reflection, one might suppose would be most difficult for them to negotiate.¹³⁸

The performances of severely self-conscious people actually reveal their true identity – or to use again the phrase that Philip Core coined: 'Camp is a lie which tells the truth' (Cleto, p.81). This typical characteristic also explains why 'camp', which I have already pointed out has a strong affinity to gender-nonconforming people, needs an audience. According to Laing, a person with a shaky sense of selfhood gains in strength on stage because his/her weak insubstantial self can become alive under the eyes of the audience without having fear of being petrified. The role this 'self' is

¹³⁸ R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1975), p.107.

pretending to perform acts like a defensive shield. This intricate process also elucidates why 'camp' draws attention to the body and its sexuality but simultaneously drives one's attention away from it - a process I will further explain when discussing the iconic camp image of the dandy. Another example would be a 'drag' performance where gay identity is openly displayed. The pretence, though, is that it is all a fictitious role elusively keeping the gay identity of the performer at a distance.

Another real-life example to illustrate how 'camp' works as a signifier for a gay, but at the same time fugitive identity would be the white soul diva Dusty Springfield. The publicly known facts about her - that she tried as a white Irish Catholic girl to be successful in the world of black soul music in the promiscuous swinging 60s - these facts alone suffice for us to imagine in what a precarious state of mind she must have found herself.

Springfield's public performances on stage had a strong resemblance to those of a male 'drag queen' with her mussed-up peroxided hair, heavy make-up, long false eye-lashes, black kohl mascara and bright frosted-pink lipstick. Even during recording sessions it is reported that she hid her insecurity behind a thick shield of make-up and impeccable style. Patricia Juliana Smith, in an essay about her, describes Dusty's appearance as a 'vampy overkill' that 'shattered any naturalistic illusion of femininity and create[d] a highly ironic lesbian resignification of the gay man in drag.'¹³⁹ Dusty admitted openly 'Basically, I'm a drag queen myself' (P.J. Smith, p.194) and it was known that she sought real male 'drag queens' for advice regarding her style. As a closeted lesbian in the 60s, it was Dusty's true self that she presented on stage. It is a matter of debate as to whether there was an element of self-loathing in her public presentation, as her style verged

¹³⁹ Patricia Juliana Smith, "'You Don't Have to Say You Love Me': The Camp Masquerades of Dusty Springfield", in David Bergman (ed.), *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), p.188.

on caricaturing femininity - revealing perhaps how her true self had become distorted under the social restrictions.

Apart from the pretence of giving a performance there is a second scenario for an ontological insecure person to reveal his/her true self. This was named after a glamorous pianist and entertainer, Liberace, who became famous for his completely over-the-top style right from his huge coiffure down to his diamond studded gown and fingers. A certain psychological mechanism was also named after him. The so-called 'Liberace effect' Bergman defines as 'to be so exaggerated an example of what you in fact are that people think you couldn't possibly be it. But such effects work not by dismantling the gender system but by trading on its blindness'¹⁴⁰. However, Bergman admits that the effect is limited and the 'conspiracy of blindness' between artists and their audiences leaves them not much scope to display their real, innate personalities.

At the end of this chapter on 'camp', I would like to point out again that for all the four main ingredients of 'camp', namely humour, irony, theatricality and aestheticism, an underlying hidden stigma in the psyche of a camp person is necessary to set psychological mechanisms in motion. The fact that a repressed stigma is a major source for 'camp' links it closely with gender-nonconformity. However, I think that one of the main functions of 'camp' is a way for gays to make oppression bearable, that is transcending the 'I' to keep it protected. Thus 'camp' might be regarded as a sort of 'hygienic cure' for a psyche suffering under a stigma and, as a consequence, struggling with a shaky sense of self. It is also a signifier that social repressions against gay people are still present. There are critics,

¹⁴⁰ David Bergman (ed.), *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993), p.xiv.

though, who claim that gay discrimination has ceased and 'camp' will therefore disappear, or only survive in the form of institutionalised 'drag queens' on the gay scene, or will even be reduced, in a consumerist world to a mere aesthetic attribute of post-modern dandies. But since a large number of gay men are nowadays starting to emulate their former oppressors, that is since (hyper-)masculinity has become an ideal for many gays and is vital for becoming a politically correct gay person, in the gay community itself oppression against 'feminine' gays will continue and thus 'Camp' has unfortunately (or not?!) a good chance of continuing.

3.2.4 High 'Camp' versus Low 'Camp'

Whether 'camp' appears to a normal person as a merely subversive form of behaviour, or even 'political', depends on how it is perceived. Chuck Kleinhans differentiates between 'High Camp' and 'Low Camp', which may correspond to the already defined categories of asexual and hermaphrodite androgyny. For example, 'Low Camp' 'accepts the deconstructed gender presence of drag queens'. It 'deliberately celebrates bad taste and often intentionally offends aesthetic and social sensibilities in order to make a statement' (Chuck Kleinhans, p.189). But as far as gender politics are concerned, 'Low Camp' will not confuse the onlooker or have a disorientating effect on him/her, as male and female sexual signifiers are still discernible. Thus 'Low Camp' keeps the gender binary unharmed. 'High Camp', on the other hand, 'aims for the seamless illusion' (Chuck Kleinhans, p.189) of male or female impersonation. It can hold the onlooker in total consternation as to the biological sex of an individual, but only if the illusion is completely androgynous in an asexual way - that is if no male or female signifiers can be obviously traced. However, if the illusion is that of a perfect man or a perfect woman, I am of the opinion that

we could never call it ‘camp’ any more: at least three main traits of ‘camp’, i.e. irony, humour and especially theatricality, are missing. As far as the gender binary is concerned there would be no disorientating effect. Here we are dealing with perfect female impersonators or even transsexuals. Moe Meyer points out that

the goal of a Drag Queen (as opposed to a female impersonator) was *not* to look like a woman. ...No, the goal of a drag queen was to look like a Drag Queen, something beyond Man or Woman, larger than life, fantastic, mesmerizing in her liminality. The aim was not to ‘pass’ as a woman, but to stand out as a Queen, as a category of being beyond the gender binary. There is a big difference between a Drag Queen and a female impersonator. (Moe Meyer, *Archaeology of Posing*, p.178)

An example to illustrate this would be the popular traditional role of the Dame in an English Christmas pantomime when, not only for adults, but even for small children, it is quite obvious at first sight that ‘she’, the Dame, is a stout, often plump male actor. In this case there is no disorientation on the part of the observer. Our plump male actor could never give the impression of being a real female.

A disorientating effect could only be achieved if it is made obvious that the same individual could give the onlooker the perfect illusion, and I stress perfect, of being either a man or a woman. On the other hand, ‘High Camp’, as I define it, renders visible the constructed character of gender, not as in the obvious acceptable or perfect imitation. ‘High Camp’ goes against the traditional notions of male and female and could be seen as an

example of the social constructionist school where sex role is not simply a performance but appears to the onlooker as completely natural.

It could be summarised that 'camp' acts as a metaphor for bridging the male/female incongruity, and this is one of the main reasons why 'camp' features androgyny as one of its main images. This also explains the close affinity of camp to gender non-conformity, or to put it in Moe Meyer's words, that 'Camp produces gay social visibility' (Meyer, *Politics and Poetics of Camp*, p.5).

'Camp' also turns out to be a way of dealing with repressed social stigmas, but first and foremost with homosexuality. R.D. Laing's explanatory model of a schizoid individual together with Freud's analysis of humour, a vital characteristic of camp, serve best to illuminate - from a psychological angle - why camp behaviour displays all the behaviour patterns Laing identifies in a person with no secure sense of selfhood. The performative character of 'camp' also involves such characters always seeming to play to an audience. This is, according to Laing, vital for a schizoid character to maintain a sense of reality, of 'being alive'. Not being petrified or depersonalised by an audience's gaze is brought about on the one hand, by the pretence of carrying out a public performance and on the other hand by transcending the 'ego' which, according to Freud has been inflated by humour and can thus remain unassailable. In this way a 'camp' individual not only appears to turn his 'real', living personality into a, for the observer, obscure impenetrable artifice but also tends to consider other people ignorant, unsympathetic, but nevertheless decorous - for him/her, nonentities. 'Camp' thus ends up being not simply a voluntary, but for some indeed a compulsory mode of behaviour, closely related to stigmatised ontologically insecure characters.

4. The Dandy: Character and Personality

Apart from being one of Camp's central images, the dandy turned out to be one of the most prevalent images of 'male androgyny' in the nineteenth century. Oscar Wilde's major works can hardly do without the figure of the dandy maintaining his superiority by giving samples of his wit, what we would nowadays term 'camp' humour. However, as will be shown in this chapter, during the nineteenth century there manifested itself different kinds of dandy figures. First there was the classical dandy, which had its roots in the father of all dandies: George Bryan 'Beau' Brummell. This 'dandiacal' prototype was celebrated in a long essay by Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly at the beginning of the nineteenth century and he thus popularized Brummell and made sure that he was not forgotten. Besides the classical dandy, other dandy figures turned up like the intellectual dandy personified by Charles Baudelaire in Paris and particularly in England the 'Butterfly Dandies' attracted attention as they took dressing-up and effeminate behaviour to new heights.

4.1 Beau Brummell

As far as dandies are concerned (an 'old-fashioned' word by the way), there seems to be one superficial cliché image: a not particularly masculine male, he is fancifully dressed, usually with highly imaginative ideas and tastes. As one dictionary definition has it, not only is it an 'old-fashioned' word but it indicates 'a man who spends a lot of time and money on his clothes and appearance'¹⁴¹. However in this chapter I will show that there are several types of dandies which have to be differentiated. The fact that they fall into different categories will become especially important later when analysing Oscar Wilde's plays and his novel *The Picture of Dorian*

¹⁴¹ Della Summers (ed.), *Dictionary of Contemporary English* (München: Langenscheidt-Longman, 1995), p.344.

Gray. In Wilde's works the figure of the dandy plays a frequent role and is of central importance.

In the many books which have been written about 'dandyism' all writers agree that the first prototype of the dandy which emerged on the London scene at the beginning of the nineteenth century was George Bryan 'Beau' Brummell. Typical of androgynous figures, as in the case of Beau Brummell, is the fact that they seem to occur out of the blue, so-to-speak and appear somewhat alien-like. One important prerequisite for designating an individual a dandy is that a dandy is free from any common ties that would link him to a certain definite background, i.e. family, milieu, social class and even gender. He is 'self-styled' so-to speak fostering in our minds the image of an exceptional individual with no common heritage. In her classic book about 'The Dandy', Ellen Moers describes how Beau Brummel set about this process of self-stylisation:

When Brummell first came up to London he disposed of his brother and sister by cutting them, and disowned his ancestors by alluding to his origins as baser than they were. 'Who ever heard of George B.'s father,' he would say, 'and who would ever have heard of George B. himself, if he had been anything but what he is?'¹⁴²

Beau Brummell took care to conceal his source of income. Having neither a profession nor any attachments or obligations such as wife or children, it was hardly possible to place him in any social hierarchy. It can be maintained that not only did he not fit into the social hierarchy of Regency England, neither did he acknowledge its patriarchal hierarchy. Max Beerbohm, with regard to Brummel in his essay about dandies observes:

¹⁴² Ellen Moers, *The Dandy* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1959), p.18.

Of rank, for its own sake, Mr. Brummell had no love. He patronised all his patrons. Even to the Regent his attitude was always that of a master in an art to one who is sincerely willing and anxious to learn from him.¹⁴³

Brummell was able to break down class barriers. The fact that he had not descended from the aristocracy - his father was a civil servant who had made it into Regency high society – this fact underlines Brummells explosive antipathy towards class structures. Ellen Moers quotes a Mrs Gore in a less charitable mood towards dandies: ‘the dandy was “a nobody, who made himself somebody, and gave the law to everybody”’ (Moers, p.26). As Hans-Joachim Schickedanz¹⁴⁴ points out, Brummel was a self-made man and, as such, it was very difficult to classify or to give this new social type a name. First he was called ‘Buck Brummell’. Outstanding men of fashion in those days were either called ‘macaronies’, ‘buck’ or, as later in Brummell’s case ‘beau’. But all these terms had a negative touch and evoked the image of a fop, a victim to fashion or simply a snob – someone wanting to draw attention to himself and granting himself status by wearing the latest fashion. At first this negative image must also have been true for Brummell. His biographers portray him in his early years as a ‘tuft hunter’, an old-fashioned term for a snob. Later, however, he was described as being a man of quite contrary characteristics as for example a man of ‘understatement’, ‘simplicity’ and ‘natural elegance’ – characteristics we do not normally associate with the cliché image of the dandy. Captain Jesse, who published the first biography about Brummell in 1844 and has still remained the main source for a whole host of subsequent biographers, stated that Brummell’s chief aim was ‘to avoid anything marked’, one of his aphorisms being, that

¹⁴³ Max Beerbohm, *The Works of Max Beerbohm* (London: Heinemann, 1922), p.7.

¹⁴⁴ Hans-Joachim Schickedanz, *Ästhetische Rebellion und rebellische Ästheten* (Frankfurt: Harenberg, 2000), p.4.

the severest mortification a gentleman could incur, was, to attract observation in the street by his outward appearance' (Moers, p.34). That was the reason why Jesse hesitated to classify Brummell even as a dandy as 'the few associations connected with the term all teem with vulgarity [...] He exercised the most correct taste in the selection of each article of apparel, of a form and colour harmonious with the rest, for the purpose of producing a perfectly elegant general effect;' (Schickedanz, p.39-40). Quite similarly Ellen Moers points out in her study that "his distinction was only visible to the initiate" (Moers, p.35). Brummell was influenced regarding his clothing by the practical and simple attire of the English country squire. This austere fashion had its cause not only in the more economical production methods for clothing attire but also expressed a longing for the old aristocratic ideals of the landed gentry in times when the political world was becoming more and more democratic. Here we can literally see the incongruity inherent in all forms of 'camp' – and the 'Dandy' is one of the outstanding figures in camp. On the one hand, he tries to be progressive and ultra-modern, but on the other hand he tries to revive the ideals of a bygone age. Brummell, by adopting the style of an English country squire was trying to signify with his 'dress' a renewal of the old aristocracy, although he himself was not of noble birth.

There are other characteristics regarding the outward appearance of the dandy which at first sight clash with one another but betray a great deal of the psychological make-up of such an individual. Insofar as Brummell was the harbinger of today's modern fashion, he introduced a style emphasising the natural form and outlines of the physical body. Similar to many of today's fashions, according to Hannelore Schlaffer¹⁴⁵, not the clothing models the body, but the body models the clothing. As the natural contours

¹⁴⁵ Hannelore Schlaffer, *Mode, Schule der Frauen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007), p.91.

of the body have more and more come into the focus of fashion, the means of keeping them in good shape, i.e. all kinds of sport and physical exercises have become necessary. How important slimness as a requisite of fashion became is illustrated by an anecdote of the time when the friendship between Brummell and George IV was already on its last legs. The Prince Regent demonstratively once ignored Brummell at a ball at Watier's Club, whereupon Brummell remarked in such a loud voice, to his friend Lord Alvanley so that everyone could overhear it: "Who is your fat friend?" (Moers, p.28) The Prince Regent was not as slim as he once was and in this way Brummell let him understand that, although he was the person with the most political power, he was not and could never be the most fashionable person in London society. Brummel, the dandy, had become an arbiter of who should be admitted to this exclusive society.

Another field where Brummell set modern standards was in cosmetics where he introduced an exemplary physical bodily cleanliness. He was proud of the fact that he did not exude unpleasant odours and that it was not necessary for him to use perfume. In her book Moers gives a detailed description of his bathroom routine:

Then he would shave with extreme care (Brummell never grew whiskers of any kind), wash and scrub and wash again with plenty of good soap and hot water, then scratch his face with a stiff fleshbrush till "he looked very much like a man in the scarlet fever." His last painful chore before dressing was to stand with a magnifying mirror in one hand and tweezer in the other, and pluck out one by one from cheek and chin each hair that had survived shaving and scrubbing. (Moers, p.33).

When focusing on Brummell's body, the outward observer senses something of a contradictory effect. By keeping a slim waist and grooming his skin Brummell draws attention to his body but, at the same time, tries to avert this attention. The energetic scrubbing of his face gives the impression that he is trying, as it were, to wash himself away: He seems to be erasing all signs of masculinity from his body. There is no trace of a beard and his rosy cheeks and waspish waist might be those of a young and innocent girl. He did not use perfume to emphasize his masculinity; on the contrary, his aim was to neutralize any smell from his body thus reducing a sense of his physical presence. Nevertheless he wanted to be seen and acknowledged as the most stylish man about town. 'Dandy' Brummell's physical body appears to swing to and fro like a pendulum between two extreme poles. At one extreme, the dandy is making a great effort to render his body as attractive as possible thus inviting the gaze of a spectator; at the other, he is trying to desexualise and negate the very same body so that nobody might perceive him as a living human being but only as a work of art. This behaviour pattern is a typical example of what R.D. Laing has termed 'ontological insecurity'. The fact that Brummell can neither be placed in a social hierarchy nor, as I will show, can one define his gender, reinforces one's opinion of his view of his precarious mental state.

4.2 Jules Barbey D'Aurevilly: *Du Dandysme et de George Brummell*

Whereas up to now I have merely tried to decode Brummell's outward appearance by relying on the anecdotes in Captain Jesse's first biography, I will take now a closer look at *Du Dandysme et de George Brummell*, a long essay which Jules Amédée Barbey d'Aurevilly privately published in

1844. With this portrayal of dandyism Barbey d'Aurevilly was attempting the first psychological interpretation of the dandy. After closely scrutinizing Brummel's behaviour, at the end of his study he arrives at the same conclusion as I did solely by analysing his outward appearance: namely that the dandy possesses a highly contradictory nature and refuses to be categorized.

Twofold and multiple natures, of an undecidedly sex, their Grace is heightened by their Power, their Power by their Grace; they are the hermaphrodites of History, not of Fable, and Alcibiades was their supreme type, among the most beautiful of the nations.¹⁴⁶

Natures doubles et multiples, d'un sexe intellectuel indécis, où la Grâce est plus Grâce encore dans la Force, et où la Force se retrouve encore dans la Grâce; Androgynes de l'Histoire, non plus de la Fable, et dont Alicibiade fut le plus beau type chez la plus belle des nations.¹⁴⁷

Moreover d'Aurevilly's judgment goes to prove Schickedanz's argument that the specific appearance of Brummell using cosmetics and dressing so fashionably mirrored his psychological self. His inward self and his outward dress formed a unity. This aspect contributes a good deal to the 'camp' image of the dandy: His stylish masquerade – often mistaken by the onlooker simply as a false façade or concealing some aspect or other of his inner self - in fact reveals the truth about his real character. Thus Brummell personified one of the first and foremost definitions of 'camp': 'The lie that tells the truth'.

Brummell was a living work of art or as Barbey points out it in his essay:

¹⁴⁶ Jules Barbey D'Aurevilly, *Dandyism*, transl. by Douglas Ainslie in 1897 (New York: PAJ Publications, 1988), p.78.

¹⁴⁷ Jules Barbey D'Aurevilly, *Du Dandysme et de George Brummell* (Paris, 1861), pp.168-169.

He was a great artist in his way, but his art was not specialized nor manifested within a limited time. It was his life itself, the eternal brilliancy of faculties which are forever active in a man created to live with his fellows. He pleased with his person as others please with their works. (Barbey d'Aurevilly, p.54)

To go back to Barbey's conclusion at the end of his essay, Barbey uses the word 'androgyné'. The English translation has 'hermaphrodite'. This is surely wrong, as it refers nowadays to a medical condition. However, Douglas Ainslie is correct when he translates Barbey's French expression 'd'un sexe intellectuel indéci' by 'of an undecided[ly] sex'. This expression not only refers to the dandy's contradictory 'intellectual' nature but also to contradictions in his nature regarding gender. It is here that Barbey attributes feminine qualities to the dandy by pointing out that '[w]omen will never forgive him [Brummell] for having been graceful as they, men for not having been graceful as he' (d'Aurevilly, p.51). D'Aurevilly, however, continues to 'feminize' dandyism further by choosing Alcibiades as the ideal type of dandy. Plato, in his *Symposium* introduces Alcibiades as the last visitor - a beautiful androgynously looking youth with ribbons dangling from his hair. Alcibiades tells the others at the meal how he had wanted to seduce Socrates with his beauty – but all in vain. Socrates resists his advances and Alcibiades's story turns into a eulogy on Socrates' moral and spiritual strength and thus exemplifies how Alcibiades is initiated into a purely intellectual, platonic attitude to love.

The dandy, as portrayed by d'Aurevilly is a Janus-faced creature, displaying both female and male qualities equally. In Brummell's case this 'dressing-up' is not particularly exaggerated, but nevertheless his charm

and elegance are usually characteristics associated with passive femininity. Disturbingly revolutionary with regard to the dichotomy as far as gender is concerned is that, on the one hand, the dandy turns himself into a passive object of desire - a role traditionally designated to women. On the other hand as Domna C. Stanton¹⁴⁸ points out, the dandy assigned to himself the role of a Circe who is actively trying to seduce and capture people with his charm. Thus it would not be quite accurate to see the dandy as a mere passive 'objet d'art', but rather more as an active, as it were, 'sujet d'art'. Brummell himself was certainly no passive character; he was very influential in setting the standards of taste and fashion, dominating society by judging who might enter fashionable high society or not. This displayed his active masculine qualities. The first impression we get of Brummell then is that of a 'hermaphrodite androgyne', with both masculine and feminine characteristics. But did Brummell actually show any form of desire for any other human being? Was he ever in love, for instance? He remained single all his life.

The main source for all researchers on Brummell's life today is the first biography written on him namely by Captain William Jesse. No emotional attachments are mentioned in this work. For Jesse, Brummell is an aloof character. It is particularly his 'sang froid' and his detached and impassive attitude towards society which are emphasised and which, even today cling to the albeit cliché image of the 'dandy'. However, in the latest biography on Brummell, Ian Kelly expresses his doubts with regard to the reliability of Captain William Jesse's book:

If Jesse is an invaluable source....he is not always a completely reliable or straightforward one. He asked a lot of questions of Brummell's friends and

¹⁴⁸ Domna C. Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p.146-148.

acquaintances, but frequently not the right ones. It took a French writer of the same period to ask Jesse the salient simple question he had missed: was there one great love in Brummell's life?¹⁴⁹

The answer is indefinite. Kelly accuses Jesse of de-sexing Brummell by deliberately covering up his love life. Moreover, in Brummell's medical records in France, Kelly claims to have discovered that for many years he had suffered from syphilis. Where and how he might have contracted this remains unresolved for Kelly too. As potential lovers, he suggests a famous high-society courtesan, Harriette Wilson, or even Lord Byron. It is a fact that Brummell conducted close friendships with both these individuals. But Kelly can provide no evidence as to whether any sex was involved. It is clear that his androgynous looks must have attracted both men and women. However, Kelly, whilst admitting being not sympathetic to the idea of asexuality comes to the conclusion that Brummell must have been sexually unavailable:

Brummell played at affection, was adept at flattery, was evidently attractive and amusing and knew it, but in addition to this he chose deliberately to send out a differing signal. He was also unavailable. (Ian Kelly, p.305)

Brummell must have loved theatricality and, like a German 'Minnesänger', he is reported to have wooed women, especially when he was with of a group of friends: 'They were light-hearted dramas with Brummell casting himself as the juvenile lead: humorous, elegant and enacted as if with an audience in mind or in sight' (Ian Kelly, p.303). Ian Kelly's impression here is in accordance with Domna C. Stanton's theory that the dandy adopted this mere pretension of affection from the tradition of the 'honnête

¹⁴⁹ Ian Kelly, *Beau Brummell: The Ultimate Dandy* (London: Hodder, 2005), p.18.

homme'. The dandy is thus adapting the code of medieval courtly love to his time - then 'love' was systematically desexualised.

Brummell lived his life in a very 'camp' way as if he was constantly on stage and flirting with women was simply part of the performance. Another part of this performance, where there was even a real, live audience present, were his 'levée': he granted certain people the privilege – just after he had risen in the morning - of watching him getting dressed. Of course they had to pay for the performance! All these biographical details concerning Brummell's theatricality indicate that even the general public could enjoy his performances.

Ian Kelly concludes regarding Brummell's gender performance that 'it must be acknowledged that the apparent enigma of Brummell's sexuality was possibly itself a construct of a deliberately beguiling man. Brummell refused to be pinned down' (Ian Kelly, p.311). The inability to classify Brummell's 'gender' makes him a classic example of what Jonathan Dollimore termed 'anti-essentialism'. In the same vein Jessica Feldman points out that 'the answer to the dilemma of dandy and artist lies locked within the stronghold of dichotomous gender, a fortress Barbey repeatedly attacks within his essay on dandyism.'¹⁵⁰ Barbey d'Aurevilly shows that the dandy breaks down the dichotomous gender categories by carefully encouraging people to pay less attention to his physical body. D'Aurevilly illustrates this 'vaporisation' of the dandy's body by describing a fashion prank which came into existence under Brummell.

They had come to the end of impertinences and were at a loss how to proceed, when they hit upon this dandiesque idea, which was to have their clothes torn, before wearing them, through the whole extent of the cloth; so that they become a sort of lace – a cloud. They

¹⁵⁰ Jessica R. Feldman, *Gender on the Divide* (London: Cornell University Press, 1993), p.92.

wanted to walk like Gods in their clouds! (d'Aurevilly, p.32)

Feldman sees in this new fad not only a shedding of clothes but, together with their clothes a discarding of physical bodies.

Together, in their imaginations, they have all but excised the heavy stuff of corporeal life – if clothes do not make the dandy, neither do bodies. Their fancy has nearly dissolved the armor of clothing and has joined them into a kind of unity; they share a cloud: 'Ils voulaient marcher dans leur nuée, ces dieux!' (Feldman, p.57)

The dissolution of the body into a cloud symbolises the unmaking of identity, and in its last consequence reflects a state of ontological insecurity – or to use R.D. Laing's term an 'implosion of identity'. In order to overcome this precarious mental state the dandy needs the affirmative gaze of spectators. As a result the dandy's only source of self-confidence lies in the spectators' eyes. Bearing this in mind the following original saying by Brummell appears psychologically in a completely different light: 'In society, stop until you have made your impression, then go' (D'Aurevilly, p.49). Brummel is not simply a superficial show-off. The initial visual approval of society was for him highly affirmative and all-important for constituting and sustaining his sense of identity – for feeling himself self-confidently alive. By distinguishing himself in his fashion in clothing, the dandy is trying to gain this self-confidence. However, before this awareness by society becomes too penetrating it is better for the dandy to physically withdraw and not offer his body for general consumption. For Jessica Feldman this 'extinction' of the body is also mirrored in d'Aurevilly's text. The latter only loosely connects one cameo of thought after another. The main body of the text seems to be taken over by a mass of footnotes.

According to R. D. Laing a heightened self-consciousness always goes hand in hand with a psychological state of ontological insecurity. An antidote to pressing self-awareness, which I have already mentioned, is either a negation of one's own body or the so-called petrification of the people surrounding you. The dandy turns the people surrounding him into stone, as it were, by silencing them. Barbey d'Aurevilly:

Like all Dandies he preferred astonishing to pleasing,[...]His witticisms crucified; but his impertinence was too great to be condensed and fit into epigram.[...] Impertinence is a veiled genius and does not need the help of words to appear; without any accentuation, its power is far greater than that of the most brilliant epigram; it is the best shield against the vanity of others, so often hostile, and the best cloak to cover one's own weaknesses.(d'Aurevilly, p.56)

Like all dandies Brummel has a Medusa's head. By being cynical and sarcastic but also by coming up with something completely unexpected dandies baffle their interlocutors in such a way that the latter are lost for words, avert their gaze and withdraw. The dandy, unlike Medusa carries the snakes not on his head but in his mouth, as it were: his tongue is the snake that bites. The dandy's impertinent remarks serve him as a protection device to maintain his shaky sense of identity.

Closely connected with the dandy's 'vaporisation' of his body is a state of self-sufficiency which serves him as a shield against his aching self-awareness. D'Aurevilly openly describes such a state:

Brummell, for he was vain, an Englishman, and a Dandy! Like all practical people, who are never absent from themselves and possess faith and will only live for immediate pleasures, he never desired others and

enjoyed these [...] to their fullest extent. (D'Aurevilly, p.58)

Thus, it seems, to protect his precarious state of mind, close relationships for the dandy are impossible. He might experience them as a threat to his own sense of identity. Again, this fear of 'engulfment' by another personality, as Laing calls it, is depicted by d'Aurevilly. The latter gives reasons why the dandy cannot afford to fall in love:

[...] for to love, even in the least lofty acceptance of the word – to desire – is always to depend, to be the slave of one's desire. The arms that clasp you the most tenderly are still a chain, [...] Brummell escaped that form of slavery. His triumphs had all the insolence of disinterestedness (D'Aurevilly, p.47-48).

The difficulty which the reader of d'Aurevilly's text encounters is, according to Feldman, that d'Aurevilly's portrait of Brummell somehow develops into a portrait of d'Aurevilly himself. There are many similarities to be found regarding their psychological make-up. If one considers a few details of Barbey's life, it becomes apparent why they both were spiritually and intellectually related. Superficially d'Aurevilly, too, loved to dress up in a flamboyant style. However, not so elegantly, tastefully and discretely as Brummell. A much more interesting fact is that Jessica R. Feldman discovered that d'Aurevilly suffered from a crushing sense of self-entrapment. His heightened sense of self-consciousness seems to have culminated in the following desire: 'I do not know what I would have given this evening not to be myself' (Feldman, p.71). A technique d'Aurevilly often uses to submerge his own identity is to obscure it with another identity. Thus it seems that, according to Feldman again 'the distrustful reader may find in *Du Dandysme* the record of one man (Barbey) devouring another [i.e. Brummell]' (Feldman, p.77).

In d'Aurevilly's letters and journals Feldman has unearthed many portraits 'demonstrating the types of people to whom Barbey was strongly attracted and the ways in which he explained to himself that attraction' (Feldman, p.58). When, with a Dr. Vatel, d'Aurevilly visited mental wards of hospitals in Normandy, out of all the inmates he picked a group of 'catatonic' men – 'affected by a condition in which you cannot think, speak, or move any part of your body.'¹⁵¹ These men were so victimised by an unspeakable sorrow that they had turned into living sculptures, as it were. Barbey must have seen in these catatonically affected patients the same psychological pattern he found in a milder form in the 'dandy' and perhaps in himself. The self-absorption of these men was so complete that they took no notice of the world outside. A similar stance can be detected in the dandy's stoicism and, in order to protect his precarious inner self, his determination not to be affected by the exterior world.

4.3 Charles Baudelaire: The Bohemian Dandy

Charles Baudelaire got to know d'Aurevilly's treatise on the dandy very soon after it was published in 1845. He accepted and thoroughly imbibed all of d'Aurevilly's ideas on dandyism. However, Baudelaire's achievement was to develop d'Aurevilly's concepts even further and to focus much more on an intellectual dandyism. Unfortunately, Baudelaire's esteem of d'Aurevilly's essay was so great that, as a result, having set his own creative standards so high, he never got round to finishing his own study of the dandy which he had always intended to publish one day. He did however, leave scattered fragments of his attempts to explain the dandy

¹⁵¹ Summers, Della (ed.), *Dictionary of Contemporary English* (München: Langenscheidt-Longman, 1995), p.200.

in some of his essays, most especially in 'Mon coeur mis a nu', 'Fusées' and 'Le peintre de la vie moderne'. Moreover, in his essay 'Notes nouvelles sur Edgar Poe' he paints a picture of the ideal dandy, where he turns Poe into his artistic counterpart and simultaneously identifies with him.

Aristocrate de nature plus encore que de naissance, le Virginien, l'homme du Sud, le Byron égaré dans un mauvais monde, a toujours gardé son impassibilité philosophique.¹⁵²

Baudelaire, too, sees Edgar Allen Poe as a member of a natural aristocracy, an aristocracy of ideas. He also praises his stoicism, one of the main traits of the dandy. The main reason why Baudelaire felt such a great affinity to Poe must have been, for both of them, their precarious social status - both were social outcasts.

Baudelaire first started out in the manner of the second generation of dandies, copies of the original Beau Brummel: flamboyantly dressed-up English butterfly dandies. Examples were Count d'Orsay, George Bulwer-Lytton or Benjamin Disraeli. Baudelaire himself curled and dyed his long hair and wore light-pink gloves over his polished fingernails. But after spending more than 50,000 francs in one year, he was placed under the care of a guardian and his annual income reduced. This meant that his extravagant days as a butterfly dandy were over and he underwent a profound change. He could be more frequently discovered amongst people from a lower-class bohemia assembling in Café Momus in Paris, experimenting with cocaine, drugs and alcohol – thus leading a life similar to Edgar Allen Poe on the brink of society. It is also interesting to note here that, in association with Edgar Allen Poe, Baudelaire also mentions

¹⁵² Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres Complètes II* (Paris : Gallimard, 1976), p.322.

Lord Byron. Baudelaire seems to have been still influenced by the dark Romanticism of which Byron was the most prominent and influential representative in France as Domna Stanton says in *The Aristocrat as Art*: ‘Consciously anachronistic in their revolt against bourgeois life, the Jeunes-France clung to the early Byronic model after other dandies had discarded it.’¹⁵³ Byron became the leading figure of French Romanticism and with him certain dark negative aspects of Romanticism came to be seen in a positive light. Stanton concludes: ‘Whatever else Byronism may contain or imply, it is primarily an aristocratic system which exalts the self as it condemns established order, moral and religious codes, humanity and the universe at large’ (Stanton, p.35). Baudelaire adhered to Byronism and thus to French Romanticism. This explains why he incorporated a certain dark side of life into his brand of dandyism as, for example, drugs, satanic crimes, sexual debaucheries, suffering and melancholy. The typical world-weariness which allows the Byronic hero to turn to the dark side of life is expressed by Byron in ‘Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage’:

It is not love, it is not hate,
Nor low Ambition’s honours lost,
That bids me loathe my present state,
And fly from all I prized the most:

It is that weariness which springs
From all I meet, or hear, or see:
To me no pleasure Beauty brings;
Thine eyes have scarce a charm for me.

It is that settled, ceaseless gloom
The fabled Hebrew Wanderer bore;
That will not look beyond the tomb,
But cannot hope for rest before.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Domna C. Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p.37.

¹⁵⁴ Lord Byron, *Byron’s Poetry*, edited by Frank D. McConnel (New York: Norton, 1978), p.47.

Byron's continued strong influence in France was thus the reason why the image of the French Romantic hero merged with that of the dandy. Whereas d'Aurevilly's dandy only dallied with certain social conventions, Baudelaire's conception of the dandy now began breaking these conventions and leading an existence beyond the confines of society. It must be noted, however, that he had no aristocratic friends, but by behaving as an aristocrat, according to Ellen Moers he was an '[aristocratic] dandy lost in bohemia' (Moers, p.273). Thus this dandy was not active in society itself, but was merely an onlooker or commentator, strolling through the parks and shopping galleries in Paris. He became known as a 'flâneur', not caring about society's opinion of him but needing nevertheless the 'bourgeoisie' as a supportive contrast. Although Baudelaire himself was not able to enjoy economic freedom, he saw it as a necessary precondition for dandies:

Ils possèdent ainsi, à leur grè et dans une vaste mesure, le temps et l'argent, sans lesquels la fantasie, réduite à l'état de rêverie passagère, ne peut guère se traduire en action. (Baudelaire, Oeuvres Complètes II, p.710)

Baudelaire could not turn his flights of fantasy into reality without the necessary money. It became an intellectual form of dandyism, a dandyism of ideas. It was so-to-speak internalized and not expressed in any form of showy clothing fashion. When Baudelaire turned into this type of intellectual dandy he started to dress in black and his long jacket reminded the onlooker of a monastic cloak. Again, as in Beau Brummel's case, the psychological make-up of this new type of dandy seems expressed in his attire, reflecting his inner mental state. Hans-Joachim Schickedanz, writing on aesthetic rebellion and rebelling aesthetes sees in Baudelaire's black attire some form of protective shield (Schickedanz, *Aesthetische Rebellion*, p.116). It is however, also a way of reducing a dandy's physicality and

concentrating on his intellect and ideas. It is therefore very difficult placing Baudelaire's dandy in any social, historical and hierarchical spectrum. When Baudelaire defines the dandy in 'Le peintre de la vie moderne' he writes that:

Le dandysme apparaît surtout aux époques transitoires où la démocratie n'est pas encore toute-puissante, où l'aristocratie n'est que partiellement chancelante et avilie. Dans le trouble de ces époques quelques hommes déclassés, dégoûtés, désœuvrés, mais tous riches de force native, peuvent concevoir le projet de fonder une espèce nouvelle d'aristocratie, d'autant plus difficile à rompre qu'elle sera basée sur les facultés les plus précieuses, les plus indestructibles, et sur les dons célestes que le travail et l'argent ne peuvent conférer. Le dandysme est le dernier éclat d'héroïsme dans les décadences; (Baudelaire, Oeuvres Compl. II, p.711)

For Baudelaire the dandy seemed not to belong to his own time. On the one hand, with his dignified manner: His pride and his decision not to have to work for a living but to live a life of pleasure, this means placing the dandy back in the bygone age of the absolute power of the aristocratic. On the other hand the ideas a dandy bases his 'aristocracy' on, for example socialism, which Baudelaire mentions in connection with Poe, seem to belong to an idealistic future. On the other hand, according to Baudelaire, they may be so temporarily high-flown that they betray a dandy's distinctive superiority. 'C'est lui qui a dit, à propos du socialisme, à l'époque où celui-ci n'avait pas encore un nom, où ce nom du moins n'était pas tout à fait vulgarisé' (Baudelaire, p.324). In general, however, a dandy for Baudelaire simply plays with various ideas. He never commits himself to a creed in which he might become completely absorbed and loses his individual identity.

This new type of nineteenth century dandy dislikes everything connected with the up-and-coming bourgeoisie, with its practical sense for leading an utilitarian life. Such a dandy leads a timeless existence. He lives in an artificial paradise often induced by drugs; he is wrapped up completely in himself and immersed in self-analysis. The physical body of Baudelaire's dandy can never be recognised in any present time – he seems always to be a fugitive, forever on the run. It is therefore, impossible to attach any signifiers regarding class, politics, religion or even gender to such a volatile physical body. Writing about d'Aurevilly's dandy I pointed out that his most prominent characteristic was his artificiality. Brummel turned himself into an active 'sujet d'art'. Baudelaire's dandy strives for a complete metamorphosis from a physical human body into a living work of art:

Le caractère de beauté du dandy consiste surtout dans l'air froid qui vient de l'inébranlable résolution de ne pas être ému; on dirait un feu latent qui se fait deviner, qui pourrait mais qui ne veut pas rayonner. C'est ce qui est, dans ces images, parfaitement exprimé. (Baudelaire, p.712).

A complete impassivity characterises Baudelaire's dandy. Only when his spirit shines through his emotionless outward appearance, does this impassivity seem to vanish for a second. For Baudelaire this type of dandy thrives on displaying a remote and cold façade to the outside world.

For Baudelaire naturalness often seems imperfect and even hostile. He strives therefore for some form of artificiality. It is not surprising then that he favours make-up to improve one's natural complexion. In his essay 'Éloge du Maquillage' he states that 'Le maquillage n'a pas à se cacher, à éviter de se laisser deviner; au contraire, s'étaler, sinon avec affectation, au moins avec une espèce de candeur' (Baudelaire, p.717). According to

Baudelaire make-up should not be used to imitate nature, to be as inconspicuous as possible. It is the obvious and recognisable artificiality of make-up that creates, for him, a beautiful effect. In this context Baudelaire's attitude to women is understandable. In his personal notes, 'Mon coeur mis a nu', he states that for him 'La femme est naturelle, c'est-à-dire abominable. Aussi est-elle toujours vulgaire, c'est-à-dire le contraire du dandy.'¹⁵⁵ A woman, in her natural state, for Baudelaire is disgusting. Reduced to her pure body, she reminds him of a mother figure of fertility – a body created merely for the useful function of procreation symbolising the instinctive sexual needs of human beings. She reminds him of an animal. In contrast, the dandy, by negating his body and thus liberating it from all useful functions becomes the absolute opposite of the natural female. Only when a woman gives up being controlled by her natural body and converts herself, with the help of 'artificial' make-up into an ephemeral goddess, can Baudelaire tolerate her.

Among all the available instruments of the transformative principle, none achieves the passage from subject to object more dramatically or more radically than make-up, a metonym for the entire process of making oneself up, making up for one's natural deficiencies, or better, making oneself into what one naturally is not.
(Stanton, p.183)

Baudelaire's relation to women seems to have a quite fetishist quality. He seems to be only able to appreciate the female sex when he can admire her clothes, her jewellery and her make-up, i.e. all the trappings which draw attention away from her body. Only when this apparent desexualisation of the female body is complete can Baudelaire see the woman as a 'work of art', as a kind of ephemeral Madonna. Only then can he appreciate her.

¹⁵⁵ Charles Baudelaire, *Journaux Intimes* (Paris : Gallimard, 1949), p.53.

La femme est bien dans son droit, et même elle accomplit une espèce de devoir en s'appliquant à paraître magique et surnaturelle; il faut qu'elle étonne, qu'elle charme ; idole, elle doit se dorer pour être adorée. (Baudelaire, pp. 716-717)

Baudelaire's aesthetic attitude towards women goes back to his childhood. In 'Fusées' he confesses to being a 'precocious dandy' for he loved his mother only for her 'elegance': 'Enfin, j'aimais ma mère pour son élégance. J'étais donc un dandy précoce' (Baudelaire, *Journaux Intimes*, p.27). We must always bear in mind that for Baudelaire the dandy evades any specific identification and seems to the outsider like a physical 'bodiless' anti-bourgeois observing society from a sublime distance. Thus it is only logical to conclude that such a dandy's sense of being alive must be very insecure. In this context he writes 'Le Dandy doit aspirer à être sublime sans interruption; il doit vivre et dormir devant un miroir' (Baudelaire, p.54). This becomes one of the core descriptive definitions of the dandy's psyche. Similarly R.D. Laing stated, that an ontologically insecure person such as a dandy must continually reassure himself that he is alive. For the earlier Barbeyan dandy the use of Baudelaire's mirror had not become reality as he was still accepted and had an active part to play in society. Now, for Baudelaire his, let us say, 'internal mirror' has become an integral and necessary part of sustaining his identity. Accordingly, Schickedanz points out that Baudelaire's dandy, because he is not directly participating in life and is continuously analyzing himself, this dandy is afflicted by melancholy and all kinds of neurotic disorders which might culminate in losing his own identity (Schickedanz, p.121). Stanton, too, argues in the same vein when she sees in the dandy an extremely good actor, living his life as if he were continually on stage. She also adds that his 'degree of artistry presupposes the self-distantiation of

the actor, the dispassionate evaluation of one's own performance...Such objectivity with respect to the self affords an indispensable emotional detachment'(Stanton, p.185).

However, in order to preserve his identity, for the dandy this 'internal mirror' is not enough. He is not completely self-sufficient; he also needs the attention, the gaze of the general public. In order to attract this attention, Baudelaire did not concentrate so much on his appearance, but began spreading disturbing rumours about himself, for instance that he was a real masochist devoted to self-flagellation. These humiliating stories, by the way, were not true. They did, of course, provide him with the necessary publicity:

C'est avant tout le besoin ardent de se faire une originalité, contenu dans les limites extérieures des convenances.[...] C'est le plaisir d'étonner et la satisfaction orgueilleuse de ne jamais être étonné. Un dandy peut être un homme blasé, peut être un homme souffrant; mais, dans ce dernier cas, il sourira comme le Lacédémonien sous la morsure du renard. (Baudelaire, p.710)

As indicated by Baudelaire in the quotation above, these upsetting and untrue rumours he invented about himself had a two-fold effect. On the one hand, they deepened the interest in his persona, but on the other hand, they discredited him so much that the general public kept their distance from him. Both effects were intended by Baudelaire and led to the typical 'to-ing and fro-ing', which can be observed regarding ontologically insecure personalities. They need the interested gaze of the public to feel alive but when the staring becomes too piercing they are either petrified or ignore those surrounding them or keep them at a safe distance. Baudelaire acts similarly in that he is not particularly clever at close repartee – as was the case with Beau Brummel. The dandy, as defined by Baudelaire

dehumanizes those around him, turning them, as it were, into machines. For instance, when Baudelaire is considering the pros and cons of classifying the painter Constantin Guys as a dandy, he decides that he cannot possibly be one. He writes:

Je le nommerais volontiers un dandy, et j'aurais pour cela quelques bonnes raisons; car le mot dandy implique une quintessence de caractère et une intelligence subtile de tout le mécanisme moral de ce monde; mais, d'un autre côté, le dandy aspire à l'insensibilité, et c'est par là que M.G., qui est dominé, lui, par une passion insatiable, celle de voir et de sentir, se détache violemment du dandysme. (Baudelaire, p.691)

Oswald Wiener, in his essay 'Eine Art Einzige'¹⁵⁶ ('A Kind of Unique Individual'), also argues that for being classed as a 'dandy' is important the latter's superior awareness to see through the moral mechanisms of society and to reduce them to a simple set of rules. The dandy perceives society around him functioning automatically like clockwork, following certain rules of which only he is aware of. Realising this, he therefore no longer feels threatened by the general public's intrusive attention. In this context it is perhaps interesting to note that a twentieth century dandy such as Andy Warhol is quoted as saying in an interview that he believed that everyone should behave like 'a machine', even Warhol himself.¹⁵⁷

If we return to the dandy's type of masochistic self-abasement, there is even a third effect the dandy tries to achieve. According to Günter Erbe¹⁵⁸ the dandy, with his self-inflicted humiliation is striving to arrive at a synthesis of all that represents human superiority, such as with a warrior, a

¹⁵⁶ Oswald Wiener, 'Eine Art Einzige', in Verena von der Heyden-Rynsch (ed.), *Riten der Selbstauflösung* (München: Matthes & Seitz, 1982), pp. 43-48.

¹⁵⁷ Andy Warhol, 'Interview', in Verena von der Heyden-Rynsch (ed.), *Riten der Selbstauflösung*, (München: Matthes & Seitz, 1982), p. 298.

¹⁵⁸ Günter Erbe, *Dandys: Virtuosen der Lebenskunst* (Köln: Böhlau, 2002), p.189-190.

poet and/or a priest. Stanton takes up the same line of thought when comparing the dandy to a type of secularized saint. Comparing the life of Baudelaire's dandy with a 'prideful Imitatio Christi', she feels 'the Christian ascetic equates superiority with a capacity for suffering modeled after the Christian martyr' (Stanton, p.195). On the one hand, this silent suffering evokes Baudelaire's ideal of beauty:

J'ai trouvé la définition du Beau, - de mon
Beau. C'est quelque chose d'ardent et de
triste, quelque chose d'un peu vague, laissant
carrière à la conjecture. (Baudelaire,
Journaux Intimes, p.21)

For Baudelaire melancholy is an indispensable ingredient for beauty (for the 'Beau'), as also is the ability to bravely endure a tragic fate. On the other hand, when he conjures up the image of a saint who tries to transcend his body by suffering, this again leads to one of the main characteristic of the dandy namely his refusal to attach any signifiers. As we have seen he does all he can, in fact, to 'dissolve' his body.

4.4 The Butterfly Dandies

Just when Baudelaire was bringing dandyism in France to new intellectual heights, in England - where dandyism all began - a new type of dandy was arriving on the London scene. The most prominent examples were Benjamin Disraeli, Edward George Bulwer-Lytton and Alfred d'Orsay. They were seen as a late flowering of the Regency dandies. They brought a new sweetness as it were to dandyism and were classified as 'butterfly dandies'. The originality of these dandies was most obvious in their

clothing. They dressed in an ostentatious and florid style and by posturing in such a theatrical fashion they were hoping to make an impression on London society: 'dressing up' was their forte. These 'butterfly' dandies stood in complete contrast to, as Max Beerbohm rightly observes,

[...] to Beau Brummel's utter simplicity of his attire. The 'countless rings' affected by D'Orsay, the many little golden chains, 'every one of them slighter than a cob-web,' that Disraeli loved to insinuate from one pocket to another of his vest, would have seemed vulgar to Mr. Brummell.¹⁵⁹

In 'Sartor Resartus' (1834) Thomas Carlyle criticises the dandy with the well-known lines:

A Dandy is a Clothes-wearing Man, a Man whose trade, office and existence consists in the wearing of Clothes. [...] so that as others dress to live, he lives to dress.¹⁶⁰

This however is only true with regard to the species of dandy which we now call a 'butterfly' dandy. For example, Carlyle knew Alfred d'Orsay in person and received him as a visitor. When he was writing the chapter in his book on the 'Dandiacal Body' he must have had d'Orsay and all the other dandies of his type in mind but not, however, their famous predecessor, Beau Brummell. This argument is supported by the fact that Carlyle mentions Henry Pelham, the eponymous hero in Bulwer-Lytton's novel whose character is drawn from the author himself. He appears in the same chapter entitled 'The Dandiacal Body' as 'the leading Teacher and Preacher of the [Dandiacal] Sect' (Carlyle, p.209).

¹⁵⁹ Max Beerbohm, *The Works of Max Beerbohm* (London: Heinemann, 1922), p.4.

¹⁶⁰ Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* (London: Everyman, 1984), p.204.

In his long essay *Du Dandysme et de George Brummel*, Barbey d'Aurevilly tries to correct Carlyle's misunderstanding with regard to Brummel by pointing out that 'Dandyism is a complete theory of life and its material is not its only side' (D'Aurevilly, p.31). However, Carlyle's sweeping statement on the dandy has become fixed in people's minds. Another difference between Brummel and the later dandies is according to Beerbohm that Mr. Brummell was a dandy, nothing but a dandy whereas D'Orsay, Disraeli and Bulwer-Lytton were more or less 'artistes manqués'. The latter were exhibitionists trying to further their careers as 'artistes' – Disraeli and Bulwer-Lytton as novelists and D'Orsay as a painter. In order to gain a better understanding as to how these 'butterfly' dandies saw themselves, invaluable insight is offered by Bulwer-Lytton's, at that time very popular and fashionable novel *Pelham or, The Adventures of a Gentleman*, published in 1828. As stated already, at that time Pelham, the protagonist, might be considered Bulwer-Lytton's alter-ego. Later in life, however, he distanced himself from the novel. At the beginning of Vol. 1, Chapter X, Pelham is trying to find a way of entering Parisian high society:

On entering Paris I had resolved to set up 'a character'; for I was always of an ambitious nature, and desirous of being distinguished from the ordinary herd. After various cogitations as to the particular one I should assume, I thought nothing appeared more likely to be remarkable among men, and therefore pleasing to women, than an egregious coxcomb: accordingly I arranged my hair into ringlets, dressed myself with singular plainness and simplicity (a low person, by the by, would have done just the contrary) and, putting on an air of exceeding languor, made my maiden appearance at Lord Bennington's.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ Edward George Bulwer-Lytton, *Pelham: Or, the Adventures of a Gentleman* (Doylestown: Wildside Press, 2004), p.31.

The passage quoted above is typical of Pelham and the ‘butterfly’ dandy. Not only that, Bulwer-Lytton is depicting what might be an ambivalent image of himself. In order to conquer Parisian society and characteristic of this Regency ‘second’ generation of dandy, Pelham decides to dress up as a ‘coxcomb’ but later in the quotation above, we see him adopting one of Brummell’s ideas by trying to tone down his form of dress. In fact, Bulwer-Lytton is continually introducing Brummell’s ideas into the novel. Even Brummell himself appears - disguised under the name of Mr Russelton. Pelham, however, cannot live up to Brummell’s form of dandyism. Both he, and indeed Bulwer-Lytton himself, do succeed in choosing plainer colours for their clothing, but the overall effect of Pelham (and possibly Bulwer-Lytton) with beautiful curly hair in ‘ringlets’ is so effeminate that, I am sure, Brummel would never have approved of them.

The same is true with Pelham’s attitude towards women. In spite of admiring Russelton’s vow never to fall in love with a woman, in the end Pelham marries for love and settles down to lead a professional life just like Bulwer-Lytton himself. *Pelham* ‘was hailed by the French critics as the complete manual of dandyism’ (Stanton, 38-39). However, the ‘un-dandiacal’ ending of the novel was ignored by the critics as a *dénouement* for being too unfashionable. The reason why Bulwer-Lytton, Disraeli and d’Orsay and others could never become true ‘Beau Brummel’ dandies is mentioned by Barbey D’Aurevilly in a footnote in his book on dandyism:

[...] that social *lion* D’Orsay, with all his Atlas beauty, was not a Dandy. His was a nature infinitely more complex, [...] His shapely hand was given with such a grace as to win all hearts; how different from the haughty touch of Dandyism! D’Orsay pleased and delighted *everyone* so much that even men wore his portrait!

While Dandies make men wear – you know what –
and please women by displeasing them. (In
 criticizing one should never forget that detail.) In
 one word D’Orsay was a kindly king; now,
 kindness is a sentiment unknown to Dandies.
 (D’Aurevilly, p.60)

The ‘butterfly’ dandy did not frighten or even surprise the people around him. Neither did he engage in what Domna C. Stanton calls the ‘L’ *Art de plaire en déplaisant*: “a perverse interplay of attraction and repulsion that fulfils a need to captivate people who are deemed inferior, and who will lionize the very individual who showers them with contempt” (Stanton, p.146). Although when they first meet Mr Russelton explains this quite sado-masochistic behaviour to Pelham, he does not follow Russelton’s example:

I will tell you the simple secret, Mr. Pelham – it
 was because I trampled on them, that, like
 crushed herbs, they sent up a grateful incense in
 return.

Oh! It was balm to my bitter and loathing
 temper, to see those who would have spurned
 me from them, if they dared, writhe beneath my
 lash, as I withheld or inflicted it at will.
 (Bulwer-Lytton, p.121)

In contrast to this first form of dandyism, all ‘butterfly dandies’ were out to please society thus going back to the old ideal of the ‘*honnête homme*’, to ‘*l’art de plaire*’, the art of pleasing. This had to do mainly with the fact that they were all intent on making a successful career of their lives: both Bulwer-Lytton and Disraeli were successful in the field of politics but d’Orsay, for financial reasons, first had to gain the sympathy of his eventual rich benefactors, Lord and Lady Blessington. In his novel, for example, as we have seen Bulwer-Lytton depicts how Pehlam charms his way into the highest social circles to further his political career. Those dandies who

suffered from ontological insecurity enjoyed creating a sensation, and were out to gain as much attention as possible for themselves in society.

However, it is said that when he was writing Bulwer-Lytton sat in front of a mirror simply to reassure himself that he was alive. In those days this has simply been regarded as vanity.

4.5 Dandyism / Metrosexuality

As we have seen the most striking feature causing all the public attention and allowing the ‘butterfly dandies’ to stand out from the rest of high society was their openly displayed effeminacy. According to Elisa Glick it would be wrong though to infer from this fact that

the dandy always has been gay or thought to have been gay. For Beau Brummel and the Regency dandies of the early nineteenth century, for example, there was not a clear-cut association of effeminate dandyism and same-sex desire. But, as Alan Sinfield and Ed Cohen have convincingly argued, after Oscar Wilde’s trial in 1895, the effeminate dandy was linked to the homosexual in the public imagination.¹⁶²

There was no recognisable modern conception of gay identity at the beginning of the nineteenth century and thus most of society would not have automatically linked ‘butterfly’ dandyism with homosexuality. It was only since the scandal caused by Wilde’s trial that Dandyism, of which Wilde was one of its most prominent examples at that time, became inscribed with homoerotic desire. Before Wilde’s trial the figure of the dandy in his works and he himself was associated with the aristocracy which evoked images of dissolution, debauchery and also a libertine ethos which stood in contrast to

¹⁶² Elisa Glick, *Materializing Queer Desire: Oscar Wilde to Andy Warhol* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), p.7.

the ethics of a hard-working and pious middle-class. For Alan Sinfield before the fall of Wilde

The history of effeminacy [...] as it runs through the rake, the fop, and the man of feeling – means that the Wildean dandy – so far from looking like a queer – was distinctively exonerated from such suspicions. Because of his class identification [with the aristocracy], or aspiration, he above all need not be read as identified with same-sex practices. At the same time, however, the dissolute aristocrat might indulge in any kind of debauchery; so while same-sex passion was not ruled in, neither was it ruled out.¹⁶³

Regarding effeminacy in men the dandy can in fact be seen as developing from the rakes and fops prevalent in Restoration comedies. Although behaving effeminately, prancing and giggling around and dressing up in provocative clothing, they were, in fact, often aggressive womanisers. George E. Haggerty in *Men in Love* concludes that it is difficult to differentiate between gay and straight fops:

Even when fops are accused of ‘running into unnatural Vices,’ as if they had taken up gambling or drinking, they are not accused of *being* unnatural. This is the distinction that I would like to keep alive.¹⁶⁴

The problem how to distinguish between gay and straight fops in the eighteenth century continues, as I will show, even into the twenty-first century when we nowadays speak of the ‘metrosexual’ – a heterosexual version of the dandy.

¹⁶³ Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century* (London: Cassell, 1994), p.71.

¹⁶⁴ George E. Haggerty, *Men in Love* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p.53.

However, when taking another look at D'Orsay, he must have made an embarrassing impression on society with his effeminate appearance otherwise, when he paid her husband Thomas a visit, Jane Carlyle would not have written: 'his beauty is of that rather disgusting sort which seems to be [...] "of no sex"' (Moers, p.161). The reason why the general public tolerated or even accepted this type of dandy's effeminate behaviour, according to Ellen Moers, must have been that the Victorians forgave such effeminacy, elegance and irresponsibility in peace-time 'by the supposition that (in war-time) they would die for their country like brave Englishmen and true Christians' (Moers, p.256). Pelham argues similarly when, in his fifth maxim recalling Brummel's dandyism, he writes:

Remember that none but those whose courage is unquestionable, can venture to be effeminate. It was only in the field that the Lacedemonians were accustomed to use perfumes and curl their hair. (Bulwer-Lytton, p.162)

Furthermore, at that time effeminacy was often seen by civilised people as something positive, a welcome refinement especially in rough, animal-like males to render them more pleasing and attractive to women. The above-mentioned efforts to excuse their apparent 'gay'-ness, of course did not stand the test of time. There are many brave 'gay' men in the army and gays come in all shapes and sizes: rough and bearish types as well as more refined and feminine types. One indicator that might 'restore' their heterosexuality for us today would be if they had all married and had fathered children. No above mentioned 'butterfly' dandy would pass that test. In the latest biography of Count d'Orsay, Nick Foulkes¹⁶⁵ writes that d'Orsay's marriage to the daughter of Lord and Lady Blessington, his

¹⁶⁵ Nick Foulkes, *Last of the Dandies: The Scandalous Life and Escapades of Count D'Orsay* (London: Little, Brown, 2003), p.159.

benefactors, remained unconsummated. Foulkes also tries to find proof for the stories that D'Orsay had an affair with Lady Blessington - or even with Lord Blessington - but all this, together with his rumoured impotence, remains pure speculation. For Victorian society, D'Orsay was a married man and thus there was no cause to associate him with unnatural vices. D'Orsay was an aristocratic Frenchman and it was even expected that he might behave in an overly refined and effeminate manner.

It was also rumoured that Benjamin Disraeli was homosexually inclined, one of his lovers being E. G. Bulwer-Lytton. But this will be further discussed in the chapter on 'Vivian Grey'. In order to settle his enormous debts, Disraeli entered a marriage of convenience which, by the way, to his own surprise turned out in the end to be true love. However his outlandish behaviour would not have surprised society in those days – after all, he was a very Mediterranean-looking Jew!

If one began to analyse the former 'butterfly dandies' from a modern perspective, they would today be labelled 'metrosexual'. Such 'modern' dandies can be seen as 'straight' men with a somewhat 'queer' form of masculinity. Detailed definitions of straight men and their 'queer' masculinity have been produced by Robert Heasley, but before trying to put the 'butterfly dandy' into one of his categories it is necessary to go back to d'Aurevilly's description of D'Orsay. Here he mentions that both women and men kept pictures of him. Such an attitude towards the famous reminds us today of pop cultdom. There are also today male media celebrities who owe a great deal of their fame to the fact that they often try to feminize conventional masculinity by assuming 'queer'-identified characteristics - a prerequisite for metrosexuality, despite the fact that they often assure their audience of their heterosexuality. Examples in this

context are, for instance, the British soccer player David Beckham, especially in his latest commercials for underwear, or the rock star Mick Jagger or David Bowie in his youth with his then androgynous looks. Robert Heasley classifies straight males who intentionally and openly adopt female styles for the media – styles which are traditionally associated with gay male culture – he classifies these as ‘stylistic straight-queers’:

These ‘stylistic straight-queers’ allow themselves to develop and display an aesthetic, such as stylish hair cuts and clothes, having facials and pedicures. In so doing, they are attracting the attention of gay men, as well as those straight males who can identify with the border crossing identities. They also get the attention of straight women who find themselves attracted to what is perceived as a ‘gay’ aesthetic or a ‘gay’ sensitivity. Straight males in this category are taking risks of being rejected by hegemonic hetero-masculine males while at the same time they can gain commercial and sexual capital from the appeal to both straight women and a segment of the queer male population.¹⁶⁶

‘Butterfly dandies’ also displayed this ‘border crossing’ behaviour and in their case certainly benefited from it in their careers. They were also frowned upon, however, and criticised as mere ‘coxcombs’ and fops by intellectuals such as Thomas Carlyle or William Thackeray. Ellen Moers again in *The Dandy*: ‘In their philosophy a compromise between the good life and the decorative life was impossible; total renunciation was required. [...] Only a man *in a Jacket* was a man’(Moers, p.203).

¹⁶⁶ Robert Heasley, ‘Crossing the Borders of Gendered Sexuality: Queer Masculinities of Straight Men’, in Chrys Ingraham (ed.), *Thinking straight: The Power, Promise and Paradox of Heterosexuality* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp.121-122.

4.6 Synopsis

In contrast to the original dandy, the ‘butterfly’ dandy emerges as a hermaphrodite male androgyne with both female and male identifiers. He uses these male and female attributes to wield power in society and, to further his career, exploiting the positive attention he receives from both men and women.

Beau Brummell, the original dandy, and, to a much greater extent Baudelaire’s intellectual ‘dandy’ shy away from any form of identification regarding gender or class which might refer to their bodies. The result of this is not, as in the case of D’Orsay, Bulwer-Lytton or Disraeli an actual physical body constituting dandyism but something less tangible beyond the simple physical body. Both Beau Brummel and Baudelaire appear as asexual male androgynes, trying to maintain their sense of being.

The question whether the figure of the dandy signified same-sex passion before Wilde’s trial has to remain unresolved. This issue is further complicated by the fact that the dandy unites binary relations like ‘gender, age, class, and race’ on his own body. These taxonomies which according to Alan Sinfield ‘structure our societies’¹⁶⁷ and thus influence our psyche also constitute the lines along same-sex desire is produced. The taxonomies of for example male/female are combined on all the dandiacal bodies of the male hermaphrodite androgyne producing an androgynous effect. The dandy thus creates the impression of being self-sufficient. The same goes for the taxonomy of class. Beau Brummel as I have shown combined in his dress and in his biography different social class aspects on his person

¹⁶⁷ Alan Sinfield, *On Sexuality and Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p.2.

giving as a result the impression of belonging to no class at all or only into a class of his own.

Synthesizing his dark Mediterranean looks and his Jewish heritage with traditional nineteenth century English cultural norms by converting to Christianity was another so-to-speak hybrid personality made up of two different races that was created by Benjamin Disraeli. The mode of the dandy to combine two binary categories on the same body furthermore created the Camp quality which thrives on incongruity.

As I have shown all three types of Dandyism display a self-invented hybrid personality which according to Jonathan Dollimore was part and parcel of a new transgressive aesthetic which could be best described by the term anti-essentialism. Bound up with this new aesthetic was a transgressive desire most famously exemplified by Oscar Wilde. According to Dollimore 'for Wilde transgressive desire is both rooted in culture and the impetus for affirming different/alternative kinds of culture.'¹⁶⁸ Wilde set up counter-cultural values which replaced depth by surface, truth by lying, stasis by change, essence by difference, essential self by persona/role, normal by abnormal, sincerity by insincerity, authenticity by style/artifice, serious by facetious, maturity by narcissism. All these counter-values could also be applied when describing the dandy. Oscar Wilde according to Dollimore was not attempting to set up an essentially new authentic self by adopting these counter-cultural maxims, instead he only tried to relinquish his old self which led to a 'decentred subjectivity which animate[d] Wilde's own aesthetic' (Dollimore, p.13). Linked up with that transgressive desire and aesthetic is thus a 'vapourisation' of the self. Accordingly I have shown

¹⁶⁸ Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p.15.

that in each type of Dandy typical traits of 'ontological insecurity' are prevalent.

5. Influences on Oscar Wilde

5.1 Defining Decadence

In most academic works dealing with English and French literature at the end of the nineteenth century, the so-called *Fin de Siècle* (in Britain, above all in works by Oscar Wilde), the two terms ‘Decadence’ and ‘Aestheticism’ regularly appear. However, they are often used synonymously. In the introduction to his anthology of *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890s*, Karl Beckson¹⁶⁹, for example, uses both terms interchangeably. On the other hand, Lisa Rodensky decided to call her anthology *Decadent Poetry from Wilde to Naidu*. When choosing the term ‘decadent’ she admits to facing a certain amount of general confusion ‘arising out of the uses of the words “aesthetic” and “decadent”’¹⁷⁰.

Rodensky approached her dilemma in the same way as had Helmut Gerber¹⁷¹, 43 years earlier, in his editorial note to the 1963 issue of *English Literature in Transition*. This note commented on a then recent Conference on Aestheticism and Decadence which differentiated between the two terms. For both, Rodensky and Gerber, the term ‘aestheticism’ applies to questions of form and style, whereas ‘decadence’ is used when a literary work is dealing with lurid subject matter. Thus ‘Decadence’ here is in the tradition of late-Romanticism or, as Mario Praz calls his book: *Black Romanticism*.

However when the term ‘Decadence’ was introduced for the first time in literary history by Désiré Nisard in 1834 in his *Études de mœurs et de critique sur les poètes latins de la decadence*, he is using this term to describe a condition of cultural and aesthetic exhaustion. For him, the main

¹⁶⁹ Karl Beckson (ed.), *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890's* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1982).

¹⁷⁰ Lisa Rodensky (ed.), *Decadent Poetry from Wilde to Naidu*, (London: Penguin Books, 2006), p.xxv.

¹⁷¹ Helmut Gerber, ‘The Editor’s Fence’, in *English Literature in Transition* 6 (1963), p.iv.

characteristics of 'Decadence' were apparent in literature which placed the main emphasis on description at the expense of plot and at the same time profusely displayed the author's erudition.

Until now the most helpful way of tackling the problem of defining literary 'Decadence' has been presented by A.E. Carter¹⁷². He basically takes an historical approach. He divides 'Decadence' into three periods, basing his arguments almost exclusively on French literature. But this does not mean it is not possible to apply this approach to English literature. As Shearer West explains, the Decadent movement was a European phenomenon which made itself well-known via the new means of mass communication. Moreover, English 'Decadent' authors such as Arthur Symonds, John Gray and, above all Oscar Wilde were in personal contact with Stéphane Mallarmé, Edmond de Goncourt, André Gide etc., to name only the most well-known authors. One of the most famous writers of German Decadence, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, was also well aware of what his colleagues in other European countries, including England, were publishing. In his articles for literary magazines he analyses the works of Wilde, Swinburne, Pater and the Pre-Raphaelites. Thus it is clear that the authors of European Decadence all influenced each other, all being part of this literary experiment which went under the term 'Decadence'. A full appreciation of the term Decadence can only be gained by reference to some of these European Continental authors.

Let us now return to A.E. Carter's attempt to give shape, form and structure to 'literary' Decadence. In the first period, which I would call the anti-bourgeois phase of literature, which at the beginning of the nineteenth

¹⁷² A. E. Carter, *The Idea of Décadence in French Literature 1830-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968).

century had dealt with morbid, sordid, unnatural and perverse topics, underwent a rehabilitation leading to a positive inversion of traditional bourgeois values and culture. Apart from such topics, Barbara Spackman¹⁷³ introduces the term 'interversions'. These are phenomena which challenge and subvert the whole formal logic of a society based on the principle of black/white, male/female - a society of absolute differences. It was these 'interversions' which, in those days, were really to blame for the uneasiness and shock with which decadent literature was encountered. For example, when new parents asked whether it is a boy or a girl and they answer 'neither' this, according to Spackman 'would be taken to refer to a monstrosity, for the logic of absolute difference constitutes all hybrids as monstrosities' (Spackman, p.41). For Spackman Decadent literature employs a different logic based, not on difference but on diversity. It features hybrids such as hermaphrodites, androgynes, chimera, and sphinxes which would not be compatible with the former 'absolutism'.

Authors such as Théophile Gautier, Charles Baudelaire and Barbey D'Aurevilly are Carter's prime examples for this initial stage of 'Decadence'. Later in his *Poems and Ballads* published in 1866, Algernon Charles Swinburne's motto, taken from his French predecessors, was to 'épater le bourgeois', that is, according to Beckson to 'shock and dazzle the dull and muddy mettled middle classes' (Beckson, p.xxii) out of their bourgeois complacency. This was their way of demonstrating their moral superiority. To be accused by the common bourgeoisie of having unnatural vices or abnormal fantasies was, for the 'Decadent' artist, a sign of exceptional sensitivity or even genius.

¹⁷³ Barbara Spackman, 'Interventions', in Liz Constable & Dennis Denisoff & Matthew Potolsky (eds.), *Perennial Decay: On the Aesthetics and Politics of Decadence* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 35-49.

John Ruskin had argued that ‘good’ art mirrored the morality of the artist. He thus had to change his mind when, in 1858, he suffered the shock of discovering the erotic drawings by J. M. W. Turner and, at the same time, much to the dismay of her parents, he fell in love with a ten-year-old girl called Rose. According to Richard Dellamora, Ruskin’s early career was based on ‘celebrating Turner as the greatest of modern painters [and so] the discovery had major implications for his thinking about the character of artistic imagination’¹⁷⁴. Ruskin, himself gave expression to his new stance – almost a complete about-turn - in *Modern Painters V* where he wrote that ‘his [i.e. man’s] nature is nobly animal, nobly spiritual – coherently and irrevocably so[...]All great art confesses and worships both’¹⁷⁵. Ruskin painfully realised that his life and the lives of other artists, like his much admired J.M.W. Turner, formed the basis of great works of art because their ideas and minds were blemished, as it were, by moral values society would have regarded as abnormal, or simply because they suffered from some form of mental disease. Accordingly Ruskin’s concept of genius, including implicitly his own, was derived from a diseased mind: ‘Ruskin’s ideal of artistic harmony carries with it a parasitical counterideal in which genius is almost inevitably linked with sexual irregularity and mental aberration’ (Dellamora, p.118). By acknowledging anti-bourgeois behaviour and mental degeneracy as a pre-condition for artistic genius, just like his counterparts in France, Ruskin set about a re-evaluation of artistic and social conventions. The message they all were trying to convey was that a degenerate mind cannot really be diseased if, with its artistic results, it provides so much pleasure to such a large audience. This kind of argument often serves also to justify the artist’s own ‘abnormal’ behaviour, such as

¹⁷⁴ Richard Dellamora, *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), p.119.

¹⁷⁵ John Ruskin, *The Works of John Ruskin*, edited by E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, Vol.7, (London: G. Allen, 1903-12), p.264.

his/her sexual orientation. An example here would be Walter Pater. In 1873 Pater published a book on the *Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* where, alongside other Renaissance artists, he attempts to analyse what constituted ‘the chief elements of Leonardo’s genius’¹⁷⁶. In an essay on Leonardo da Vinci he declares that his art appeals to all lovers of strange souls. He celebrates Leonardo da Vinci’s non-conformity and ‘otherness’ with regard to traditional aesthetics and ‘sujets d’art’: ‘Out of the secret places of a unique temperament he brought strange blossoms and fruits hitherto unknown; and for him, the novel impression conveyed, the exquisite effect woven, counted as an end in itself – a perfect end’ (Pater, p.75). Moreover Pater defines da Vinci’s artistic subjects featured in his paintings as

Nervous, electric, faint always with some inexplicable faintness, these people seem to be subject to exceptional conditions, to feel powers at work in the common air unfelt by others, to become, as it were, the receptacle of them, and pass them on to us in a chain of secret influences. (W. Pater, p.74).

Moreover, by repeatedly citing examples of androgynous beauty - which Pater describes as characters displaying a ‘doubtful sex’ (Pater, p.74) as, in his painting *Saint John the Baptist* - on the one hand, Pater portrays Leonardo da Vinci indirectly as a master of homoerotic aesthetics. On the other hand, however, he uses the artist’s fame and authority to prove that, although his portraits evoke a ‘queer’ beauty, indirectly hinting at their master’s own ‘queer’ sexuality, they captivated a world-wide audience. Furthermore Pater, in his essay on ‘Leonardo da Vinci’ is, so to speak, concealing himself behind the artistic fame and authority of Leonardo. At a time when the word homosexual did not exist, he is confessing to a

¹⁷⁶ Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.64.

Victorian society that non-conforming sexuality - Pater uses expressions like 'strangeness' or 'unique temperament' (Pater, p.75) - such sexuality betrays signs of genius. Pater was increasingly becoming aware of his own homosexuality which, as a Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford, was impeding his career. To find famous artists like Leonardo da Vinci or renowned scientists like Johann Joachim Winckelmann displaying their aberrant sexuality like a badge of genius, must have been for Pater very liberating and reassuring.

Similar to those early 'Decadent' French writers who celebrated Satan as liberating them from narrow-minded bourgeois thinking, their later English successors were also fascinated by the figure of Satan, in particular how he is characterised by Milton in *Paradise Lost*, where he appears as a charismatic rebel questioning an established and merciless order represented by God. These English writers, by the way, were following in the 'dark' Romantic tradition of Lord Byron. Moreover, writers of the first phase of decadence - and these include Walter Pater - were voicing their rebellion against old values in a much more subtle form by lauding the creative artists and by discussing the latter's eccentric quirks which often did not fit into the traditional norms of society. Later on George Moore¹⁷⁷, in his collection of short stories *Celibate Lives* followed their example by portraying eccentric outsiders in a sympathetic manner. Displaying 'otherness' or 'queerness' giving great pleasure to the eccentric or creative artist, even more so when it triggered off works of art which could also be enjoyed by a widespread audience, this creative attitude began to liberate morality as it meant that a new generation of so-called 'Decadent' artists began to free themselves from any religious, philosophical or previously traditional confinements of thought. It was only then they had the self-

¹⁷⁷ George Moore, *Celibate Lives* (London: William Heinemann, 1927).

confidence to trust their own very individual moral judgements. The artists, and possibly some of their followers were now able to judge for themselves what was, to put it simply, 'good' or 'bad'. The basic motto of this period of literary 'Decadence' became: Whatever gives creative artists and their audience joy and pleasure must also be good from a moral point of view - a point which in the history of creative art is better known by the catchphrase 'L'Art pour l'Art', or simply 'Art for Art's sake'.

The second stage of 'Decadence' is what Roger Bauer¹⁷⁸ referring to A.E. Carter calls the 'naturalistic phase' characterised by the influence of psychopathology. Instead of wanting to loosen up the moral corset, so to speak, of a narrow-minded bourgeoisie by aestheticising social outcasts or forms of socially stigmatised behaviour such as homosexuality, the emphasis placed by the second generation of 'Decadent' artists lay elsewhere. They tried to probe down into a much deeper level of reality. In November 1893, in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* appeared an article entitled 'The Decadent Movement in Literature'. Here Arthur Symons tried to elucidate and sum up the major characteristics defining this period of European literary Decadence. He came up with four key phrases: 'an intense self-consciousness, a restless curiosity in research, an over-subtilizing refinement upon refinement, a spiritual and moral perversity.'¹⁷⁹ While the latter two traits are characteristic of this 'naturalistic phase' of Decadence, they still relate to the initial stage we have already described. When choosing the first two phrases, however, Arthur Symons certainly had Edmond and Jules de Goncourt in mind who, to use Roger Bauer's German word, 'verinnerlichen' (Bauer, p.277), 'internalised' Decadence by analysing typical aspects of modern life. Such aspects included, above

¹⁷⁸ Roger Bauer, *Die schöne Décadence* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2001), p.13.

¹⁷⁹ Arthur Symons, 'The Decadent Movement in Literature', in Karl Beckson (ed.), *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890's* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1982), p.135.

all, the increasing ‘troubles du système nerveux’, caused by an aggressive industrialisation and the ‘artificial’ life in a city. The use of machines and modern techniques were blamed for the growing imbalance of body and soul because they weakened the body through apparent lack of exercise, finally causing exhaustion and possibly furthering emasculation in men.

As far as city life is concerned Harry Campbell, among other psychologists towards the end of the nineteenth century, associated it with effeminacy writing

that the confinement entailed by town-life exerts an injurious influence on the men, and makes them more like women in their nervous health, [and this] is evident to every one who has the opportunity of comparing country with town people.¹⁸⁰

Moreover, the sheer presence of so many people seems to call for a certain amount of civilised behaviour almost impossible to attain. An urban population simply cannot or could not live up to such ideals and thus a city often becomes a centre of moral and physical disease. Shearer West however, reveals the irony of the ambiguous image of a city in the late nineteenth century when she states that it ‘provided the most obvious evidence for scientific and technological progress in the nineteenth century [...but also...] came to be seen as one of the causes of social decline.’¹⁸¹ Bearing this in mind, it is understandable that the brothers Goncourt were not interested in nature or landscape but minutely observed what they found on the streets of Paris. Their observation followed the stylistic tradition of the Parnassians, a group of authors - most prominent among them Théophile Gautier - who were influenced by Positivism, indicating

¹⁸⁰ Harry Campbell, *Differences in the Nervous Organisation of Man and Woman: Physiological and Pathological* (London, 1891), pp. 87-88.

¹⁸¹ Shearer West, *Fin de Siècle* (London: Bloomsbury, 1993), p.25.

that their main principle with regard to literary style was that of exact, objective and unemotional description. The diary entries of the brothers Goncourt, by which they were inspired for their own novels remind one of medical reports on an autopsy, any particular illness or of the neuroses they found in Parisian society.

But what, to return to Arthur Symonds made the gaze of these decadent authors also turn inward? It is true that literary movements such as Realism and the Parnassians were capable of portraying not only an outward reality but also, as precisely as possible an inner reality. Decadent authors were not only influenced by these movements but they were equally zealously intent on really getting to grips with this inner reality. Shearer West, however, portrays this desire from another point of view. She sees a direct link from the renewed interest in Gothic subjects to the attempt to portray the ‘secrets of the soul’:

From the 1760s onwards, a new focus on Gothic subjects expressed both a rational contempt for superstition and a continued irrational fear of unknown forces. A declining belief in the real existence of demons freed artists to incorporate them unapologetically into non-religious art. The most famous such painting is Henry Fuseli’s *The Nightmare* which visualizes the disturbed imagination of a dreaming woman. An incubus and unnatural horse externalise her hidden fears, and Fuseli’s painting thus firmly places the origin of demonic superstition in the mind, rather than in the cosmos. (Shearer West, pp.11-12)

Apart from stressing the introspective nature of this neo-Gothic revival, another factor was taken into consideration, namely the aims of Positivism bringing in their wake the importance of industrialisation and the ensuing competition. Both had a limiting and possibly even inhuman effect but

nevertheless triggering off a counter movement which focused on the 'inner life'. Developing one's own personality was seen by Decadent artists to be a much more valuable goal as it was bound to spread on a much broader and popular level. It thus became a subject of interest to them. Moreover, the increasing materialism of nineteenth century society caused by Positivism meant that people were beginning to lose their faith in religion and thus morality. The then 'modern man' was thrown back onto himself and had to introspectively discover the reasons for society's failures in his own soul. Personal introspection thus became a way of dealing with one's increasing disillusionment in society.

But all the soul-searching was also connected with an urge to become conscious of one's inner self – a feeling of being genuinely alive. This perpetual striving after novel unexplored sensations derived from Dark Romanticism whose most prominent representative in life as in literature was Lord Byron, the father so-to-speak of these new Decadents in the nineteenth century. His motto was 'The great object in life is Sensation - to feel that we exist - even though in pain.'¹⁸² He disregarded all social conventions, and even welcomed Heaven's vengeance upon him which he was often unconsciously seeking. Filling his 'craving void' with what was considered in those days 'sinful' indulgences was infinitely better than sacrificing the feeling of 'being alive'.

In this context it is important to consider an early piece by Hugo von Hofmannsthal: 'The Age of Innocence'. He called this early literary fragment 'Psychologische Novelle', a psychological study about himself as a young man. Hugo von Hofmannsthal was one of the most prominent

¹⁸² Lord Byron, *'Alas! the love of Women: Byron's Letters and Journals, Vol.3 (1813-1814),* edited by Leslie A. Marchand (London: John Murray, 1974), p. 109.

representatives of the Decadent movement in Vienna. 'The Age of Innocence', written in 1891, gives an invaluable insight into his own early psychological and artistic development. It can also be considered as a model reflecting the similar psychological background of other fin-de-siècle writers. *The Age of Innocence* was Hofmannsthal's favourite English picture book, given to him as a child to help him learn English. He describes how he initially loved all those cute and blond, snub-nosed boys and girls all wearing Greenaway hats. However, when his English was good enough to realise that this book was written solely for children, he felt he could no longer relate to these figures. The book did not reflect reality for him as a child and although he recognised the aesthetic beauty of the way the children were dressed, their games and conversation remained utterly strange and artificial to him. In contrast, Hofmannsthal goes on to depict his own 'games', which mainly played with his deepest fears such as touching revolting insects like caterpillars and his general 'Angst vor dem Dunkel' ('fear of the dark'). To enjoy revelling in these sensations he tried to torment himself in other ways. But more importantly he made a habit of observing himself, seeing how he reacted to inflicting these playful 'tortures' on himself like staging a play.

Er genoß das seltsame Glück, seine Umgebung zu stilisieren und das Gewöhnliche als Schauspiel zu genießen. Das Erwachen kam über ihn und das Erstaunen über sich selbst und das verwunderte Sich-leben-Zusehen.¹⁸³

¹⁸³ Hugo von Hofmannsthal, *Gesammelte Werke: Erzählungen, Erfundene Gespräche und Briefe, Reisen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1979), p.21. (My translation: 'He enjoyed the strange good fortune of stylising his surroundings and the common-or-garden objects and people around him as if they were all actors and scenery in a theatrical performance. Suddenly he woke up astonished at himself and amazed at his ability to experience himself actually living.')

And later on he concludes that ‘So erlangte er die peinliche Geschicklichkeit, sich selbst als Objekt zu behandeln’¹⁸⁴ (Hofmannsthal, p.23). This self-analysis appeared to Hofmannsthal very much as if he was simply more an inanimate object under a magnifying glass than a living human being. For Hofmannsthal just as for the second generation of other decadent authors, it was typical that they not only strove to experience extraordinary sensations, making them feel ‘alive’, but at the same time in the process they tried to analyse their feelings. It was these feelings and this analysis which found artistic expression in their literary works. One prime example of a literary product from this second generation of Decadent authors is Oscar Wilde’s only novel *Dorian Gray*. Wilde delves beneath Dorian’s superficially beautiful exterior to analyse his feelings whilst he, Dorian, is experiencing the finest and most exquisite sensations. Wilde’s contemporary Joris-Karl Huysmans writes in a similar fashion with regard to the protagonist Des Esseintes in *À Rebours*. Both authors are representatives of the ‘psychologisation’ of literature. Both strove to depict psychographs, or in Huysmans’s case ‘projection d’âme’¹⁸⁵ (projection of the soul) in order to escape the confinements of Naturalism and Realism, taking these former literary genres to new psychological levels.

The period after the so-called Yellow Nineties is classified by Roger Bauer as the third phase of Decadence, characterised by treating the terrible and the obscene in an utterly banal fashion (Bauer, pp.14-15). Furthermore, the various trials of Oscar Wilde rendered it far too dangerous and almost impossible for authors to continue to portray androgynous characters anymore. Decadence became increasingly hijacked by commercialisation. Publishing houses began to encourage their authors to make more money

¹⁸⁴ My translation: ‘In this way he was able to achieve the somewhat embarrassing skill of treating himself as a simple object.’

¹⁸⁵ Joris-Karl Huysmans, *À Rebours* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978), p. 56.

for them by watering down decadent subjects to provide cheap thrills which could be read by the bourgeois middle-classes without any embarrassment. Literary Decadence began so to speak to degenerate into producing works such as the popular gothic horror story or the detective novel. These became the most prominent examples of the third phase of Decadence.

5.2 *À Rebours*

Whilst Edward Carson was cross-examining Oscar Wilde during the case which he had brought against the Marquess of Queensberry, he extracted from him the title of a book which could help prove Wilde was a sexual sodomite. This particular book occurs in Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and, in the novel, is given to Dorian by Sir Henry Wotton. The title of the book is not mentioned but it is described as having an immoral and evil influence on Dorian. Ever since the mention of this untitled book and its occurrence in the trial, Joris-Karl Huysmans's novel *À Rebours* has been inextricably linked with Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. It is seen as influencing a description of the book appearing in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in its original unedited first version published in July 1890 in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*:

It was a novel without a plot, and with only one character, being, indeed, simply a psychological study of a certain young Parisian, who spent his life trying to realise in the nineteenth century all the passions and modes of thought that belonged to every century except his own, and to sum up, as it were, in himself the various moods through which the world-spirit had ever passed, loving for their mere artificiality those renunciations that men have unwisely called virtue, as much as those natural rebellions that wise men still call sin. The style in which it was written was that curious jewelled style, vivid and obscure at once, full of argot and of archaisms, of technical expressions and of elaborate paraphrases, that characterises the work of some of the finest artists of the French school of *Décadents*. There were in it metaphors as monstrous as orchids, and as evil in colour. The life of the senses was described in the terms of mystical philosophy. One hardly knew at times whether one was reading the

spiritual ecstasies of some medieval saint or the morbid confessions of a modern sinner. It was a poisonous book.¹⁸⁶

Wolfgang Maier¹⁸⁷, who carried out intensive studies on Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and in particular on how Wilde's novel was influenced by other literary works, proves that it is a myth that Wilde borrowed anything from *À Rebours*. Maier cannot explain or understand Wilde's saying to Edward Carson:

I don't mind telling you the name. The novel is called *À Rebours* and the artist is Huysmans. I consider it a badly written book, but it gave me a suggestion that there might be a wonderful.....(here Carson interrupts him with: 'The novel was *À Rebours*?', to which Wilde replies: 'Yes.')

However, in a letter dating from February 1894, Wilde writes:

The book that poisoned, or made perfect, Dorian Gray does not exist; it is a fancy of mine merely.¹⁸⁹

But in the cross-examination mentioned above Wilde goes on to modify his rash answer and says

that the idea of the book was suggested by *À Rebours*, but that when I came to quote in the next passage of *Dorian Gray* from this supposed imaginary book, I quote chapters that do not exist in *À Rebours*. It was merely a motive, that is all. There is the difference. (Holland, *Irish Peacock*, pp.97-98)

¹⁸⁶ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray: An Annotated, Uncensored Edition*, edited by Nicholas Frankel, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 184-186.

¹⁸⁷ Wolfgang Maier, *Oscar Wilde: The Picture of Dorian Gray. Eine kritische Analyse der englischen Forschung von 1962 bis 1982* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1984).

¹⁸⁸ Merlin Holland (ed.), *Irish Peacock & Scarlet Marquess: The Real Trial of Oscar Wilde* (London: Fourth Estate, 2003), p.94.

¹⁸⁹ Merlin Holland & Rupert Hart-Davis (eds.), *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde* (London: Fourth Estate, 2000), p.585.

In an earlier letter dating from 15th April 1892, when Wilde again explicitly mentions *À Rebours*, he explains that

The book in Dorian Gray is one of many books I have never written, but it is partly suggested by Huysmans's *À Rebours*, which you will get at any French bookseller's. It is a fantastic variation on Huysmans's over-realistic study of the artistic temperament in our inartistic age. (Holland, *Complete Letters*, p. 524)

Wolfgang Maier arrives at the same conclusion as Wilde himself. He can make out only marginal and superficial similarities between *À Rebours* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: in both novels there is only one protagonist, the novels having virtually no plot and, he writes, both are psychological studies or, as Wilde puts it, are 'over-realistic' (*Complete Letters*, p.524).

Themes turning up in both novels are descriptions of perfumes and jewels, and the fascination of the two protagonists for Roman Catholicism.

Wolfgang Maier also proves that Wilde assembled his minute descriptions of precious stones and perfumes from specialist catalogues and magazines. He did not copy them from *À Rebours*. Roman Catholicism is also handled differently in the two novels. Whereas Des Esseintes is interested in ancient religious literature and liturgy, Dorian is more interested in Roman Catholic rites. Moreover Wilde's strangely fascinating book portrays his hero as being afraid of losing his good looks and thus avoids looking into mirrors. This bears no similarity whatsoever to Des Esseintes: he is not afraid of mirrors and Huysmans never describes his features as being attractive – rather the reverse.

Although both protagonists could be classified as aesthetes, their outlook on life is completely different. Dorian is eager, in a hedonistic way, to get

the most out of life, intensifying it by attempting to experience all aspects of reality, thus feeling 'alive' - in more senses than one. He enjoys all kinds of sensations and lives life to the full. Des Esseintes in *À Rebours*, on the other hand, is possibly one step ahead of Dorian. He has left that latter's kind of life behind him and now shuns the city by moving to a country retreat. He sets himself on a self-healing process by avoiding all reality which he considers thoroughly degrading. He seeks his cure in artificiality. The interior decorations of his house and all the precious stones and perfumes are simply extensions of his own body. He blends into the exquisite interior aspects of his home in order to be less conscious of his own self. For Dorian, on the other hand, precious jewels and exquisite experiences are purely there to provide him with stimulating sensations.

However it is only initially that we can class Dorian Gray and Des Esseintes as complete opposites to each other. Both of them are placed in difficult social situations: Des Esseintes is part of an aristocracy which has no longer any political power; Dorian, having lost both his parents seems to us to have remained a highly vulnerable small child. To Wilde, however, what must have been most important is the fact that the sexual identity of the two protagonists is never clearly determined. After Wilde eventually admitted to *À Rebours* being the book that 'poisoned' Dorian, Edward Carson asked him whether Huysmans's novel was a book 'dealing with undisguised sodomy' (Holland, *Irish Peacock*, p.96). Wilde, however, successfully avoided further discussion of the contents of *À Rebours*, as he knew full well that there are possibly two, or certainly one explicit episodes in Chapter IX of the novel which could have been classed as portraying sodomy when, in the nineteenth century, all kinds of gender non-conforming behaviour were described under that term. The episode in question concerns Des Esseintes's affair with a Miss Urania, an American

acrobat. Her name alone hints at the concept of 'Uranian' love, a term coined in the mid-1860s by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs before the term 'homosexuality' became widely used. Des Esseintes is fascinated by Urania's muscularity and, when she holds him in her strong arms, he dreams of being turned into an obedient, weak, rather girlish creature. However, when Des Esseintes seduces her into his bed, she turns out to be a young, traditionally feminine, coquettish, normal American woman who prefers the usual gender roles in bed not to be reversed. This upsets Des Esseintes as in her presence he had hoped to adopt a feminine role, offering him an opportunity to emasculate himself even further. After the relationship with Miss Urania proves unsuccessful, a young, pale, androgynous-looking young man with long hair turns up. Des Esseintes begins what he calls a 'special friendship' with this young man, taking the part of the obedient slave. This affair, too, does not last long and proves a mere short episode in Des Esseintes's life.

In addition, then, to their precarious social positions, both Des Esseintes and Dorian lack confidence in their sexual orientation. Whereas Dorian is able to conceal his sense of insecurity under the mask of perfect youthful beauty, Des Esseintes's precarious psychological state is symbolised in the novel by a tortoise with a jewel encrusted shell. The shell of this tortoise, its house or shelter as it were, resembles Des Esseintes's house, overladen with its valuables and precious furniture. Just as Des Esseintes's luxuriously overburdened house cannot help to cure him, the shell of the tortoise, highly ornamented with precious stones appears to have suffocated the poor animal. Des Esseintes's house, far from 'curing' him, shuts him off so completely from reality that to use R.D. Laing's terminology, his 'true self' has withered away under its exquisite exterior. The outward reality can give Des Esseintes no positive confirmation of his sense of

being 'alive', so necessary for an ontologically insecure person to retain the feeling for his/her authentic being. Similarly, Dorian Gray suffers equally from an increasing loss of feeling for his authentic being. This will be analysed in the following chapter.

In the end, then, Wilde was indeed telling the truth when he said that he got the idea and inspiration for Dorian Gray from Huysmans's *À Rebours*. Just as for Huysmans, of special interest to Wilde must have been his attempt at a psychological study of a character who progressively feels that he is attracted to his own sex, thus also possibly reflecting Wilde's personal situation at the time.

Wilde in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* had the courage to portray homosexuality from a psychological perspective when it was still cruelly punished by law. Enlightening evidence for this surely lies in the title of the yellow book Sir Henry gave Dorian. Before J.M. Stoddart, the editor of that July 1890 edition of *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, before he had struck the title of the book from the original typescript of the novel, it ran as follows: 'Le Secret de Raoul, par Catulle Sarrazin' (Wilde, *Picture of Dorian Gray*, Uncensored Edition, p.184). Wolfgang Maier, for his part, points out that in the second half of the nineteenth century there is no protagonist in any French novel with the name of Raoul, except *Monsieur Vénus* by a French authoress, calling herself Rachilde. In all probability, then, in his title Wilde is alluding to the Raoul in the above novel. She, in fact, dresses and acts like a man and takes an effeminate man, as it were, as 'his' 'mistress'. The author's name of the novel given to Dorian, Catulle Sarrazin, is a composite of the first and last names of two contemporary French authors, namely Catulle Mendès and Gabriel Sarrazin. Catulle Mendès like Rachilde was one of the most prominent authors of the French

Décadence and with his works transgressed against the then accepted notions of gender and sexual conventions. He became friends with Wilde during the latter's stays in Paris, but how intense that friendship was is a matter of debate. He had, however - according to *The Star*¹⁹⁰ newspaper - he had to fight a duel because, after Wilde had been sent to prison, he was accused of having had an intimate relationship with him. Gabriel Sarrazin, on the other hand, was an influential man of letters running several magazines and, as a French anglophile, also published those works by English writers Wilde admired.

From the above information it cannot be a coincidence that in the title of the book given to Dorian in *The Picture of Doran Gray*, Wilde is associating the names Raoul, Catulle and Sarrazin with hints of sexual inversion. As far as Rachilde's *Monsieur Vénus* and Théophile Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin* is concerned, in the following chapters I will show that Wilde found here too found inspiration of how to convey to the reader an insight into the psyche of those who transgress sexual conventions.

¹⁹⁰ 'A Wilde Duel', in *The Star* (13th April 1895), p.3.

5.3 Mademoiselle de Maupin

*Veiled loves that shifted shapes and shafts, and gave,
Laughing, strange gifts to hands that durst not crave,
Flowers double-blossomed, fruits of scent and hue
Sweet as the bride-bed, stranger than the grave;*¹⁹¹

(from: 'Memorial Verses on the Death of Théophile Gautier' by Algernon Charles Swinburne)

Oscar Wilde claimed that he could not travel without Gautier's novels and *Mademoiselle de Maupin* had already been in his youth an all-time favourite of him. This is not surprising when looking at the preface of Gautier's first novel as it set the agenda for the 'L'art pour L'art' movement way ahead of the Fin-de-siècle, that is in 1834, when it was published a year before the first volume of *Mademoiselle de Maupin* was published and was from then on included as a preface. All the ingredients of Decadent literature are mentioned but first and foremost Gautier rants against utilitarianism and formulates an aesthetic credo which Wilde will repeat half a century later.

The only things that are really beautiful are those which have no use; everything that is useful is ugly, for it is the expression of some need, and the needs of men are ignoble and disgusting, like his poor and infirm nature. The most useful place in the house is the lavatory.[...] And I prefer things and people in inverse proportion to the services they render me. Instead of a certain useful pot, I prefer a Chinese one decorated with dragons and mandarins, which is no use to me whatsoever;¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ Algernon Charles Swinburne, *Swinburne's Collected Poetical Works Vol. 1* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1935), p. 360.

¹⁹² Théophile Gautier, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, (London: Penguin, 2005), p.23.

Wilde will take the Decadent movement to new heights when famously proclaiming that he will try to 'live up to [his] blue china'¹⁹³, but what Gautier points out is according to Jessica R. Feldman still a romantic subjectivity in literature. 'For the terms of 'L'art pour l'art' are still those of subjectivity: not only must art not serve a moral purpose, preach a lesson, or effect social progress, but its sole end is to express and to deliver pleasure through the refinement of the senses.'¹⁹⁴ The revolutionary message from Gautier was that the sole purpose of art was nothing but beauty, and the beautiful effect it made on the recipient was its only criteria to judge it by. Thus 'art has an internal and self-referential code of beauty, independent of the individual and his shameful needs' (Feldman, p.51). The other important aspect Gautier deals with in his preface revolves around the fact, that the readership and literary critics in the nineteenth century still read novels in an autobiographical way.

It is just absurd to say a man is a drunkard if he describes a drunken orgy, a debauchee because he recounts a debauchery, as to claim that a man is virtuous because he has written a moral book; one sees the opposite every day. It is the character who is speaking, not the author.
(Gautier, p.18)

In a post-Romantic, Decadent art movement where also immoral and risqué aspects were chosen as topics by the artist, as they titillated the senses of the reader even more, this could prove dangerous as it happened in the case of Oscar Wilde. In the preface of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* Wilde writes: 'There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written or badly written. That is all.'¹⁹⁵ But during Wilde's famous trials, the jury at the Old Bailey regarded his books so-to-speak as extensions to

¹⁹³ Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987), p.43.

¹⁹⁴ Jessica R. Feldman, *Gender on the Divide* (London: Cornell University Press, 1993), p.51.

¹⁹⁵ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, edited by Donald L. Lawler (New York: Norton, 1988), p.3.

his life. The trial very quickly focused on questions concerning the true sins of Dorian Gray. It was a fatal misjudgement on Wilde's side to think that the jury and the general public would be prepared to differentiate between the life and the literary output of an author. However Wilde and Gautier essentially differ when it comes to the question of whether nature imitates art or vice versa. For Gautier

books follow manners and manners do not follow books.[...] Pictures are created according to the model, not the model according to the picture. I cannot remember where it was said, or by whom, that literature and arts influence manners. Whoever it was, he was undoubtedly a fool.(Gautier, p.19)

Of course the different contexts have to be taken into account here. Gautier argues on a moral level, that is immoral books do not cause any harm, they only mirror what is already there. On the other hand Wilde's focus is on the artistic perception. Wilde claims that we can only perceive beauty if art makes us aware of it which sometimes involves that we as an audience will perceive things as beautiful which we beforehand overlooked or even thought of as ugly. In 'The Decay of Lying' he lets Vivian say:

Where, if not from the Impressionists, do we get those wonderful brown fogs that come creeping down our streets, blurring the gas-lamps and changing the houses into monstrous shadows? [...] The extraordinary change that has taken place in the climate of London during the last ten years is entirely due to a particular school of Art¹⁹⁶

Apart from formulating the aesthetics of an avantgarde art movement, what makes Gautier's novel especially valuable is that it offers a thorough insight into the character of an effeminate dandy, that is chevalier d'Albert.

¹⁹⁶ Oscar Wilde, *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* (London: Collins, 1986), p.986.

This aspect is connected with the special mode of Gautier's introspective story-telling. Patricia Duncker in the introduction to the Penguin edition of *Mademoiselle de Maupin* observes that in a true Decadent fashion the "novel deals with introspection rather than action" (Gautier, p. xiii). Up to the middle of the novel we get lengthy and detailed insights into the soul of d'Albert, but nothing much regarding the plot has happened. The only suspense the action can generate for the reader is to find out about the true gender identities of the protagonists, whereas the outer framework of the novel is simply made up of chevalier d'Albert and Rosette, his lover, carrying on a love affair which none of the two has the courage to terminate because for both of them it is rather more convenient to let it simmer on. However the most striking and avant-garde feature of the novel is that at least two protagonists are depicted behaving in a gender non-conforming way. The reader is in addition offered for the first time in literature a psychological insight into these characters, and how they justify for themselves their attraction to the same sex.

5.3.1 Inside the Love Triangle

Right from the beginning chevalier d'Albert, the protagonist of the novel feels like an outsider or like an alien. In his long musings where he dissects his own soul as it would lie under a microscope all day long he comes to the following conclusion: 'I have never been able to convince myself that I am truly like other men' (Gautier, p. 85). He feels like 'a drop of oil in the glass of water' (Gautier, p. 86) that won't mingle with the rest of society. D'Albert is moreover aware that Parisian society keeps its distance to him as they have branded him as a dandy.

I have heard that many of them have bitterly
criticized my dress, saying that my style is too

effeminate; that my hair is curled and greased more carefully than it should be; and, given the fact that I don't have a beard either, that it makes me look like a ridiculous dandy of the worst kind. They say that I dress in rich, gaudy clothes like you see in the theatre and am more an actor than a man. (p.77)

In this description of how others perceive him from the outside, d'Albert's effeminacy and his being not authentic are of particular interest. In a camp fashion the artificial outward appearance tells the truth about d'Albert as the reader learns in his confessions that he indeed feels neither 'real' nor 'alive' when pretending to be the most loving man for Rosette. D'Albert's schizoid condition has progressed so far that he no longer tries to forget his identity and wants to turn himself into a different person, but he moreover discovers his secret longing to become a woman. Gautier uses examples from Greek antiquity like the myth of Tiresias or Ovid's tale of 'Hermaphroditus and Salmacis' to illustrate d'Albert's increasing desire to emasculate himself. With psychological insight Gautier depicts the inner process d'Albert undergoes which is in line with Laing's research regarding the stages an ontological insecure person experiences. D'Albert's inner self has already become so porous that he feels overpowered in his identity when another person comes too close to him. Bearing d'Albert's shaky sense of self in mind he experiences making love to Rosette like in the following scene:

Like Salmacis of old, in love with the young Hermaphrodite, I tried to make my body become one with hers; I drank in her breath and the warm tears of desire which spilled from the overflowing chalice of her eyes. The more entwined our bodies became and the more intimate our embraces, the less I loved her (Gautier, p.88).

D'Albert feels Rosette's femininity seeping into him which he welcomes on the one hand but draws him also away from her as he no longer wants to take the male part in the sexual act. The more intense Rosette's love for d'Albert grows the more suffocating her embraces and presence become for him and he feels completely overpowered by her closeness as she threatens to absorb his own identity. D'Albert observes that

The arms of a woman, the things which they say attach a man most firmly to the earth, are very feeble attachments for me, and I have never been more remote from my mistress than when she was clasping me to her heart. I was gasping for breath, that's all. (Gautier, p.86)

Later on d'Albert claims that Rosette has completely engulfed his self when he points out: 'I really believed I was someone else. Rosette's soul had totally entered my body' (Gautier, p. 92). The fact however that d'Albert carries on his affair with Rosette all the same is caused by his need for Rosette's attention in order to receive the confirmation that he is actually alive, but it must also be due to the circumstance that Rosette herself is not authentic and she herself feels insecure of her identity. She admits to Madeleine-Théodore: 'I have played my role like a consummate actress; [...] I have wept false tears and shaped my lips into artificial smiles' (Gautier, p.141).

One of the weaknesses of Gautier's novel is that the reader never gets a deeper insight into Rosette's character as Gautier never expresses her thoughts through an interior monologue and unfortunately the omniscient narrator never intrudes into her mind. Gautier merely switches over to dramatic dialogue in Chapter VI where Rosette vents her feelings in front

of Madeleine-Théodore in a long soliloquy, and this is the only time in the novel where Rosette's thoughts and feelings are voiced by her directly. The only hint that Rosette might also behave in a gender non-conforming way is given in a description of her by the narrator.

This was a mistress free as country air, and rich enough to enjoy the most elegant, exquisite refinements; one, moreover, who had no notion of morals. She never went on about her virtue while trying out a new position, nor about her reputation; it was as though she had never had one. She had no close female friend, but treated all women with scorn, almost as much as if she were a man.
(Gautier, p.106)

For R.D. Laing the first signs that an ontologically insecure person becomes schizoid is that he has feelings of emptiness and that he loses his 'subjectivity' and his 'sense of being alive'. Moreover for Laing 'The schizoid individual fears a real live dialectical relationship with real live people. He can relate himself only to depersonalised persons, to phantoms of his own phantasies (imagos), perhaps to things, perhaps to animals.'¹⁹⁷ The impression of not being 'alive' which Rosette mentions to Madeleine-Théodore, thus being a 'depersonalised' character makes her as a lover ideal for d'Albert, who also suffers from not feeling 'alive', but in a much higher degree. In order to keep his shaky sense of self intact d'Albert keeps at first the society around him at a distance by perceiving them as mere shadows. He confesses that

[a]ll around me is a pale world peopled by ghosts, real or unreal shades murmuring confusedly, in the middle of which I find myself as completely alone as I could be; none has any effect upon me for good or ill and they seem quite different from me in kind.(Gautier, p.85)

¹⁹⁷ R. D. Laing, *The Divided Self* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1975), p.77.

Later on, just as Laing had diagnosed above, d'Albert declares that he prefers being in love with a picture or a statue to the love of a woman. A lifeless piece of art cannot engulf his precarious sense of self and thus it is only logical that he feels more comfortably being in love with a statue.

D'Albert therefore concludes that

there is something fine and noble about being in love with a statue; because you are totally uninvolved you don't have to worry that you will be surfeited or disgusted when you have made your conquest; (Gautier, p.126)

A whole new situation presents itself when Madeleine de Maupin in male attire under the name of Théodore de Sérannes appears on the scene. Both d'Albert and Rosette fall in love with Madeleine-Théodore. For Rosette it is a renewal of her infatuation with Madeleine-Théodore of the past but to d'Albert the homosexual erotic attraction to a man is a shock of recognition which even more deteriorates his psychic condition. In d'Albert an inner vacuum spreads and gains so much space that he feels his identity dissipating. He accurately describes the implosion of his identity when he compares himself to a dried up bottle of liqueur.

I resemble those bottle of liqueurs which have been left uncorked and whose spirit has totally evaporated. The drink has the same appearance and colour; but taste it and you will find it is as insipid as water.

When I think about it I am frightened by the speed of my decomposition. If it goes on like this, I shall have to cover myself in salt or inevitably go rotten and the worms will come for me, for I no longer have any soul and that is the only difference between a body and a corpse. (Gautier, p.179)

D'Albert realises that the self he had shown to society was only a façade which suffocated his true identity. In a schizoid way he had watched his false self playing a part in his own real-life drama. 'I was my own spectator, the audience for the play I was in. I watched myself living and listened to my heartbeat as I would the ticking of a clock' (Gautier, p.185). However, d'Albert to his own surprise has to acknowledge that there has existed a true self within him all the time. When becoming aware of his homosexual feelings for Madeleine-Théodore, his authentic self being still rather feeble becomes stronger by letting it out into the open so it can so-to-speak take in oxygen and breathe which makes d'Albert come and feel 'alive' for the first time in his life.

Love has come down to the bottom of the tomb
 where my torpid soul was crouching, chilled to
 the bone. She has taken me by the hand and
 helped me up the steep, narrow steps leading to
 the air. The locks on all the prison doors have
 been picked and for the very first time the poor
 Psyche which was shut up inside me has been set
 free.

Another life has become mine. I draw breath
 through the lungs of another, and the blow that
 hurt him would kill me. (Gautier, pp.184-185)

The last two lines in the quotation above make it obvious that d'Albert has divided himself up into two different personalities. He admits to himself here that his old self would not survive the blow of acknowledging his homosexuality, but his new authentic self, although hurt by the stigma, can deal with it. Nevertheless he has to protect his weak new self and it is astonishing that he uses the same metaphor as Laing, that is the head of the Medusa, when he speaks of being approached by other persons. D'Albert experiences the gaze of individuals like the petrifying look of the Medusa.

I understand a statue perfectly, but I do not understand a man. Where life begins, I break off and stand back in fear just as if I had seen the head of the Medusa. The phenomenon of life provokes in me an astonishment from which I cannot recover. [...] The sound of my voice surprises me to an unimaginable degree and there are times when I am tempted to think it someone else's. (Gautier, pp.219-220)

It is only logical then that he prefers statues to human beings as objects cannot fixate their stare on his stigmatised homosexual feelings and can thus not endanger his precarious real self even further.

At this stage it makes sense to point out that Gautier only by a narrow margin avoids that his novel will turn out to be the first psychological portrayal of homosexual characters, although the devices Gautier uses for dissipating any such suspicions are not really convincing and a bit strained. But Gautier must have been aware that his minute descriptions of pre-marital sex was daring enough and that the subject of homosexual love was taboo and would have been simply too much for the censors. So in order to spare the novel the fate of being censored and forgotten the reader now learns what he must have guessed all along, that in truth Théodore de Sérannes is Madeleine de Maupin and d'Albert's masculine instincts were so strong that Madeleine's masquerade could not deceive him. And in turn Madeleine confesses that she only started to don male attire to find out how men really are and what they think about women before choosing a husband. Indeed, as Vern & Bonnie Bullough point out, in the eighteenth and at the beginning of the nineteenth century '[...] the growing popularity of masquerade balls attest to the public's continued curiosity in regard to

outward manifestations of gender-role experimentation.’¹⁹⁸ However the main motive for most women cross dressers remained still a rational one, that is to gain in social status which however does not apply to an aristocratic woman like Mademoiselle de Maupin. Moreover Gautier was inspired by a real life model when writing his novel. The character he had in mind was Mademoiselle d’Aubigny-Maupin (1673-1707), who just like Madeleine-Théodore preferred men’s clothing, ‘fought duels and had a lover named d’Albert. Her adventures included burning a convent and kidnapping a woman whom she loved.’¹⁹⁹ These facts together with Gautier’s artistic choice of presenting d’Albert and Madeleine-Théodore as androgynes behaving in a gender non-conforming fashion and revealing a precarious sense of self nurtures the suspicion that Gautier indeed intended to write about the psychological side of homosexuality. Gautier depicts though two different kinds of androgyny, which I have defined in chapter two, to evoke indirectly the idea of homosexuality in his novel. D’Albert would be an example of the asexual androgyne. Not only is he ridiculed by his friends for being a beardless and effeminate dandy, but in his gradual process of inner emasculation he sheds his male gender signifiers without taking on new female ones. Madeleine-Théodore on the other hand while still relishing her female beauty discovers increasingly typically male traits in her self, for example being the protector for little Ninon or a certain fascination to fight duels like a man. Thus by uniting both male and female signifiers on her persona she turns into a hermaphrodite adrogyne.

Although Madeleine-Théodore excuses her boredom and disappointment regarding men by claiming to know the ways of men too well to be still

¹⁹⁸ Vern L. Bullough & Bonnie Bullough, *Cross Dressing, Sex, and Gender* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), p.138.

¹⁹⁹ Marlène Barsoum, *Towards a Definition of the Androgynous Discourse* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), p.34.

amorously ensnared by them, she confesses at the same time that her love for Rosette was 'more than a woman loves another woman.' (Gautier, p.280). So when d'Albert, Rosette and Madeleine-Théodore stage Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, the doomed infatuation Rosette has for Madeleine-Théodore is mirrored in their parts when Phoebe played by Rosette has to suffer from an impossible love regarding Rosalind. But also Madeleine-Théodore deeply regrets that she cannot physically fulfil the love for Rosette.

If I had been a young man, how I would have loved Rosette! How I would have adored her! Our souls really were made for one another, two pearls destined to melt into one! I should have made her idea of love come true! Her character suited me perfectly, and I loved her kind of beauty. What a shame our love was utterly condemned to be necessarily platonic! (Gautier, p.310)

Rosette's and Madeleine-Théodore's love has to remain unresolved to the end, and the incompatibility of their love is symbolised by the two pearls the chambermaid finds in between the sheets of their bed they shared during their last night. Apparently Madeleine-Théodore cannot satisfy Rosette merely with the love of her soul, as Rosette desires a male body.

Madeleine-Théodore's stage role as Rosalind in a camp fashion tells the truth about herself: a woman disguised as a man plays a female role. She arrives at the conclusion that in reality she will finally seem '[...] like a man disguised as a woman.' She feels that she is neither male nor female but is 'of a third, separate sex which does not yet have a name' (Gautier, p.318). In order not to touch upon the subject of lesbianism Gautier lets Madeleine-Théodore find a resolution of her dilemma outside reality, in the

realm of dreams, of art and Greek antiquity, but not in the here-and-now, when she compares herself to a chimera. 'My dream, a chimera, would be to have both sexes in turn, to satisfy my dual nature. Man today, woman tomorrow' (Gautier, p.318). In the historical context this is understandable because at the beginning of the nineteenth century there did not exist a lesbian identity, let alone a word for it and Gautier as many of his literary colleagues had to revert to the image of the androgyne to convey the idea of a gender non-conforming identity. The historical context is also to blame that it is the female protagonist Madeleine-Théodore in Gautier's novel who openly displays and acknowledges her homosexual side as women in the nineteenth century were still thought to have no sexuality and were thus safe regarding censorship. This aspect concerning the presentation of homosexuality in literature was still true at the beginning of the twentieth century in the case of Ronald Firbank's novels where he displaces same sex desire on female bodies. I cannot therefore agree with Marlène Barsoum when she speculates 'that Gautier chooses the androgyne as subject in order to express his nostalgia for a lost absolute' (Barsoum, p. XI). Madeleine-Théodore is desperate to find a name for her real identity and gives authentic details of her character to the reader to describe her difficult situation. She is not looking for a romantic ideal, but searches for her place in society. Whether she appears to be a bi-sexual woman or a lesbian is a matter of debate, but she clearly realises that she is different from other women.

Many men are more female than I am. All that is female about me is my bosom, a few more curves and more delicate hands. The skirt is round my waist, not my mind. It is often the case that the sex of the soul does not correspond to that of the body and that is a contradiction which invariably creates dreadful confusion. If, for example, I had not taken this decision, which

may seem crazy but is basically sensible, to give up the clothes of a sex which is only mine materially and fortuitously, I should have been miserable. I love horses, fencing, all violent exercise, I enjoy climbing and running around everywhere like a boy;[...] All the foolish, expensive things which as a rule prove such a temptation to women have only ever affected me mildly, and, like Achilles disguised as a young girl, I would willingly abandon the mirror for the sword. The only thing I like about women is their beauty. In spite of the disadvantages that causes, I should not care to change my shape, even though it does not match the mind inside it very well. (Gautier, pp. 260-261)

It is surprising that as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century Gautier brings up the topic of gender ‘drawing attention to the artificiality of what we think of as “natural” behaviour’.²⁰⁰ Madeleine-Théodore is conditioned in her mode of thinking by a society where the biological sex was thought to determine and had to be in accordance with the way a person conceived of him- or herself. This is the reason why she despairs, because although she is biologically a woman she feels like a man and desires Rosette but, at the same time, she wants to keep her female body. D’Albert’s quite feminine body is only a transitory substitute for the female body she desires. But it is also her precarious sense of self which makes her leave d’Albert. And in this context has to be seen her at first sight illogical statement when she claims that ‘if I had a lover, the female in me would no doubt dominate for a while over the male, but it would not last long, and I feel I should only be half content’ (Gautier, p.318). According to Laing a schizoid individual is drawn to certain degree to a depersonalised character like d’Albert because it would not overpower her identity at first, but in the long run his male presence would engulf her female personality. Her

²⁰⁰ David Glover & Cora Kaplan, *Genders* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.ix.

female self would not react to his masculinity, that is it would not make her feel more feminine, but instead her inner vacuum would be filled with d'Albert's maleness. Marlène Barsoum is right however that Madeleine-Théodore 'is incapable of either loving d'Albert or being part of a couple', but not because she 'represents the narcissistic androgyne which turns back on itself'. The true reason for Madeleine-Théodore's self-sufficiency is her ontological insecurity which renders intimacy to another person for her impossible. D'Albert and Madeleine-Théodore turn out to become mirror images in the end as they are both trapped in the same psychological condition.

5.4 Monsieur Vénus

Monsieur Vénus was the first novel to bring the French Decadent authoress Rachilde (Marguerite Vallette-Eymery) a certain amount of success. However, it was banned immediately after publication in Brussels in 1884. The novel depicts a female cross-dressing aristocratic protagonist who falls in love with a much younger effeminate working-class boy. It was seen as having a too great a corrupting influence on readers but became nevertheless ‘un succès scandaleuse’.

As Wolfgang Maier points out in his critical analysis of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*²⁰¹, Rachilde’s novel has never been seen in relation to Wilde’s work despite certain striking resemblances. Wilde did, in fact, know ‘Monsieur Vénus’ and praised it and recommended it to his friends. In his book ‘L’Affaire Oscar Wilde’, Marc-André Raffalovitch writes:

Il fut saisi d’un véritable accès de fièvre cérébrale
après avoir lu Monsieur Vénus et en racontait le
sujet avec une ardeur poétique admirable.²⁰²

Moreover, Oscar Wilde and Rachilde were personally acquainted with each other as Frazer Lively²⁰³, an American academic, mentions in his introduction to Rachilde’s plays. Rachilde had hosted a literary salon in Paris attracting celebrities of the Symbolist and Decadent movement.

The main topic as we have mentioned, in *Monsieur Vénus* as in Théophile Gautier’s novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin* is gender inversion, a continuous play upon sexual identities. Such a topic must have fascinated

²⁰¹ Wolfgang Maier, *The Picture of Dorian Gray: Eine Kritische Analyse der anglistischen Forschung von 1962-1982* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1984), p.199.

²⁰² Marc-André Raffalovitch, ‘L’Affaire Oscar Wilde’ reprinted in: Marc-André Raffalovich, *Uranisme et Unisexualité* (Lyon & Paris, 1896), pp.245-246.

²⁰³ Rachilde, *Madame La Mort and Other Plays*, transl. & ed. By Kiki Gounaridou and Frazer Lively (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p.4.

Oscar Wilde for he often mentioned such novels when it came to works which had had a considerable influence upon him.

‘I am an androgyne of letters’²⁰⁴ said Rachilde of herself and by giving herself the pseudonym ‘Rachilde’ she was emphasizing her androgynous character. Although she never wrote an autobiography, she nevertheless allows the reader to catch glimpses of her inner self via her literary texts. Contemporaries such as Maurice Barrès were severe critics of her plays and novels, claiming that ‘Rachilde has scarcely done anything but write about herself’²⁰⁵. However, as Diana Holmes has pointed out in *Rachilde: Decadence, Gender and the Woman Writer*, nineteenth-century literary criticism tended to see fictional characters as being highly autobiographical, particularly in literary texts by women writers. But even from today’s post-modern perspective Holmes admits that ‘there is certainly a degree of self-projection in these [Rachilde’s] texts.’²⁰⁶

Wearing male suits and presenting herself as an ‘homme de lettres’ was not, for Rachilde, simply a tactic to attract attention in the up-and-coming Decadent movement. She was simply mirroring her inner self, her gender identity. Whilst she was writing *Monsieur Vénus*, Rachilde was living in a state of eroticised celibacy, bringing her close to Walter Pater’s ideal of the true artist – a diaphanous being. By thinking up the most exquisite debaucheries in her novels, she was eroticising her imagination and working herself up into such a delirious frenzy that, for instance, *Monsieur Vénus* was finished in a fortnight.

²⁰⁴ Renee A. Kingcaid, *Neurosis and Narrative* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), p.111.

²⁰⁵ Rachilde, *Monsieur Vénus* (Sawtry: Dedalus, 1992), p.3.

²⁰⁶ Diana Holmes, *Rachilde: Decadence, Gender and the Woman Writer* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), p.113

Analysing the plot of *Monsieur Vénus*, the ‘effeminate working-class boy’, Jacques Silvert, foreshadows his own fate in the first sentence he utters to the heroine, Raoule de Vénérande: “Madame... for the present, I am Marie Silvert.” (Rachilde, p.12) This does not mean that by the end of the novel he has assumed his sister’s identity and profession – she is a costume designer - but only that, effeminate as he is by nature, he is becoming or will become more ‘woman-like’. Raoule visits Jacques because she needs his sister’s finely-made satin flowers for her ‘water-nymph’ dress, for it is highly possible that she intends to dress up as Salmacis. She is a water nymph who lures Hermaphroditus into her pond where her female and his male body melt into one, thus creating what we today know as hermaphroditism, that is a physical body having all the anatomical attributes of both male and female bodies. Raoule, it is clear, is depicted by Rachilde as a highly educated young lady, well aware of the Greek and Roman myths dealing with sexual ambivalence. For example, in her rooms she has several statues of the lover of the Roman Emperor Hadrian, the ancient god, Antinous, and compares young Jacques to him. All of this material regarding gender identity is only contained in the initial part of the novel but nevertheless is successful in setting the overall theme namely ‘gender-bending’.

Raoule is fascinated by Jacques’s general appearance, which is neither completely feminine nor masculine. His pale, babylike - or even ladylike - flesh and the contours of his mouth, as though he had put on bright red lipstick, form a striking contrast to the unruly, manly golden curls on his chest and his deep dark voice. Raoule describes Jacques to her suitor, Raittolbe, who tries in vain to win her over to him, as follows:

He exists, my friend, and he isn’t even a
hermaphrodite, nor even impotent: he is a

handsome male of twenty-one years, whose soul
with its feminine instincts, is in the wrong
container.(Rachilde, p.54)

But just seconds before, she, Raoule, had confessed to her unlucky suitor, Raittolbe: 'I am a man in love with a man, not a woman!' (Rachilde, p.53)

However, Jacques is often referred to by Raoule not as 'he', a man, but as 'she'. With all this 'gender bending', which is getting us in a complete muddle, it is perhaps best to consider what can be deduced from the way these characters interact. In this respect, it is clear that Raoule wants Jacques to be the submissive partner, not only by dominating him but possibly also by intimidating him, the working-class lad, by her higher social status. For instance, for him always to be at her disposal he never leaves the apartment Raoule has rented for him without her permission. In bed, too, Raoule is the active partner, and certainly never takes up the so-called 'missionary position'. What Raoule appreciates in Jacques is his desire to act in a feminine manner and she does her best to further this desire. However, as far as his outward appearance is concerned she is aroused by his physical body's masculine, as well as by its feminine attributes. Interestingly, as far as Raoule and Jacques are concerned, two developments coincide: The gradual 'feminisation' of Jacques is accompanied by a slow 'masculinisation' of Raoule. Regarding their gender identity, the omniscient narrator reveals that "...they were more and more united by a common thought: the destruction of their sex".(Rachilde, p.68) From the modern point of view, they both feel and act more and more like present-day 'gay' men. Raoule being the masculine, straight-acting gay man and Jacques the effeminate one. The attraction between Raoule and Jacques is so vehement as, according to Alan Sinfield, relations that are

sexy still operate now as then along hierarchical and binary parameters like 'gender, age, class, and race.'²⁰⁷

It is not surprising that these characters are compared to Hadrian's boy lover we have already mentioned, namely Antinous. The first allusion to Antinous is made by Raoule when she embraces Jacques, paying him the compliment that "...Antinous was one of your ancestors".(Rachilde,p.33) And later, with Raoule, it is the omniscient narrator who draws an analogy between her and the bust of Antinous besides which she is standing. The bust's eyes, incidentally, "glitter", says the narrator (Rachilde?) with desire. It seems that both Raoule and Jacques are becoming more and more identical. Raoule asks herself "...whether she had not, in the manner of God, created a being [i.e. Jacques] in her own image".(Rachilde,p.68) As far as Jacques is concerned, having been freed by Raoule from social and financial constraints, he now feels free to develop his identity. For a short while he was, perhaps, in a perfect state of androgyny like Raoule, but it is clear that he is slowly turning into a 'feminine' transsexual whose only desire is to act the female and to have sex with a real 'masculine' man. Raoule, on the other hand, is the 'masculine' gay person who identifies herself with masculinity, and thus begins to resent a completely 'feminine' transsexual man as a sex partner.

The climax of the novel begins to become apparent. The tragic ending of their love affair begins by the increasing 'feminisation' of Jacques who is starting to develop transsexual tendencies towards men brought about also, incidentally, by Raoule herself who, vampire-like, drains him of his masculinity, making it her own. She has so great an influence upon him that she can no longer recognise him as a man. Similarly Raoule can no

²⁰⁷ Alan Sinfield, *On Sexuality and Power* (Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2004), p.2.

longer play the part of the 'man' Jacques desires. She can, in fact, no longer live up to his expectations. Her 'masculinity', of course, is limited by anatomical realities. Jacques makes the flippant remark to Raoule that 'there is something you will always lack!' (Rachilde, p.72) And when making love to her, he is thoroughly revolted at seeing Raoule's naked breast, marking the end of any mutual desire. Raoule falls out of love with Jacques when he becomes, for her, too exaggeratedly feminine, such as when he tries on female 'drag' and, thus attired, seduces her friend and, by this stage, her rival Raittolbe.

In the novel Raittolbe acts as a foil for Raoule. It is no coincidence that both their names start with the same two letters. They also have similar gender make-ups: Both have the desire or want to remain, 'masculine' in their behaviour. Both long for a 'feminine' male. There is only one difference: their biological and anatomical gender. Although it is clear in her novels that Rachilde uncouples gender from sex, the actual physical bodily realities finally play an important role. Raoule does not have a male body with all its obvious male attributes, which might have satisfied Jacques's desires and have bound him to her. Moreover, Raoule is unwilling or unable to show or give love to anyone. She confesses this herself when she 'devours' Jacques: 'I cannot love...I...Raoule de Vénérande...!' (Rachilde, p.65) In its place, she turns Jacques into an 'objet d'art', an 'homme-objet' she tries to control and possess. One explanation for Raoule turning Jacques into such an 'objet' might be provided by R.D. Laing's psychological model of ontological insecurity. Raoule is deeply insecure in her 'male' identity. The obvious reason is that such a relationship as that between Jacques and Raoule would have been completely taboo at the end of the nineteenth century. But more important

for her insecurity is, I think, that the only reference point for securing Raoule's identity resides in Jacques. If Jacques does not confirm her 'construct' of male gender identity by responding to her advances then, quite naturally, Raoule begins to lose a sense of her own self. Laing describes this ontologically insecure state of mind as a process of oscillation.

There is a failure to sustain a sense of one's own being without the presence of other people. It is a failure *to be* by oneself, a failure to exist alone. As James put it, 'Other people supply me with my existence'. (...) Utter detachment and isolation are regarded as the only alternative to a clam- or vampire-like attachment in which the other person's life-blood is necessary for one's own survival, and yet is a threat to one's survival. Therefore, the polarity is between complete isolation or complete merging of identity rather than between separateness and relatedness.²⁰⁸

Just as the doctor had predicted for Raoule, she would be a 'special case[...] No middle way! Nun, or monster!'(Rachilde, p.23). The actual vampire-like sucking of Jacques's wounds symbolises how she depends on his 'identity'. On the other hand, when her identification with Jacques becomes too exaggerated, she pushes him away from her by turning him into an 'objet d'art'. When Raoule finds out about Jacques's infidelity with Raittolbe - whilst trying to free himself from Raoule and trying to confirm his own identity as a feminine gay man or even transsexual – Raoule's own identity is in danger. She loses the reference point for her identity. It is a threat to her survival when by the end of the novel Jacques has been killed. Raoule is trying to ensure that her identity can no longer be threatened by replacing the living Jacques with a type of 'Jacques dummy'. Raoule can

²⁰⁸ R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1975), pp.52-53.

always control a ‘dummy’ but still it cannot give her the reassurance of a sense of being alive. That is her tragedy. Moreover, by turning Jacques into a solid real object she is, at the same time, dehumanising herself, whilst nevertheless being psychologically and inseparably linked to him.

In *Monsieur Vénus*, apart from Raoule, there are two other androgyne characters: Raoule’s aunt, Elisabeth, and Jacques. Elisabeth falls into the category of an asexual androgyne. She is a religious ascetic trying to overcome the needs of her body. Jacques, at the end of the novel, is about to abandon his hermaphrodite androgyny and is heading towards an identity as a possibly transsexual, ‘feminine’, gay male. Raoule herself is a supreme example of a hermaphrodite androgyne, physically combining both male and female gender signifiers in her dress and behaviour. Both Jacques and Raoule are unsure about their sexual identity and, as seen already, display the typical behaviour of ontologically insecure beings.

For nineteenth-century readers, Rachilde’s novel offers a deep insight into the psyche of personalities behaving in a gender non-conforming fashion. This must have deeply impressed and influenced Oscar Wilde. When he thought up the title of the ‘dangerous’²⁰⁹ book that Sir Henry gave Dorian Gray, namely ‘Le Secret de Raoul’, he was almost certainly thinking of Rachilde’s *Monsieur Vénus*. Oscar Wilde, like Rachilde, was wanting to portray characters which transgress sexual conventions with, for that time, deep psychological insight. When Dorian reads this book, a product of Wilde’s own imagination, it is no surprise that he recognises, as he says, ‘his own life’ (Wilde, p.206) and background.

²⁰⁹ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray: An Annotated and Uncensored Edition* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), p.206.

5.5 Vivian Grey

When a literature expert is trying to find direct influences for Oscar Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the obvious choice that immediately comes to mind is Benjamin Disraeli's novel with a similar sounding title: *Vivian Grey*. And, to be sure, in Book 3, chapter IV of the latter, we do indeed find an episode mentioning a portrait where the character in the portrait actually changes the facial features of his picture. This, by the way, is of no further significance for the plot. The portrait itself was of Max Rodenstein. Mrs Lorraine, who narrates this episode, reminds us that Rodenstein's nurse told him that if anyone painted his portrait he would have to die. The reason was that such a "beautiful being"²¹⁰ could only be allowed to remain alive under the condition that his 'beauty' was never captured, so to speak, in a portrait. Nevertheless, three months before the battle of Leipsic [sic], Max's mother does, in fact, receive a portrait of her son. She hangs it above the fireplace. Three months later, Mrs Lorraine is looking at the portrait when the eyes suddenly begin to move and the eyelids begin trembling, whereupon the figure in the portrait closes his eyes for ever. Later, it was discovered that at that very moment, Max Rodenstein had been killed in the Leipsic battle in 1813.

However, if we look more closely at the actual character of Vivian Grey, it becomes clear that in his novel Wilde was not only inspired by the 'portrait motif' but he must also have been impressed by Disraeli's general portrayal of his hero. Disraeli was trying to outline the general psychology of, as he says, 'the development and formation of the poetic character'²¹¹. The 'portrait motif' can be seen then as a perfect disguise to draw the reader's

²¹⁰ Benjamin Disraeli, *Vivian Grey*, (Teddington, Middlesex: Echo Library, 2007), P.89.

²¹¹ Benjamin Disraeli, *Contarini Fleming*, (London: Peter Davies, 1927), p.ix.

attention away from what really inspired Wilde, namely the novel's 'poetic' character of the hero which is closely linked with homoerotic feeling. It is important at this stage to point out that *Vivian Grey* is part of a trilogy of novels comprising also *Contarini Fleming* and *Alroy*. Disraeli regarded the whole work as being autobiographical although in public he denied any such suggestion. In William Kuhn's *A Portrait of Benjamin Disraeli* he writes: 'Disraeli admitted in a fragmentary diary, "This trilogy is the secret history of my feelings – I shall write no more about myself."'”²¹² Thus, all of the three different protagonists of these novels taken together provide the reader with an intimate portrait of their author.

What all three have in common is a deep-seated feeling of estrangement from society. In a deep depression Contarini confesses to a stranger:

But I have ever been unhappy, because I am perplexed about myself. I feel I am not like other persons, and that which makes them happy is to me a source of no enjoyment. (Disraeli, *Contarini Fleming*, p.51)

There were many reasons why Disraeli did not fit into English society. First and foremost there were his dark, sultry Mediterranean looks which, when he was a child, separated him from other children and later made him stand out from the normal British crowd. And then there was the fact that he was born a Jew. For opportunist reasons his father decided however, that the whole family should convert to Christianity. Benjamin was only twelve years old but his surname still betrayed his Jewish origins. Throughout his whole life Disraeli had the feeling of being, as it were, in a limbo. He was ignored and disregarded by Jewish society but still never fully accepted by Christians. The final fact that must have complemented his insecure sense of identity was his effeminacy. In his novels Disraeli depicts Vivian, Alroy

²¹² William Kuhn, *The Politics of Pleasure: A Portrait of Benjamin Disraeli* (London: Pocket Books, 2006), p.8.

and Contarini as pretty, androgynous-looking little boys. For example, Vivian is described as being proud of his shiny black curls – as indeed was Disraeli.

In *Contarini Fleming* a prominent place at the beginning of the novel is taken up by schoolboy romances: Contarini woos an older boy by the name of Museus. This is not necessarily autobiographical but should be seen as a projection of Disraeli's deepest wishes. Disraeli was very upset that at school he never had any 'best friend'. In his novels, however, he projects his homoerotic feelings into boys who tearfully confess to their 'puppy love'. William Kuhn writes in his portrait of Disraeli that

Lord Blake wrote of the schoolboy romance described in *Contarini Fleming* that 'In those pre-Freudian days it was possible to write about schoolboy romances in a way which could scarcely be imitated today'. Before Freud, people did not think of sex as a central part of identity. The Victorians could speak of romantic friendship between members of the same sex without any thought of there being homosexuality involved'.
(William Kuhn, pp. 8-9)

On the other hand these innocent schoolboy romances provided him an artistic outlet for his homoerotic feelings. Proof that these feelings were not quite so innocently perceived neither by himself nor by the general public lies in the following incident. When *Contarini Fleming* was reprinted in 1853 it was much against the wishes of Disraeli himself who wanted to suppress the book altogether. However, he did delete the passage where Contarini tries to make Museus cry. Furthermore his friend Edward Bulwer-Lytton later repeatedly advised him to tone down his 'effeminacy' not only in his dress but also in his writing. Perhaps Bulwer-Lytton was especially nervous regarding signs and insinuations of effeminacy as his

divorced wife Rosina repeatedly accused him publicly having committed sodomy with Disraeli.

After the great success of *Vivian Grey*, Disraeli's next books were comparative failures. This disappointment combined with his own sense of insecurity outlined above must have been the cause of his suffering a nervous breakdown. To recuperate, Disraeli travelled to the Middle East and eastern Mediterranean where he could also learn about his Jewish roots. However, William Kuhn points out that there was another reason for Disraeli having regained confidence in his personality:

Finally what he brought back from the East was a greater sense of peace about his ambiguous sexuality. He told both Sarah and Isaac that now that he knew himself better, he did not intend to marry. He would try to increase the happiness of his existing family without starting one of his own. We do not know for certain whether he consummated his desires for other men. On the other hand, we do not know for certain that he did not. We have only the evidence of his letters home and his novels. These dwell so lovingly on Greek pages, Spanish nights and solitary bachelors, Turkish baths, eunuchs and beautiful, girlish boys that homoeroticism begins to emerge as one of the most persistent themes of the written work. (Kuhn, p.140)

Historically in the eighteenth-century so-called rakes, fops and macaronis tried to transgress social conventions by displaying a girlish, affected manner yet, at the same time, often being aggressive womanisers. Disraeli saw himself in the same tradition of the pleasure-loving libertine. This vague imprecise label offered Disraeli a means of covering up any gender-nonconforming behaviour. What often betrayed his ontologically insecure identity was the way he kept audiences at a distance, that is only with a, as

Kuhn writes ‘half-smile [or] half-sneer[...]Contemptuousness was part of his stage persona’ (Kuhn, p.177). Nevertheless his ‘precarious self’ urged him to appear in public, something which made him feel alive. This urge is expressed in his own words: ‘I love to live in the eyes of the country’ (Kuhn, p.184). Before Disraeli became a popular statesman, he gained this attention in the first half of his life, for some 30 odd years by dressing outrageously as a ‘Butterfly Dandy’.

Perhaps more important in the context of the background to Oscar Wilde’s only novel is the fact that the sound of the name ‘Vivian Grey’ was, for many, steeped in homoerotic connotations. Both Wilde and Disraeli must have been aware of this fact. The best evidence for this is provided by a sensational trial held long before *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was written in 1870. Earnest Bolton and Frederick Park had been arrested for parading up and down the exclusive Burlington Arcade, a shopping arcade in London, dressed in women’s clothes. They had also asked to use the ladies’ room at the Strand Theatre. During the trial, the jury learnt ‘that both of them had at one time or another gone under the alias of Vivian Gray or Vivien Grey’(Kuhn, p.11). Both of the men had been charged with conspiracy to commit sodomy. They were eventually found to be innocent and released.

5.6 Walter Pater's Diaphanous 'Bodies'

Walter Pater's essays, especially those included in *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, were for Oscar Wilde his 'golden book of spirit and sense, the holy writ of beauty.'²¹³ According to Thomas Wright, none of Pater's disciples 'more assiduously followed Pater's injunction to burn always with a 'hard, gemlike flame'²¹⁴ than Oscar Wilde. Whether Wilde really lived up to Pater's artistic ideal of a diaphanous nature is doubtful. If Pater had lived to see Wilde put on trial he would have reprimanded him of being a failed Epicurean, just as he had characterised Dorian when writing a critique on the publication of Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. When in *De Profundis* Wilde wrote: 'I remember during my first term at Oxford reading Pater's Renaissance – that book which has had such a strange influence over my life' he echoes the lines he wrote in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* when referring to that obscure poisonous book Sir Henry Wotton had given to Dorian. 'For years, Dorian Gray could not free himself from the memory of this book.'²¹⁵

Anyone picking up Walter Pater's book, published in 1873, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*, to discover a few historical facts about the culture of that time would soon be disappointed. It is not any recognizable kind of cultural history at all. What we get are biographical sketches of painters or historical figures which do not necessarily represent the mainstream Renaissance individual. However, they appealed to Pater as it was such figures who introduced the first wave of Hellenism into the Middle Ages and challenged the Christian ideals of self-denial and

²¹³ Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987), p.80.

²¹⁴ Thomas Wright, *Built of Books: How Reading Defined the Life of Oscar Wilde* (New York: Henry Holt & Co, 2008), p.103.

²¹⁵ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray: An Annotated and Uncensored Edition*, ed. by Nicholas Frankel (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), p.187.

renunciation. In his introduction to *The Renaissance* editor Adam Phillips points out that

[I]t was noticeable that his [Pater's] biographical approach to his subjects was based on what could have been regarded as an over-identification with them, that tended to diminish their differences.²¹⁶

Accordingly we often find Pater filtering out certain aspects of his chosen subject's temperament. This possibly points to the fact that Pater is describing here his own temperament, thereby in some way justifying it. Already in 1864, in one of his earliest essays entitled 'Diaphaneité', which was first given as a talk to the Old Mortality and only published posthumously in 1895, he attempts to define that 'temperament' which runs throughout his work. He distinguishes there between three types of human temperament. The first is materialistic and worldly; the second is exemplified by 'the artist', the 'saint' or the 'speculative thinker', all of whom live 'out of the world's order'²¹⁷ but who can still be appreciated by the so-called 'common man' and are able to connect with him albeit in conflict.

The third temperament, the diaphanous type Pater associates with 'colourless, unclassified purity' (Pater, *Misc.*, p.252) or with the 'simplicity' (Pater, *Misc.*, p.253) and 'sexless beauty' (Pater, *Misc.*, p.257) of Greek statues. Denis Donoghue when discussing the diaphanous type of temperament in his analysis of 'Diaphaneité' concludes:

A person of this type treats life in the spirit of art and finds that as he comes nearer to the perfection of the type – with Pater it is always 'he' not 'she' – 'the veil of an outer life not simply expressive of the

²¹⁶ Walter Pater, *The Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.x.

²¹⁷ Walter Pater, *Miscellaneous Studies* (London: Macmillan, 1895), p. 251.

inward becomes thinner and thinner'. He lives a transparent life, indifferent, beyond confusion, as if exempt from the exacerbation of meeting qualities in the world different from his own.²¹⁸

The process the diaphanous character undergoes is one of disembodiment, of turning himself into an 'objet d'art' until he has reached the stage of a 'clear crystal nature', until the 'self-assertion of the intellectual part of such natures' (Pater, *Misc.*, pp.254-255) has, as it were, 'erased' the body and gained the upper hand. In other words the 'outer' life has become the 'inner' life and vice-versa.

Being under the influence of Fichte's transcendental idealism Pater had to some extent a character in mind who put his whole life and existence in the service of an idea. As examples Pater cites the Florentine religious fundamentalist Savonarola, and the French revolutionist Charlotte Corday.

But apart from such incorporeal idealists Pater hints for such a 'pure' existence also at a certain androgyny when he makes the telling statement that:

Often the presence of this nature is felt like a sweet aroma in early manhood. (Pater, *Misc.*, p.258)

In Pater's essays androgyny signifies a diaphanous nature which, for him, is a sign of genius. For Pater a diaphanous character stands not in opposition to the prevalent cultural order but outside it or as he puts: 'It crosses rather than follows the main current of the world's life' (Pater, *Misc.*, p.252). Thus 'Diaphaneité' does not define itself by contradicting

²¹⁸ Denis Donoghue, 'The antimonian Pater: 1894-1994' in: E.S. Shaffer (ed.), *Comparative Criticism: Walter Pater and the culture of the fin-de-siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.8.

cultural parameters but by setting up utterly new ones like a self-sufficient androgyny would. Similarly, in his essay on Leonardo da Vinci, he states that what Leonardo had introduced to his admirers were 'strange blossoms and fruit hitherto unknown' (Pater, *Renaiss.*, p.75). Most of the characters in his pictures have, says Pater, an androgynous appearance and are of a 'doubtful sex' (Pater, *Renaiss.*, p.74). The only direct statement we have from Leonardo regarding his inner life is quoted by Freud's colleague Edmondo Solmi and indicates the artist's frigidity:

The act of procreation and everything connected with it is so disgusting that mankind would soon die out if it were not an old-established custom and if there were not pretty faces and sensuous natures.²¹⁹

Interesting in this context is the fact that in 1910 Sigmund Freud wrote a psychoanalysis of Leonardo da Vinci and published it in the form of a long essay. Freud's analysis consists of what Pater might only have guessed at, intuitively, from examining Leonardo's paintings. In Freud's view Leonardo had transformed his sexuality into a strong desire for knowledge. According to Freud he was either sexually inactive or he had so 'desexualised' his homosexuality that it had been transferred onto a higher plane and become an idealised platonic form of homosexuality. But surely this stands in direct opposition to Pater's famous maxim that 'to burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life' (Pater, *Renaiss.*, p.152).

Pater's diaphanous ideal and his maxim of attaining the highest possible forms of sensuality do not, as Herbert Sussman has shown in his book on

²¹⁹ Sigmund Freud, 'Leonardo da Vinci', in Sigmund Freud, *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1995), p.69.

Victorian Masculinities, entirely exclude one each. Pater, he writes, was still somewhat under the influence of Thomas Carlyle's view of the Victorian ideal of manhood. Sussman writes: 'As much as Carlyle, Pater fears the eruption, the uncontrolled flood of male desire.'²²⁰ However, for Carlyle regulating potentially destructive male energy is best achieved by leading a more cerebral working-man's existence and leading a comparatively celibate way of life, thus gaining a certain amount of order as well as achieving mental stability. On the other hand, for Pater, valuing one's celibacy and repressing one's sexuality ought, in fact, to create a highly eroticised 'interiour' life, thus intensifying and heightening the value of male-male relationships. Pater's

crucial turn is presenting this disruption of the equilibrium of manliness not as a condition to be overcome but as a condition to be desired. For Pater sealing the valves of desire creates a disease, but this is a '*beautiful disease*'. Turning desire inward generates for Pater as for Browning physical debility in men. But for Pater men that are 'frail' are men of an 'unaccustomed beauty'. (Sussman, p.178)

In other words, Pater recognizes that the difficulty for the diaphanous type is to maintain a balance, to contain the fire of such exquisite, mainly homoerotic passion so that, as he says, the flame burns 'gem-like' and one's imagination can be inspired, otherwise passion becomes self-destructive.

Pater exemplifies his views in a story published in 1893, one year before his death and which takes place in the Middle Ages: 'Apollo in Picardy' (Pater, Misc, pp.140-170). Here Apollo the Greek God returns in

²²⁰ Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.183.

the form of a young golden-haired monastic brother equipped with harp and bow to Picardy and induces such a sensuous atmosphere at a monastery there which proves irresistible for Prior Saint-Jean. Pater juxtaposes here the ascetic, rigid and soulless world of Christian doctrine with the pagan Hellenic culture which for him is characterised by a 'liberty of the heart' and its 'search after the pleasures of the senses and the imagination' and also by a 'care for beauty' and a 'worship of the body' constituting 'a strange rival religion' (Pater, *Renaiss.*, p.16). But Pater also depicts the brutal and irrational side of the old pagan gods when he lets Apollo kill all of the monastic brother's pidgeon in a frenzy one single night. According to Ellis Hanson '[m]onasticism [...] provides Pater with a chaste homoerotic ideal'²²¹ which is precariously placed right in the middle of these two opposing religions. Towards the end it is claimed in public that Prior Saint-Jean, in a manic fit caused by dissolute living is instrumental in the death of his beloved little boy server, Hyacinthus. The reader does not know whether this is true as Pater depicts how Apollo similar to the Greek myth unintentionally kills the boy while playing with him. But by telling the reader that Saint-Jean is unable to continue his life's work, a treatise of mathematics, and the last volume he is working on is 'pieced together of quite irregularly formed pages [...being] a solecism' (Pater, *Misc.*, p.142), Pater is implying that he is unable to contain the 'flame' of his inner desires any longer and it has consumed him.

The theme of Pater's story is similar to John Addington Symonds's poem 'Gabriel'. The protagonist of his poem, Gabriel, is a youth like Apollo who brings a sensual and homoerotic atmosphere to a monastery. Gabriel has to be slain and victimised in the end to restore the old rigid life at the

²²¹ Ellis Hanson, *Decadence and Catholicism* (London: Harvard University Press, 1997), p.218.

monastery. The poem which Symonds wrote in 1868 presumably remained unpublished until 1974 because of its homoerotic flavour. According to the editors of that poem, Robert L. Peters and Timothy D'Arch Smith, it describes a dream Symonds repeatedly had and it is similar to those dreams of his own 'case-history' (without reference to the fact that it was his) which are cited in his and Havelock Ellis's book *Sexual Inversion* (1897):

He [Symonds] enjoyed visions of beautiful young men and exquisite Greek statues; he often shed tears when he thought of them. He was often visited in nocturnal visions by a beautiful youth, who clasped him round. The dreams persisted for many years.²²²

Even more enlightening regarding Pater's concept of 'Diaphaneité' is Pater's essay on the German archaeologist, Johann Joachim Winckelmann, he published in 1867. Again he detects in Winckelmann too a diaphanous nature when repeating word for word the same comparison describing the 'sexless beauty' (Pater, *Renaiss.*, p.257) of Greek statues he had already used for illustrating the nature of 'Diaphaneité'. For Pater, Winckelmann was

occupied ever with himself, perfecting himself and developing his genius,...This temperament he nurtured and invigorated by friendships which kept him always in direct contact with the spirit of youth. The beauty of the Greek statues was a sexless beauty: the statues of the gods had the least traces of sex. Here there is moral sexlessness, a kind of ineffectual wholeness of nature, yet with a true beauty and significance of its own. (Pater, *Renaiss.*, pp.141-142)

²²² John Addington Symonds, *Gabriel: A Poem*, edited for the first time from the original manuscript by Robert L. Peters & Timothy D'Arch Smith (London: Michael deHartington, 1974), p.3.

The notion of a 'moral sexlessness' is used here by Pater again to explain the nature and prerequisite of artistic creativity and genius. Pater seemed well-informed about Winckelmann's inclinations for young boys – it was rumoured that Winckelmann was, in fact, killed by a male prostitute. Pater himself, by the way, whilst a don at Oxford became entangled in a homoerotic affair leading to difficulties with his academic superiors. The pages following the above quotation concerning Winckelmann contain what seems like not only a strained excuse for Winckelmann, but even a rehabilitation of Pater himself. For Pater, Winckelmann becomes alive through his appreciation of Greek artistic creations and thus seems to turn everything he experiences into art. Pater calls it a 'Greek sensuousness' which does not 'fever the conscience' and in its essence is 'shameless and childlike' (Pater, *Renaiss.*, p.142). When Winckelmann fingers the flesh of young boys, for him they turn into 'pagan marbles' and thus, there is nothing erotic about this as his hands remain, so to speak, 'unsinged' (Pater, *Renaiss.*, p.143). Winckelmann needs such homoerotic emotions to fan the inner flame of his artistic imagination. Lying behind this attitude there is also the notion of cultivating one's own 'genius'. When serving one's artistic genius in this way almost anything is permissible. The normal constraints of morality do not apply to the artist. Winckelmann regarded himself and others as actors in a Greek drama, or rather 'tragedy', when we consider how he died. Whether Pater, in fact, knew the real circumstances of Winckelmann's death remains unclear. However, to maintain his diaphanous image of Winckelmann, Pater seems to be making Winckelmann's living in an Hellenic, a bygone age, his otherworldliness and his childish trust in other people responsible for his brutal death.

More aligned with Pater's diaphanous ideal is what was called, by the 1890s 'the new chivalry', that is idealised male friendships, chaste but highly eroticised. The best example of such a non-physical ideal of male friendship is French poet and writer André Raffalovich. He took as his companion John Gray, who became the model for Wilde's fictional character of Dorian Gray. In 1896 Raffalovich published a study of homosexuality, *Uranisme et Unisexualité*, where he defended homosexuality but nevertheless as the Christian ideal, proposed a life of chastity, supported by male-bonding. Both Raffalovich and Gray regarded themselves as *artistes* and were amongst Pater's circle of friends. It can thus be assumed that they supported Pater's diaphanous ideal.

The diaphanous type is an artificial self-construction, insomuch as it is a paradoxical blending of chastity and sensuousness. Pater's ideal of an individual's virgin aestheticism is the result of a sexually repressed identity – ideally of a homosexual kind. The sexually repressed individual according to R. D. Laing tries to turn his or her exterior self into an object in order to ward off critical judgement. But he also petrifies the society around him and thus treats life 'in the spirit of art' (Pater, Misc., p.253). He or she thus is denying the physical body and turning him or herself into pure spirit, into a 'clear crystal nature' (Misc., p.258), the diaphanous ideal. The intended effect of such a transformation is that it is not the physical body, but the imagination that is 'burning' with passion.

Ellis Hanson points out that:

Virtually every representation of love between men in Pater is haunted by the grave – and the stronger the

suggestion of homoerotic desire, the more eagerly
Pater seems to want to see one of the two men dead.²²³

Common homosexual physical love finds no place in Pater's world of the artistic imagination. Individuals must repress their homosexual desire and employ it in the service of artistic endeavour, at the same time turning themselves and others into 'objets d'art'. If they don't do this, according to Pater, they have to die.

Keeping up a diaphanous state of being is like a tightrope walk or like a 'fine edge of light' (Pater, Misc., p. 252), because the mind must continuously burn for an ideal or with such a homoerotic passion that it consumes the body.

²²³ Ellis Hanson, *Decadence and Catholicism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 184.

5.7 Summary

Des Esseintes in Huysmans' *A Rebours* which is the most well-known and prominent character associated with nineteenth century literary Decadence has been on the whole overrated as a literary influence for Wilde, in particular regarding *Dorian Gray*. Wilde merely admired Huysmans' idea to substitute the plot of a novel with the minute study of a decadent character. Moreover the growing interest of his literary colleagues during the second phase of literary Decadence to move beyond the confines of mere outer realism and to explore in literature an inner reality must have furthered Wilde's own ambition doing the same.

When going through the works of authors which Wilde claimed to have him influenced directly when writing *Dorian Gray* there emerges a certain pattern. There is often an obvious reason why Wilde had chosen a certain work of literature as an influence, but this served him merely as a cover for a much deeper reason. That is in all the influential works the authors attempted to portray the psyche of a gender non-conforming character. For example at first sight the tale of Max Rothenstein in Disraeli's novel *Vivian Grey* obviously gave Wilde the idea of a picture that comes alive. But at a much deeper level Wilde just like Disraeli wanted to portray what Disraeli called 'a poetic character' which entailed depicting the feminine side of a male character. And again in the case of Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin* the first thought which comes to the mind is that Gautier in the introduction of this novel set up the manifesto for the 'L'art pour L'Art' movement which became a holy writ for all authors of the Decadence in the nineteenth century. However the fact that Gautier's novel became for Wilde and other authors of the Fin de Siècle a blueprint they copied when describing the innermost feelings and the psyche of homoerotic characters has hardly been mentioned.

According to Herbert Sussman male same-sex relations were 'nameable only through historicist coding' (Sussman, p.63) and accordingly in all influential works the image of the androgyne was used to depict gender non-conforming characters. In this context Walter Pater was also influential as he prepared the ground for it by introducing a counter-aesthetic. The new 'strange beauty' he celebrated constituted itself in his works largely in the form of androgynous looking figures who wore their homoerotic beauty like a badge of genius.

An important motivation for Wilde to try his hand at a psychograph of a homosexual character must have also been his own private situation. Just when Wilde's literary career gained momentum was a time when he also must have become aware of his homosexuals side which certainly added to his motivation giving an insight into a homosexual character like himself.

6. Oscar Wilde

6.1 *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

6.1.1 John Gray: Le Plus Décadent des Décadents

In 1893, when John Gray published his first volume of poems *Silverpoints*, the Pall Mall Gazette recognised in him le plus décadent des décadents²²⁴.

This public labelling of Gray as the personification of Decadence must, to a great extent, have been due to John Gray's friendship with Oscar Wilde.

One of the first father figures to John Gray was Charles Ricketts who owned an artist's studio called 'The Vale'. It was presumably here that John Gray got to know Oscar Wilde - a similar situation to the fictional characters, Lord Henry Wotton getting to know Dorian Gray.

Wilde must instantly have been impressed by John Gray's ethereal beauty. It is reported, at the opera, that when John Gray was pointed out to André Raffalovich's devoted governess Florence Gribbell, she looked through her opera glasses and exclaimed: What a fascinating man. I never knew that anybody could be so beautiful.'²²⁵

Jerusha Hull McCormack has claimed that "Gray undoubtedly met Wilde before the first publication of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in July 1890.'²²⁶

The fact that Oscar Wilde took John Gray as the real life model for his Dorian Gray is further supported by Arthur Symons who recalls in his *Memoirs* that, in late 1890, he was introduced by Wilde himself to 'the future Dorian Gray'²²⁷. This was still before the publication of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as a novel.

²²⁴ *Pall Mall Gazette* 56 (4th May 1893), p.3.

²²⁵ Neil McKenna, *The Secret Life of Oscar Wilde* (London: Century, 2003), p.116.

²²⁶ Jerusha Hull McCormack, *John Gray: Poet, Dandy, and Priest* (Hanover, New England: Brandeis University Press, 1991), pp.84-85.

²²⁷ Arthur Symons, *The Memoirs of Arthur Symons* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977), p.136.

But why did Wilde alter Gray's Christian name for his literary figure and choose 'Dorian' of all names. Incidentally he used 'Dorian' as a nickname for John Gray himself. It is quite clear that with the name Dorian, Wilde was alluding to the Doric race in early Greek history. This had already been investigated by Karl Otfried Müller in volume three of his study on *Geschichten Hellenischer Stämme und Städte* (known in English as *The History and Antiquities of the Doric Race*). The German original, published in 1824, was later translated into English in 1830. Müller's study used to be highly popular academic reading with regard to early Greek history and it certainly will not have escaped Wilde's attention as an Oxford graduate. In the 4th book of volume III, in chapter 4, Müller describes how the Doric race differentiated itself from other Greek tribes by having developed a tradition of how an older man 'educated' often very young men as part of their upbringing. In German, Müller calls this institutionalised form of 'love' between an older man and a boy 'Knabenliebe'²²⁸, i.e. 'pederasty'. However, Müller points out that the main emphasis in such a male bond must be seen from its pedagogical aspect - in the ideal form of a such a relationship sexual intercourse was not involved. 'Pederasty', for Müller could not be compared to heterosexual matrimony. In fact, he stresses that the Doric race, as one of the races in northern Greece was, according to him hard-working and concentrated on raising brave fighting warriors.

When reading about this institutionalised form of pederasty in the Doric race one is reminded of Wilde standing in the dock during his trial. Here he defended himself with his famous speech in which he explained and, at the same time desexualised such relationships by quoting Alfred Douglas's

²²⁸ Karl Otfried Müller, *Geschichten Hellenischer Stämme und Städte*, Vol. III (Breslau; Verlag Josef Mar und Komp., 1824), p.295.

poem 'Two Loves' where he describes 'the love that dare not speak its name'²²⁹. Such love was for Wilde, 'deep, spiritual affection that is as pure as it is perfect.'²³⁰ Furthermore, the example of male bondage in the 'Dorian' race was also used to contest the, at the time, occasional slur of effeminacy with regard to homosexuals. Furthermore, in his 1873 essay on 'A Problem in Greek Ethics'²³¹, John Addington Symonds similarly points out that in Hellenic times the partners in a male bondage acted, as we now say, 'straight', in a very masculine way.

Ironically enough, when Wilde gave John Gray the nickname 'Dorian' - from the character in his novel - it really suited him. Jerusha Hull McCormack quotes Brian Reade from the introduction to Reade's book *Sexual Heretics*:

[...] he claims that 'the probability is that Gray had no strong sexual inclinations at all, and that by his subsequent chastity he exploited what was already there – a kind of incipient sexual anaesthesia'. (McCormack, p.50)

At first, John Gray felt so flattered that Wilde and his circle called him 'Dorian' because, for him, it meant that he had arrived as a poet. He was proud to be associated with a famous author like Oscar Wilde. When Gray sent a copy of his poem 'Mishka' to Wilde he even signed it below with 'Yours ever, Dorian' (McCormack, p.273). For those who could read homosexual codes the nickname 'Dorian' was also appropriate for it hinted at homoerotic attraction. When considering the background to the name more closely, however, it was a safe label for Gray as it indicated a chaste form of homosexuality. Furthermore, Wilde used the nickname 'Dorian'

²²⁹ Alfred Douglas, 'Two Loves', in Caspar Wintermans, *Lord Alfred Douglas: Ein Leben im Schatten von Oscar Wilde* (München: Blessing, 2001), p.258.

²³⁰ Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987), p.435.

²³¹ John Addington Symonds, *Male Love: A Problem in Greek Ethics and Other Writings* (New York: Pagan Press, 1983), pp.1-74.

for John Gray, because he saw in him, similar to his fictional character Lord Henry Wotton, an impressionable and compliant young man whom he could easily influence with his aesthetic theories.

John Gray was deeply attracted to men who we would nowadays call 'practising homosexuals'. When they came too close, however, he withdrew his feelings. In society, too, he displayed the same behavioural mechanism we have already observed in 'dandies', thus betraying his ontologically insecure character. 'Part of his technique', as J. H. McCormack observes, was 'to be seen but not to be involved; it was his way of establishing himself socially without putting his inner self in jeopardy' (McCormack, p.53). His elusive personality was like the furnishings of his home: tantalising, seductive surfaces that invited the gaze of visitors but faded away at the very first touch. John Gray, when he later became a Catholic priest, retained such behaviour patterns. Father Anthony Ross of the Dominican order, who administered Gray's estate, remembered that 'should a curious visitor pick out one of the books whose spines were mysteriously turned toward the wall, it would without comment be gently lifted from his hand and replaced' (McCormack, p.219). Like any ontologically insecure character Gray thrived on being seen and admired. In this way he felt himself alive but, in order to protect his precarious inner self, he had to make sure that the gaze of his spectators did not become too penetrating.

Taking these facts into consideration, it soon becomes obvious that John Gray could be seen as a typical case regarding his ontological insecurity. He lived in a self-created so-called 'social vacuum' (McCormack, p.51). Nevertheless, as far as his own career was concerned he achieved considerable success. Much against his mother's wishes, his father made

him leave school to become a simple metal worker. From such hard manual labour he worked his way up by attending evening classes and to even becoming a civil servant at the Foreign Office in London. He thus miraculously broke through class barriers, a fact which nevertheless had its negative side in that he felt socially uprooted. Such a successful career meant that he had automatically cut himself off from his family. During the day, he assumed the superficial mask of a dutiful civil servant whilst, in his spare time, in the company of other aspiring poets of the Decadence, he lived the life of a dandy – a role he could hardly afford to keep up, both socially and financially. His main central reference figure became Oscar Wilde who, after only a couple years' friendship, allocated to him the role of Dorian Gray, thus proving to others how life imitates art – a credo which in 1891 Wilde expressed in his essay entitled 'The Decay of Lying'.

The mask of 'Dorian Gray' for John Gray became an embarrassing threat to him when the affair Oscar Wilde was having with Lord Alfred Douglas became more flamboyant and thus more well-known. Wilde separated from his wife Constance – he and Douglas began openly to live together in various hotel rooms. From this time onwards Gray tried everything to rid himself of the 'Dorian' label, of being, as it were, the original 'Dorian Gray'. John Gray even went so far as to ask Wilde to write a letter to the *Telegraph* to correct a remark in the paper naming him as Wilde's 'protégé'.

In short, to be named in the spring of 1892 as Wilde's 'protégé' or as the original of 'Dorian Gray' was the equivalent of being named Wilde's lover. (McCormack, p.84)

Later on, Gray did everything he could to distance himself from Wilde and during the latter's trial, he even burned his letters from Wilde and tried to

retrieve those to other friends which could have been considered homoerotic. Thus Gray's life as 'Dorian' was over, but by losing his only point of reference his precarious sense of identity came under even more pressure. In the aftermath of his rupture with Wilde, John Gray contracted a nervous illness, himself admitting that he was approaching insanity. At the request of a friend he wrote a short story entitled 'The Person in Question',²³² examining his own peculiar state of mind. The first-person narrator in this autobiographical story encounters a person he imagines might be his older self twenty-five years later. At first he tries to avoid this 'double', but his initial fear turns later into a craving for him. It seems that only his 'double' will know the secret of his own uncertain future. In the end, the roles are reversed and the narrator himself becomes the 'person in question'. However, as far as Gray's private situation then is concerned, he must have been in the mental condition which R.D. Laing terms 'implosion'. Having adopted various personalities as 'masks' for most of his life so far, he must have felt that he no longer retained any 'real' self. In 'The Person in Question', being in this schizoid condition, i.e. the idea of merging with the 'double' of what he might possibly be like in the future gives the actual narrator of the story, i.e. John Gray, a certain peace of mind.

By November 1892 Gray's both mental and personal situation greatly improved when he befriended the French writer and poet Marc-André Raffalovich. Again Gray was attracted to a man who professed to having a so-called 'uranian' character which for Raffalovich was 'unisexualité', which nowadays, we would consider as being homosexual. Raffalovich and

²³² John Gray, *The Selected Prose of John Gray*, ed. By Jerusha Hull McCormack (Greensboro: ELT University Press of North Carolina, 1992), pp.18-28.

Gray, however, conducted a close, life-long, homoerotic, but chaste friendship. The exact nature of their relationship and

[...] its archetype had already been set out by Raffalovich [himself] in his book, *Uranisme et Unisexualité; Étude sur Différentes Manifestations de l'Instinct Sexuel*, published in France in 1896. In this landmark publication, hailed by Havelock Ellis as being an early and important work on sexual inversion in England, Raffalovich argues that homosexuality is generally congenital rather than acquired, and therefore not a matter of moral responsibility. He deplores, however, the 'inferior' type of homosexual who gives into this appetite, while praising the 'superior', who controls or even denies appetite for the sake of an intellectual and spiritual friendship. (McCormack, pp.149-150)

Both John Gray and Marc-André Raffalovich considered themselves 'superior' for they succeeded in sublimating their homoerotic passion into a platonic friendship - we must not forget that Gray later became a Roman Catholic priest! However, from a Freudian analytic point of view, such a homoerotic but celibate partnership – which at the time also went under the name of 'New Chivalry' - would be classified as a typical case of 'negation'. Freud claims that

the content of a repressed image or idea can make its way into consciousness, on condition that it is *negated*. Negation is a way of taking cognisance of what is repressed; indeed it is already a lifting of the repression, though not, of course, an acceptance of what is repressed.[...] With the help of negation only one consequence of the process of repression is undone – the fact, namely, of the ideational content of what is repressed not reaching consciousness. The outcome of this is a kind of intellectual acceptance of the repressed,

while at the same what is essential to the repression persists.²³³

Bearing the above in mind, when Gray and Raffalovich openly stressed that they were forbidding sexuality to interfere with their relationship, they were, in fact, unconsciously asserting their interest in it. Nevertheless, the fact that they claimed to live as asexual human beings only confirms their internalised fear of behaving in the same sexually deviant way as Oscar Wilde himself.

It should not be forgotten, however, that they both lived at a time when Section 11 of the British 'Criminal Law Amendment Act', better known as the 'Labouchère Amendment' or the 'blackmailer's charter', was in force. A person was still punished for committing 'acts of gross indecency' without actual sodomy having to be proved. In such a social climate an indication that deep down Gray felt stigmatised as an individual is apparent in his confessing that, as McCormack tells us, 'although he was a white man he was black inside' (McCormack, p.246). However, both Marc-André Raffalovich as well as John Gray tried to come to terms with their deepest fears at being 'found out' - even if only in a humorous way - when they called their publicly performed melodrama *The Blackmailers*.

6.1.2 An Experiment in Self-Realisation

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* when, for the first time, Lord Henry Wotton sets his eyes on Dorian Gray, Wilde describes him as possessing the same heavenly androgynous beauty reminding us of John Gray, Wilde's model for Dorian:

²³³ Sigmund Freud. 'Negation', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XIX 1923-1925 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961), pp.235-236.

Lord Henry looked at him. Yes, he was certainly wonderfully handsome, with his finely-curved scarlet lips, his frank blue eyes, his crisp gold hair. There was something in his face that made one trust him at once. All the candour of youth was there, as well as all youth's passionate purity. One felt that he had kept himself unspotted from the world. No wonder Basil Hallward worshipped him. He was made to be worshipped.²³⁴

Dorian here is defined by possessing a kind of delicate beauty that might also be applied to someone of the female sex. In particular, the virgin-like quality of being 'unspotted from the world' and also the fact that, in relation to others, he assumes a passive, feminine role, thus allowing himself to be adored as an 'objet d'art', all this underlines Dorian's gradual emergence as a 'homme fragile'. He hardly seems to have any male signifiers and, according to the parameters concerning androgyny I discussed in chapter two, might be classified as an 'asexual androgyne'. Another parallel to John Gray is that Dorian, as an orphan, also seems to have no firm social ties.

The decisive moment in the novel arrives when, for the first time, Dorian sees the finished picture of himself. Thus, at last, he is able to appreciate his own persona objectively from a distance. Not only does he now become aware of his own extraordinary beauty, but is also able to realise that this will attract the eyes of everyone, marking him out as someone special:

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 recognized himself for the first time. He stood there

²³⁴ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray: An Annotated, Uncensored Edition*, edited by Nicholas Frankel (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 90.

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. (Wilde, pp.101-102)

What occurs at this moment then is a division of Dorian into two individual beings. Firstly, there is the 'self' of which he was not conscious, but which has now suddenly been revealed to him. He becomes aware now that the new 'self' which he recognises in the picture is a highly attractive young man. He realises he is able to exert power over others, both women as well as men, by arousing passion in them. Dorian is, as it were, viewing himself as others might and thus is slowly becoming 'self'-conscious. However, the picture not only reveals Dorian to himself but also to Basil Hallward, who painted it, and who says: 'The reason I will not exhibit this picture is that I am afraid that I have shown with it the secret of my own soul' (Wilde, p.78). Later on, Hallward becomes even more explicit, and confesses that he has 'put into it all the extraordinary romance of which, of course, [he] never dared to speak to him' (Wilde, p.85). And so it is that this picture becomes an emblem of self-revelation both for Basil as well as for Dorian. Secondly, there is still Dorian's 'old self', which is unaware of the true 'inner self', not able to benefit from any similar 'self'-perception. This other or 'old self' - which for Dorian has not really come alive so far - will remain unchanged right to the end of the novel.

This process of Dorian becoming aware of himself also entails new impulses which he feels are part of finding his own sexuality. When Wilde lets Dorian fall in love with his own picture on seeing it for the first time, or when Wilde writes that, 'in a boyish mockery of Narcissus, he had kissed, or feigned to kiss, those painted lips' (Wilde, p.164), Dorian is

superficially portrayed as being narcissistic. However, it would be wrong to deduce from these lines that Dorian develops psychological traits such as those described in a later 1914 treatise on 'Narcissism' by Sigmund Freud²³⁵. Gregory W. Bredbeck points out that in Wilde's time 'the mere invocation of Narcissus suggest[ed] the potentiality of inversion.'²³⁶ 'Narcissus' provides Wilde with an ambiguous and thus safe image that expressed homoerotic attraction because, at the same time, it can be interpreted as an image for 'self'-love. On the other hand, when taking a closer look at whether Dorian Gray could really be seen as an embodiment of the 'Narcissus' in Ovid's fable, A. B. González, a professor of English literature in Spain, observes that

there is a main difference between Dorian and Narcissus: the latter is unconscious about the fact that the reflection he sees is himself until it is too late, but the former knows – he has witnesses proving that what he sees is true – that he is contemplating his own self.²³⁷

According to theories outlined by R. D. Laing, Dorian's growing self-consciousness helps him to sustain, at the very least, a precarious sense of self. But to an outsider he might seem narcissistic:

Neither the schizoid nor the schizophrenic is narcissistic in this sense. [...] The schizoid individual exists under the black sun, the evil eye, of his own scrutiny. The glare of his awareness kills his spontaneity, his freshness; [...] And yet he remains, although profoundly not narcissistic, compulsively preoccupied with the sustained observation of his own mental and/or bodily processes.²³⁸

²³⁵ Sigmund Freud, 'On Narcissism: An Introduction', in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis* (London: Penguin, 1984), pp.59-98.

²³⁶ Gregory W. Bredbeck, 'Narcissus in the Wilde', in: Moe Meyer (ed.), *The Politics and Poetics of Camp*, (London: Routledge, 1994), p.56.

²³⁷ Antonio Ballesteros González, 'The Mirror of Narcissus in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*', in C. George Sandulescu (ed.), *Rediscovering Oscar Wilde* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1994), p.5.

²³⁸ R. D. Laing, *The Divided Self* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1975), p.112.

Dorian's new and precarious self as symbolised in Hallward's picture becomes even more self-conscious because all the protagonists in the novel treat him simply as an object. To use Laing's terminology again, Dorian feels 'petrified' by these characters. Lord Henry Wotton overwhelms Dorian's 'precarious self' by infiltrating the very soul of his being with seductive hedonistic theories proclaiming a life of sensual pleasure with the result that Dorian becomes 'dimly conscious that entirely fresh impulses were at work within him' (Wilde, p.96). For Lord Henry Wotton, seeing the picture of Dorian also becomes a means of his own self-realisation. Being an intellectual 'dandy', modelled on Charles Baudelaire, Lord Henry begins to devise an experiment for Dorian. In true intellectual, 'dandy' fashion, he holds society at bay by means of his shocking, cynical and 'camp' witticisms. He perceives society as functioning simply like clockwork: he does not treat Dorian as an individual but turns him into a simple object of personal and intellectual interest. He is trying to discover what would happen if his own soul and his hedonistic theories were contained in such a beautiful and attractive body as Dorian's. As Wilde expresses it:

He [Lord Henry] had been always enthralled by the methods of Science, but the ordinary subject-matter of Science had seemed to him trivial and of no import. And so he had begun by vivisectioning himself, as he had ended by vivisectioning others. Human life – that appeared to him the one thing worth investigating.[...] Yes, the lad was premature.[...] The pulse and passion of youth were in him, but he was becoming self-conscious. It was delightful to watch him. (Wilde, pp.128-129)

This increasing self-consciousness on the part of Dorian is not only caused by becoming aware of how others really see him, but it also has to do with the fact that not only Wotton, but also Basil Hallward treat him as an

object. When Basil finishes Dorian's picture and the latter states that it is really part of his, Dorian's, own being, Basil even seems jealous of the portrait. For him it represents the former romantic and innocent conception he had of the young man. His reply, therefore, to Dorian's statement is: 'Well, as soon as you are dry, you shall be varnished, and framed, and sent home. Then you can do what you like with yourself' (Wilde, p.104).

The first major crisis occurs when Dorian falls in love with the young actress Sybil Vane, in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, playing the sexually ambiguous role of Rosalind. In fact, we learn later that Sybil Vane is a 'femme fragile' who is 'sick of shadows' (Wilde, p. 144), similar to Alfred Tennyson's 'Lady of Shalott'. When considering the social status of an actress in Victorian society, it becomes obvious how precarious Vane's situation was. An actress in those days belonged to no social class at all. However, the advantage of being an actress then was that if things went well she could move in the highest social circles but, at the same time, it also meant that if her success or her looks failed her, like many other actresses of the day, she might earn her living as someone's mistress. We must also not forget that Sybil Vane had even suffered the misfortune of having lost her father. In Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Vane follows the tradition of other actresses in nineteenth century literature such as Arthur Symonds's Esther Kahn, or La Faustin in Edmond de Goncourt's novel of the same name. For the American professor of English literature, Kerry Powell, Vane is another example for the 'deeply ingrained Victorian habit of conceiving the performing woman as being outside the boundaries of gender, health and even human life itself.'²³⁹ She lives only through the parts she plays - as she confesses to Dorian:

²³⁹ Kerry Powell, 'A Verdict of Death: Oscar Wilde, Actresses and Victorian Women', in Peter Raby (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.192.

‘Dorian, Dorian,’ she cried, ‘before I knew you, acting was the one reality of my life. It was only in the theatre that I lived. I thought it was all true. I was Rosalind one night, and Portia the other. The joy of Beatrice was my joy, and the sorrows of Cordelia were mine also. I believed in everything. (Wilde, p.144)

In fact we see that Vane has a very unstable personality of which she is not particularly conscious. In order to have her protect her insecure ‘self’, Wilde depicts her seeing Dorian not as a real character, treating him as if he was an actor in a play. She calls him Prince Charming, quite content not to know his real name. Up to the moment when Dorian confesses his love for her she truly feels she has not lived. In order to forget about her social stigma, she uses the characters she plays as a shield to protect her real self. On the other hand, acting before an audience makes her feel alive because ‘people who are usually extremely self-conscious may lose their compulsive preoccupations with this issue when they are performing in front of others’ (Laing, p. 107). Surprisingly Dorian, himself very self-conscious and trying to uphold a sense of feeling ‘alive’, is attracted to her. The fact that Sybil is an actress makes it easy for him to aestheticise her and thus to perceive her as an ‘objet d’art’ that cannot upset his precarious sense of self. According to R. D. Laing it is common for someone having a shaky sense of selfhood only to relate to an individual who also feels as if he was depersonalised:

The schizoid individual fears a real live dialectical relationship with real live people. He can relate himself only to depersonalised persons, to phantoms of his own phantasies (imagos), perhaps to things, perhaps to animals. (Laing, p.77)

Sybil’s and Dorian’s love for each other is based on the fact that they both turn each other into ‘objet d’arts’. Dorian sees in Sybil a multitude of

literary characters and for Sybil, Dorian is simply 'Prince Charming'. The situation becomes problematic when Sybil, under the illusion that Dorian loves her 'real' self, dares to display it. These genuine feelings engulf and threaten Dorian – or so he thinks. When she expresses them in such a clumsy and provocative manner, they cannot be subdued by simply artificially turning them into play-acting. In order to protect his real self Dorian must simply distance himself from her. Wilde has him in fact physically pushing her away from him. Sybil, however, has a precarious sense of her real self. She cannot protect it and it will finally be coldly extinguished by Dorian who, after a passionate performance by Sybil at their last meeting together deems it nothing but a performance by a third-rate actress. At this point, when Sybil feels she is losing all sense of being 'alive', she is unwilling to step back into her world of shadows. She is full of despair because, by this time, she has already experienced how it is to feel 'alive'. She commits suicide. 'The girl never really lived, and so she has never really died' (Wilde, p.162). Such is Lord Henry's cynical, but thoroughly justified comment, when he finally brings the news of Sybil's death to Dorian.

The same kind of situation arises again when Dorian manages to extract from Basil Hallward an admission with regard to his not-so-innocent feelings for him:

It is quite true that I have worshipped you with far more romance of feeling than a man should ever give to a friend. Somehow I had never loved a woman.[...] I quite admit that I adored you madly, extravagantly, absurdly. I was jealous of every one to whom you spoke. I wanted to have you all to myself. (Wilde, p.172)

Basil feels ashamed of his homoerotic adoration of Dorian and fears how the latter might react. This suits Dorian for it keeps Basil at a safe distance - as it has so many other admirers. Such behaviour by Dorian is perhaps the cause for his general notoriety. In fact he has become, for him, achingly self-conscious of his own good looks but, unfortunately, in the eyes of his admirers, he continues to excite in women a 'strange love' (Wilde, p. 202) and, in men, to arouse homoerotic feelings. This dread of such feelings causes him to develop techniques to keep his admirers at bay. For R. D. Laing, a self-conscious person

[...] never allows himself to 'be himself' in the presence of anyone else. [...] The part he plays is always not quite himself. [...] He makes friends with people he does not really like and is rather cool to those with whom he would 'really' like to be friends. No one, therefore, really knows him, or understands him. He can be *himself* in safety only in isolation, albeit with a sense of emptiness and unreality. (Laing, p. 114)

And indeed, Wilde tells us that Dorian 'had been seen brawling with foreign sailors in a low den in the distant parts of Whitechapel, and that he consorted with thieves and coiners and knew the mysteries of their trade' (Wilde, p. 202). When rumours spread around in London society concerning his 'double life', Dorian does not really care. The reason for this is that the feeling of being despised is, for his insecure 'self', far less unsettling for him than the fear of actually being understood, let alone being loved.

It was remarked [...] that those who had been most intimate with him appeared, after a time, to shun him. (Wilde, p. 203.)

Just when Dorian's admirers, such as Basil, have opened up to him and have confessed their innermost secrets, he turns them into simple, harmless 'objects'. He does this in many ways by, for example, exploiting their

innocent, yet confident attitude towards him by – for his own interests - reversing it and thus reducing them to compliant, useful ‘tools’. The power Dorian exerts over Alan Campbell, the natural scientist in the novel, must be seen in this context. Campbell gets rid of Basil Hallward’s corpse, but only when Dorian - possibly with the recent Labouchère Amendment act in mind - begins to blackmail him. Ever since the break with Dorian, Campbell has an aversion to music ‘of any passionate character’ (Wilde, p.233), thus repressing his emotional side, most probably homoerotic in nature. Furthermore, the reader must take into account the historical background whilst *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was being written, not forgetting that the 1885 Labouchère Amendment for ‘acts of gross indecency’ was then in force. As a symbol, and at the same time a projection foil for homoerotic feelings, Dorian must probably have had some evidence to prove Alan Campbell’s unnatural behaviour.

As explained above, Dorian is caught up in this typical oscillating process of a schizoid person where, on the one hand he does everything to avert the interest and scrutinizing gaze of society but, on the other hand he needs their attention to feel himself ‘alive’. A person suffering from extreme self-consciousness

[...] appears to be extremely narcissistic and exhibitionistic. In fact he hates himself and is terrified to reveal himself to others. Instead, he compulsively exhibits what he regards as mere extraneous trappings to others; he dresses ostentatiously, speaks loudly and insistently. He is constantly drawing attention to himself, and at the same time drawing attention *away* from his self. His behaviour is compulsive. All his thoughts are occupied with being seen. His longing is to be known. But this is also what is most dreaded. (Laing, p.114)

As Dorian's picture is becoming ever more distorted and his dread that somebody will find out his true nature simultaneously getting stronger, at first sight it seems illogical that Dorian gives in to Basil Hallward's desire to take a look at his innermost being. Only when keeping Laing's postulation in mind, namely that a schizoid individual wants to be understood or even loved, does it make sense why, in this psychological context, all of a sudden Dorian grants Basil his wish to take a look at his 'soul' and unveils the actual picture of him before his very eyes. By this time Dorian is feeling so petrified that he refers to his 'soul' as a 'thing' when he invites Basil to look at the picture. 'I will show you my soul. You shall see the thing that you fancy only God can see' (Wilde, p.217). Moreover, the dialogue that ensues when, in the picture, Basil sees the real Dorian, also reveals that homoerotic 'romance' is, for Dorian, something socially unacceptable and degraded and thus has to be repressed. It also leads to self-loathing and self-consciousness. On the other hand, for Basil, it was nothing to be ashamed of:

'Can't you see the romance in it?' said Dorian bitterly.
 'My romance, as you call it...'
 'As you called it.'
 'There was nothing evil in it, nothing shameful. This is
 the face of a satyr.'
 'It is the face of my soul'. (Wilde, p.222)

It is tragic that when Dorian has laid bare his true self in front of Basil, thus being just as vulnerable as Sybil Vane had been when confessing her love for him, it is now Basil that turns Dorian's 'soul' into an 'object':

Christ! what a thing I must have worshipped! This
 has the eyes of a devil. (Wilde, p.222)

By scrutinizing the picture he reduces Dorian's innermost being, his 'soul', to a simple object. In order that Dorian does not feel completely extinguished by Basil, he must act and get rid of him. Eventually he kills

him. Dorian could not bear the thought that there might possibly exist anyone able to stare deep down into his soul. However, the murder of Basil does not bring any psychological relief to Dorian. Although he feels safe for the moment, 'it was the living death of his own soul that troubled him' (Wilde, p.249). His increasing self-awareness - which Laing describes as living through a 'death-in-life' (Laing, p.113) - renders Dorian's life unbearable. Although the picture 'had given him pleasure once to watch it changing and growing old' (Wilde, p.250) - just as intensive self-scrutiny gives an individual with a shaky ontological psyche the impression of feeling 'alive' - this picture now casts too large a shadow over Dorian's life, controlling and completely determining his existence. In fact, he is already 'dead' within himself, so to speak. When, with a final effort, he tries to get rid of this unbearable self-consciousness by 'ripping the thing right up from top to bottom' (Wilde, p.252), he symbolically fulfils what in real life was already a fact: Dorian himself, similar to Sybil Vane has never been authentic and alive. Quite the opposite. Since he murdered Basil he has 'experienced' himself as nothing but a living corpse.

Just as Basil's picture serves as a means of revealing Dorian to himself so, with his own androgynous appearance he, in turn, makes Basil become aware of possessing a homoerotic nature. On the other hand, for Lord Henry Wotton, Dorian was a means of discovering his own possible capabilities. Thus by attempting to install his own hedonistic characteristics into Dorian, the latter becomes for Wotton a 'beautiful' version of himself. He can observe at leisure the specimen of Dorian he himself has created, thus rendering the latter even more self-conscious.

By being treated in this way, not simply by Lord Henry, but by others as well, Dorian's development appears to the outsider as an exemplary case of

how a 'beautiful soul' can be thoroughly deformed by living in the sort of fin-de-siècle restrictive society that suppressed and even punished any form of deviant sexuality. Bearing this in mind, if Wilde's fictional character of Dorian Gray can still be seen by many readers as some sort of gay symbol, then it seems that this can signify only some form of repressed homoerotic desire which may possibly lead to heightened self-consciousness and, in its most extreme form, even to a schizoid personality.

When Oscar Wilde - the actual creator of Dorian Gray - writes in a letter in 1894 to a friendly enquirer: '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' (Wilde, CL, p.585), he is in fact implying that he would like to be Dorian Gray himself - only in a more liberal society. Such a society is a prerequisite for anyone 'beautiful' enough to enjoy attracting women and, for some, especially men. This is certainly not the case in the moral and social climate Wilde had to endure in Victorian England, where any form of sexual diversion such as sodomy or so-called 'acts of gross indecency' were forbidden and, if discovered led to exaggerated punishment. In such a restrictive fin-de-siècle society the model for Dorian Gray, John Gray himself, was indeed fortunate to recover his sanity by sublimating and repressing his deeply felt homoerotic desires by becoming a fervent Roman Catholic priest.

6.2.The Search for Identity in ‘The Portrait of Mr W. H.’

Scorn not the sonnet; critic, you have
frowned,
Mindless of its just honours; with this
Key
Shakespeare unlocked his heart;²⁴⁰

(William Wordsworth)

Whenever literary critics deal with Oscar Wilde’s ‘The Portrait of Mr. W.H.’ – a rare occurrence indeed – this short story is greatly overshadowed for them by William Shakespeare. Most of them are thinking of the above words by William Wordsworth. They then look for the ‘Key’ that will, as it were, ‘unlock’ Shakespeare’s heart. Wilde was certainly taking a risk by introducing the subject of homoerotic passion in his story while at the same time seeking certain refuge in Shakespeare’s renowned respectability as a national literary hero. Bearing this in mind, it is not surprising that publishers were not eager to consider Wilde’s manuscript. However, in 1889, after the story was eventually published in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, Wilde’s plan was to expand it into a full book-length tale. It is unclear whether he was attempting to do this out of a chronic need for money - a book was financially much more worthwhile than a simple story – or purely for artistic reasons. According to Lord Alfred Douglas, Wilde firmly believed in the theory he had begun to develop in the short story. Some additional parts in the later longer version, officially not published until some twenty years after his death, consist largely of quotations from Shakespeare’s sonnets. Thus critics were enticed even more to focus their attention on Shakespeare’s own sexual identity. It was once more Lord Alfred Douglas who even went so far as to state that basically the

²⁴⁰ William Wordsworth, *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, ed. by Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), p.206.

additional parts were pretty useless, in fact obfuscating any literary theory Wilde wished to develop about the sonnets. Lord Alfred Douglas again:

Wilde's theory is so good and so ingenious that it is a thousand pities that he did not write it and put it forth as a theory and nothing else. Instead of this he wrapped around the theory what I can only describe as a very foolish and unconvincing story about a young man called Cyril Graham who causes a forged portrait of Will Hughes to be painted (and commits suicide to 'prove the truth' of the story he had evolved about Mr W.H.), and his friend Erskine who, after first rejecting the story as absurd, afterwards becomes obsessed by it, and dies of consumption, leaving a letter to say that he also is committing suicide as a 'martyr' to the theory.

The result of all this silliness is that the excellence of the theory is obscured, and Wilde himself, as I have already said, leaves his reader in doubt as to whether he is really advancing a serious theory or simply indulging in a piece of clever 'leg-pulling'. Wilde, however, did tell me more than once that he fully believed that his theory was correct.²⁴¹

Despite Douglas's opinion, nevertheless, those familiar with Wilde's artistic process know how important every detail in his books was for him, and how each was arranged. There must surely have been substantial reasons for Wilde wishing to put a narrative frame around his 'sonnet' theory.

With his, for us nowadays, indeterminate and thus manifold character, Shakespeare, as Wilde writes in 'The Critic as Artist', is an ideal topic as it has a '[...] subtle quality of suggestion'²⁴² and thereby offers the critic much scope for him upon which he can project and satisfy his own

²⁴¹ Lord Alfred Douglas, *The True History of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (London: Martin Secker, 1933), p.34.

²⁴² Oscar Wilde, *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* (London & Glasgow: Collins, 1986), p.1031.

character thus making him, as Wilde has it, ‘brood and dream’ and finally enabling him ‘to realise [his] own personality on some imaginative plane out of reach of the trammelling accidents and limitations of real life’ (‘Portrait of Mr W. H.’, *CWW*, p. 1150). In ‘The Portrait of Mr. W.H.’ Wilde had clarified what is later the core message of his essay entitled ‘The Critic as Artist’: ‘the highest criticism really is the record of one’s own soul’ (*CWW*, p.1027).

In Wilde’s story (both in the original and the expanded version) the three main characters, Graham, Erskine and the narrator attempt to interpret Shakespeare’s sonnets. However, instead of unlocking, as it were, Shakespeare’s heart to the reader, each of the three reveals his own deep personality and it is this which renders the ‘Shakespeare’ frame so essential. Recent criticism has rediscovered the importance of this frame. For example, Edward Cohen in *Sex Scandal* points out that ‘[j]ust as the secret to the interpretation lies in “the frame itself” of the painting, so in Wilde’s story does the frame narrative contain the key to its contents.’²⁴³

As far as the contents are concerned it is important for us to consider how Wilde half way through the story with his references to Shakespeare creates a certain atmosphere which in its turn seems to broaden and deepen the flavour of the whole work itself. For example, he lovingly describes how Elizabethan theatre set up a system of boy actors playing female roles. In those days, of course, women were not allowed on the stage. Under this system leaders of theatrical companies together with their playwrights sought out and took on one or more of their favourite male boy actors which very much resembles the classical pederast tradition prevalent in the Doric race during early Hellenic times, c. 1000 BC.

²⁴³ William A.Cohen, *Sex Scandal* (London: Duke University Press,1996), p.199.

The relations that existed between the masters and their pupils seem to have been of the most cordial and affectionate character. Robin Armin was looked upon by Tarlton as his adopted son, and in a will dated 'the fourth daie of Maie, anno Domini 1605', Augustine Phillips, Shakespeare's dear friend and fellow actor, bequeathed to one of his apprentices his 'purple cloke, sword and dagger'. (Wilde, *CWW*, p.1181)

Wilde goes on to imply that any sexual ambiguity that was involved on stage when a young boy played the part of a woman inspired some of the best plays in English literature.

Of all the motives of dramatic curiosity used by our great playwrights, there is none more subtle or more fascinating than the ambiguity of the sexes. This idea, invented, as far as an artistic idea can be said to be invented, by Lyly, perfected and made exquisite for us by Shakespeare, seems to me to owe its origin, as it certainly owes its possibility of life-like presentation, to the circumstance that the Elizabethan stage, like the stage of the Greeks, admitted the appearance of no female performers. It is because Lyly was writing for the boy-actors of St. Paul's that we have the confused sexes and complicated loves of Phillida and Gallathea: it is because Shakespeare was writing for Willie Hughes that Rosalind dons doublet and hose, and calls herself Ganymede. (Wilde, *CWW*, p.1180)

In short, Wilde is clearly happy that this theatrical form of Elizabethan pederasty was largely responsible for inaugurating one of the richest and most prolific periods in English cultural history, only to be compared to the golden times of general culture in Greek antiquity.

Another homoerotic theme Wilde discusses in this middle part of the expanded version of 'The Portrait of Mr W. H.' is that of neo-Platonism.

This is insofar important as it sheds a light on the cultural background as far as the general formation of homosexual identity was concerned at the time when Wilde was writing his story. The topic is also relevant for the basic content of 'The Portrait of Mr W. H'. The reader is encouraged to wonder whether Wilde, by conjuring up the ideal of Platonic love, is in fact simply depicting the then contemporary intellectual relations between men or possibly even more.

At Oxford, where Wilde had studied, the ideal of Platonic love was held in high esteem. According to Professor Linda Dowling, who has looked into the question as to what role Hellenism played at Oxford in Victorian times, the

[...] Socratic eros was essential to the survival of liberal England. For this erotic bond represented to them [Symonds and Pater] a pure form of intellectual procreancy and regeneration, the two men insisting on the truth and genuine Victorian relevance of Plato's famous teaching in *Symposium* 209 that at the highest level of masculine love, men who love men are procreating ideas – generating the creative arts, philosophy.²⁴⁴

Bearing the above in mind, the question is whether this 'Socratic eros' was ever realised, or did it simply remain a theoretical construct used for intellectualising and thus disguising homoerotic relationships.

In this regard, seeking an answer in the various lives led by John Addington Symonds, Walter Pater and, indeed, Oscar Wilde himself, can only offer us a somewhat bleak picture. All three men had come into contact with Hellenism at Oxford and were deeply influenced by the Greek ideal. However, around the time Wilde was writing 'The Portrait of Mr

²⁴⁴ Linda Dowling, *Hellenism and Homosexuality at Victorian Oxford* (London: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 80.

W.H.’, each of them was becoming more and more disillusioned with that ideal. By the end of the 1880s all three of them had experienced sexual relationships with men which, sooner or later, brought them into trouble with prudish Victorian society.

When Symonds concludes his essay ‘The Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love’ with: ‘It is a delusion to imagine that the human spirit is led to discover divine truths by amorous enthusiasm for a fellow-creature, however refined that impulse may be’²⁴⁵, he is expressing his deepening mistrust of Platonic love. The very university institutions and teachers who put the idea of the ‘Socratic eros’ into their disciples’ heads denounced erotic relations between men as perverse. For Symonds, and presumably for Wilde and Pater as well, there existed a schizophrenic contradiction within the so-called Oxford Hellenism. Reading ‘The Portrait of Mr.W.H.’ with this biographical and socio-cultural knowledge in mind, it at first seems odd that the narrator praises the merits of Platonic love and finds in the Shakespeare’s Sonnets

[...] a noble basis for an artistic comradeship. But it was not all that the Sonnets revealed to us. There was something beyond. There was the soul, as well as the language, of neo-Platonism [...] its subtle suggestions of sex in soul, in the curious analogies it draws between intellectual enthusiasm and the physical passion of love, in its dream of the incarnation of the Idea in a beautiful and living form, and of a real spiritual conception with a travail and a bringing to birth, there was something that fascinated scholars of the sixteenth century.
(Wilde, CWW p.1174)

In this appraisal of the ‘Socratic eros’, the names of Pater and Symonds are omitted. However, the narrator does mention that ‘a young Roman of his

²⁴⁵John Addington Symonds, *In the Key of Blue and Other Prose Essays* (London: Elkin Matthews and John Lane, 1893), p.85.

[Winckelmann's] day initiated Winckelmann into the secret of Greek art, taught him the mystery of its beauty and the meaning of its form' (Wilde, *CWW* p.1177). The sexual undertones of this sentence, together with mentioning Winckelmann's name lend the appraisal of neo-Platonism an ironic and mocking undertone, causing the narrator to appear somewhat naïve. In Wilde's story the narrator represents an innocent belief in a concept of Platonism which Wilde, together with Pater and Symonds - both major influences upon Wilde - had already renounced. Wilde himself certainly knew full well that Winckelmann could not be associated with Platonic love. In 1900 he writes in a letter from Rome to Robert Ross: 'Omero was with me, and Armando, forgiven for the moment. He is so absurdly like the Apollo Belvedere that I feel always as if I was Winckelmann when I am with him' (Wilde, *CL*, p.1184). Wilde goes on to describe in detail the physical attractions of such 'rent-boys' as Omero and Armando, and thus siding with Winckelmann who had also sought their company and in fact was stabbed to death by one of his 'rented' boy-lovers.

The young Robert Ross, it seems, was to play an important role with regard to 'The Portrait of Mr W.H.'. In a later letter to him Wilde refers to the literary theory he had developed in this work: 'indeed the story is half yours, but for you it would not have been written.'²⁴⁶ These last words were intended to be very personal as they hint at Robbie's general appearance which, in fact, was not particularly out of the ordinary. Indeed, for Wilde Ross had 'the face of Puck' (Ellmann, p.259). Neither his short stature combined with his very boyish looks were made to inspire any form of 'poetry'. However, those who are more familiar with Wilde's intimate life know that it was Robert Ross, who in 1886, first seduced Wilde, thus initiating him into practising homosexuality. And so it seems that Wilde

²⁴⁶ Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987), p.281.

too, not only Pater and Symonds, had become disillusioned with the neo-Platonic concept.

The strongest evidence, however, against any form of neo-Platonic interpretation of 'The Portrait of Mr W. H.' can be discovered by examining the actual story behind the superficial plot. The main function of neo-Platonism, as Dowling has it, is the 'procreancy' of ideas, thoroughly derided in the whole work and exposed as untrue. The theory that Willie Hughes, i.e. Mr W. H. ever existed is handed on in the story from one character to another, but cannot be mutually shared with friends: 'The theory's determining characteristic is that to convince someone else of it is no longer to believe in it oneself. Belief "goes out of one" only to lodge itself in the recipient' (W. Cohen, p.203). Only superficially does it seem at first sight that the relationships in the story have anything to do with neo-Platonism. When taking a closer look, however, as to what conditions these relationships and flavours the plot, it is necessary to concentrate on the main protagonists namely, the narrator, George Erskine and particularly Cyril Graham.

The most obvious outward characteristic bestowed by Wilde upon Cyril Graham as well as Willie Hughes is their striking androgynous good looks. Shakespeare, too, describes his W.H., in Sonnet 20, as having:

A woman's face with, Nature's own hand painted,
Hast thou, the Master Mistress of my passion²⁴⁷

The same is true also for the way Cyril Graham is described who, with his 'dreamy, wistful' and 'delicate scarlet lips' has 'the face of a girl' (Wilde, CWW, p. 1151). It is here, for the first time, that Oscar Wilde introduces an

²⁴⁷ William Shakespeare, *Sonnets – Sonette*, transl. by Stefan George (Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1989), p.46.

androgynous character into his stories. As with Dorian Gray, Cyril Graham belongs to this completely new human category as well. In order to stress this neither have any form of earthly parentage but seem to have simply fallen to earth from another planet. Wilde endows Cyril Graham with the type of character that, as far as his behaviour is concerned, unites both male and female stereotypes. He is repeatedly described as being “effeminate”(Wilde, *CWW*, p.1152) but, at the same time, has some typically male features. For example “he was a capital rider and a capital fencer” (Wilde, *CWW*, p.1152) We might therefore classify Cyril Graham as being a ‘male hermaphrodite androgyne’.

Wilde, however, goes even one stage further or perhaps deeper by giving the reader a clue to Cyril’s psychological, as it were, make-up. The latter’s main obsession was to become an actor and appear on the stage. Erskine adds that ‘Cyril Graham was the only perfect Rosalind I have ever seen’ (Wilde, *CWW*, p.1153). As is well-known, the role of Rosalind in Shakespeare’s play ‘As You Like It’ is that of a sexually ambiguous character because she dresses up in trousers and pretends to be a boy. But Graham’s androgynous inner being together with his love of acting points to his also having a thoroughly insecure ontological character. As we have already seen with regard to discussing ‘camp’, R.D. Laing states that the ontologically insecure not only suffer as a consequence of their severe self-consciousness

but may lose their compulsive preoccupations with this issue when they are performing in front of others – the very situation, on first reflection, one might suppose would be most difficult for them to negotiate. (Laing, p.107).

This explains why, for George Erskine, Cyril Graham seems to be ‘heartless’ (Wilde, *CWW*, p.1150). Accordingly, in Sonnet 94, Shakespeare describes Will Hughes as one of those:

That do not do the thing they most do show,
Who, moving others, are themselves as stone
(Wilde, *CWW* p.1170)

It is impossible, as has already been pointed out in previous chapters, for ontologically insecure persons either to give or receive love fearing, as they do, that their own identity will be engulfed and annihilated by another. Thus, they might build up a false identity for themselves, or - another secure way out of their dilemma - is for them to view the world around them as a seemingly unreal artistic creation. This serves them as a shield protecting them from their own personal insecure identity.

To come back to 'The Portrait of Mr W. H.' and Oscar Wilde: 'It is Art, and Art only, that reveals us to ourselves' (CWW, Wilde, p.1194). For Cyril Graham, the figure of Will Hughes reveals to him his own soul and becomes for him a source of identity. His somewhat frantic enthusiasm to prove that Will Hughes really existed turns, for Cyril Graham, into a matter of life and death. His failure to find any proof for Will Hughes's existence means that Cyril is identifying himself with nothing but a simple literary figure. This, of course, intensifies the fact that he sees himself simply as an 'object' and accordingly heightens his ontological insecurity. The only way for him to inwardly acknowledge his inverted identity is to find proof that Will Hughes really existed. This would then mean that his inner self would, for him, come alive 'on behalf of a certain gaze'. Then he would also be able to understand and confirm his *own* inverted nature. All this is elaborated on by an American professor of English literature, Richard Halpern, who writes that:

the structure of this identification becomes clear only if we distinguish between the Freudian ideal ego [Ideal-Ich] and the ego-ideal [Ich-Ideal], or imaginary and symbolic identifications. As Slavoj Žižek writes, 'imaginary identification is identification with the image in which we appear

likeable to ourselves, with the image representing 'what we would like to be', and symbolic identification [is] identification with the very place *from where* we are being observed, *from where* we look at ourselves so that we appear to ourselves likeable, worthy of love'. Cyril's identification with W.H. is clearly imaginary; but since such identification is, as Žižek notes, 'always identification *on behalf of a certain gaze in the Other*', we must then identify the Other whose viewpoint constitutes the perfection of this ideal ego. For the young man of the Sonnets, it is clearly Shakespeare; for Cyril, it is someone who occupies the Shakespearian position with respect to him, who regards him with a Shakespearean gaze – obviously, Erskine.²⁴⁸

Cyril can only take on an identity affirming 'gaze' from someone who actually believes in Will Hughes's existence. This means that someone who is convinced of the latter's existence is able to understand the homoerotic nature of the relationship between Mr W. H. and Shakespeare, thus acknowledging Cyril's own homoerotic personality. When someone 'gazes' in an informed way at another person, this lends authority to the latter's identity. The fact that the identity constituting authority lies in 'the gaze of the other' explains why one individual loses faith in such a theory as soon as another individual begins to believe in it as well. For instance, as long as Cyril is unable to convince anyone else of his theory, he was left trying to do his utmost to maintain his own somewhat precarious sense of 'self'. Erskine, on the other hand, as soon as he believes the forged portrait is genuine and thus in Hughes's actual existence, it is no longer necessary for Cyril himself to harbour the same belief. It seems clear then that ontologically insecure individuals derive and 'anchor' their 'identity' from

²⁴⁸ Richard Halpern, *Shakespeare's Perfume: Sodomy and Sublimity in the Sonnets, Wilde, Freud, and Lacan* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), pp. 38-39.

and in those individuals who are closest to them. However, when Erskine finds out that the portrait is a forgery and thus forfeits his belief in the theory that Mr W. H. actually exists, this turns out to be dangerous for Cyril, the real source of his identity is now actually linked up with Erskine, his closest friend. The ensuing result of all this is that Cyril's identity implodes, causing him to commit suicide.

Something which also has to be seen in the above context, is the fact that Erskine sends a deceitfully falsified suicide note to his friend, the narrator of the story, about his own natural death. Erskine was fond of the narrator, who reminded him of Cyril Graham. He simply wanted to make sure that history did not repeat itself. All his life he had blamed himself for Cyril's death, because he somehow knew that it had been connected with the discovery of the forgery of the portrait which was to lead to his disbelief in the existence of Mr W. H.. When, to his dismay, Erskine realises – just as Cyril had many years before - that the narrator is also beginning to be similarly enamoured by the theory concerning Will Hughes, he was once and for all and somewhat naively anxious to ensure that there would be no further deaths as a result of the theory. Erskine thus pretends to have 'committed suicide' for it.

6.3 *Salomé*: The Clash of the Androgynes

When perusing the secondary literature on Wilde's *Salomé*, the overall impression is that the majority of Wilde scholars are preoccupied simply with finding external influences and sources for the play. There are indeed many adaptations of the biblical tale and Wilde is often reproached for offering nothing original in his version of the *Salomé* story. Norbert Kohl, however points out that this is not so:

Although there can be no doubt that Wilde borrowed some material from the great French novelist [Flaubert] – particularly descriptive details relating to the background – it is equally undeniable that his version of the tale can in no way be regarded as merely a compressed, dramatic imitation of Flaubert. This is already clear from the fact that in *Hérodias* *Salomé* [...], speaks only fifteen words; Wilde has vastly extended her role and changed her motivation, with the dance and the demand for the Baptist's head both resulting from her own will.²⁴⁹

In his adaptation, as I will show, Wilde creates a heroine with a differentiated psychological make-up and a completely original character of her own.

In her essay on Wilde's version, Melissa Knox poses the question: 'Why is she [*Salomé*] interested in this strange man ['*Jokanaan*', i.e. John the Baptist] covered with filth and rags?'²⁵⁰ The answer to this question in many critical works on Wilde, is that *Salomé* personifies a 'femme fatale',

²⁴⁹ Norbert Kohl, *Oscar Wilde: The Works of a Conformist Rebel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.191.

²⁵⁰ Melissa Knox, 'Losing One's Head: Wilde's Confession in *Salomé*', in C. George Sandulescu (ed.), *Rediscovering Oscar Wilde* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1994), p.233.

driven by all-devouring lust - in short a nymphomaniac. But how can such a 'nymphomaniac' consider herself as a chaste 'virgin'?

In the play itself is defined the image the other characters have of Salomé. Coincidentally they seem to connect her with their impressions of the moon – how pale it looks. To them the moon seems the quintessential symbol of femininity. Such definitions however serve not so much as to enlighten the reader about Salomé but they also seem to have the function of a projection foil, mirroring their unconscious wishes and desires of the character themselves when describing the moon. For example, for Herod, Salomé's step-father, the moon mirrors his lust for his step-daughter: He wishes that she was 'like a mad woman, a mad woman who is seeking everywhere for lovers' (Wilde, *CP*, p.394). For Herod then, a woman such as Salomé, openly displaying her sexuality, must be a nymphomaniac. It is Salomé herself when giving us her impression of the moon who voices her own unconscious desires and defines her own inner self:

How good to see the moon.[...] 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 the other goddesses. (Wilde, *CP*, p.385)

It seems as though Salomé is not like any other goddess. For Wilde, she clings to her chastity, she is very much in love with it. As far as her outward appearance is concerned, she tries to attract as much attention as she can and to arouse as much sexual desire as possible. For the reader Salomé's character appears self-contradictory, standing in complete contrast to her inner psyche which longs for a pre-pubescent state of complete asexuality. This incongruity is a sign of an ontologically insecure

‘self’. Her inner ‘self’ betrays her public image insomuch it seems that she is simply putting on a performance as an over-sexed seductress. The artificiality of such a ‘gender’ performance combined and contrasted with her true inner ‘chaste’ self seems to turn Salomé for the reader into what we would nowadays define as ‘a camp icon’.

When we contrast Salomé’s outward appearance of a powerful ‘femme fatale’ with her ‘inner’ self - which might describe her as a ‘femme fragile’ - we find it almost impossible to seriously classify her with regard to the two categories of androgynes mentioned above. In fact, Salomé could be seen as a hybrid between the typically ‘female hermaphrodite’ and an ‘asexual androgyne’, oscillating between the two variants. On the one hand, she certainly displays masculine aggressive behaviour when she orders around the soldiers and even goes so far as to challenge the patriarchal hierarchy common at the time by denying the wishes of the then Tetrarch of Judaea, her step-father Herod Antipas. However, on the other hand, she appears to the reader - like a naive child – to be thoroughly enjoying her chastity. The fact that she is anxious not simply to enjoy her chastity but, possibly more importantly desires to protect her precarious chaste ‘inner self’ partly explains why she becomes obsessively drawn to Jokanaan. However when first encountering him she says:

But he is terrible, he is terrible![...] It is his eyes above all that are terrible [...] How wasted he is! He is like a thin ivory statue. He is like an image of silver. I am sure he is chaste as the moon is. He is like a moonbeam, like a shaft of silver. His flesh must be cool like ivory. I would look closer at him.(Wilde, *CP*, p.389)

Salomé is attracted to Jokanaan as she comes to realise that he is just as chaste as she is. Not only that, being a hermit, Jokanaan is just as much an outsider as Salomé for she feels estranged from her parents and is even sexually pursued by her stepfather. She is neither part of the soldier's circle and maintains a distance from her servant pages: she stands in the centre alone. Unlike Salomé, whether she be a *femme fatale* or *femme fragile*, Jokanaan displays no gender signifiers whatever. He thus would fall into the category of the male asexual androgyne.

In addition to the above there is a new element apparent in Wilde's depiction of Salomé, what I term is 'the politics of the 'gaze''. Salomé together with Jokanaan and also Herod behave in peculiar individual fashion when it comes either to averting the gaze of others or seductively commanding to be looked at. In fact, Salomé turns out to be yet another protagonist in the whole of Wilde's writings who suffers from ontological insecurity, as R.D. Laing defines it. In the very first scene she flees from the banquet as she can no longer stand the penetrating stare of the tetrarch, her stepfather: 'I will not stay. I cannot stay. Why does the Tetrarch look at me all the while with his mole's eyes under his shaking eyelids?' (Wilde, *CP*, p.385). She feels threatened when he looks at her in this way and senses that she is being turned into a sex object. Another character who stares too much at Salomé is the young Syrian, Narraboth and, with him, it proves to be fatal. It becomes apparent that all these penetrating eyes are threatening Salomé's sense of selfhood. R. D. Laing:

To turn oneself into a stone becomes a way of not being turned into stone by someone else.[...] Thus the man who is frightened of his own subjectivity being swamped, impinged upon, or congealed by the other is frequently to be found attempting to swamp, to impinge upon, or to kill the other

person's subjectivity. The process involves a vicious circle. The more one attempts to preserve one's own identity by nullifying the specific human individuality of the other, the more it is felt to be necessary to continue to do so, because with each denial of the other person's ontological status, one's own ontological security is decreased, the threat to the self from the other is potentiated and hence has to be even more desperately negated. (Laing, pp.51-52)

The more Herod and the young Syrian, Narraboth, stare at her and are engulfed by her personality, the more power she seems to have over them. Eventually the young Syrian becomes so heartbroken - she seems to be continually ignoring or simply exploiting him for her own selfish desires - that he kills himself.

Paradoxically then, why does Salomé always want Jokanaan to look at her? According to Petra Dierkes-Thrun of Stanford University:

the isolating look or gaze is a major theme in Wilde's text [...] Like Hérodiade, Salomé is constantly pursued and haunted by adoring eyes and minds attracted to her outward beauty. The other characters approach Salomé as a looking glass for their own narcissistic desires and needs, and yet they do not truly see her: Salomé is simultaneously the center of attention and completely alone. Wilde's play unfolds as a circle of frustrated looking with desire, awe, or doubt.²⁵¹

Repeatedly Jokanaan provokes Salomé by calling her either 'daughter of Babylon' or even 'daughter of Sodom' (Wilde, *CP*, p.390). Thus she

²⁵¹ Petra Dierkes-Thrun, *Salomé's Modernity: Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetics of Transgression* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2011), p.20.

becomes convinced that Jokanaan is conscious of her as a living being. His gaze probably boosts her sense of being 'alive' and this strengthens her desire for him to repeatedly look at her, but he refuses to: 'Who is this woman who is looking at me? I will not have her look at me' (Wilde, *CP*, p.389). Apparently he feels threatened himself by Salomé's gaze. It is interesting of course that, vice-versa, Salomé's gaze would threaten Jokanaan's own identity. Here lies the basic tragic element in Wilde's play: towards the end, these two ontologically insecure characters confront each other. In order to feel alive, both of them love to attract attention: Salomé, by showing off her physical beauty and Jokanaan, by theatrically raising his voice and loudly abusing the Tetrarch and Hérodiad, Salomé's mother. What is more, both of them, Salomé and Jokanaan, simultaneously and somewhat paradoxically try to avoid all those who have a greater than usual interest in them by continually staring at them.

In *Salomé with John the Baptist's Head*, by the artist Aubrey Beardsley published in 1893, one of his drawings (Figure 9) vividly captures the psychological situation described above: Salomé is holding up the slain head of Jokanaan in her hands. Salomé's head is depicted as being very similar to that of a Medusa. More interesting, perhaps, is that Wilde has Salomé describing Jokanaan's hair 'like a knot of black serpents writhing round thy neck' (Wilde, *CP*, p. 391). We see then two 'Medusa heads' staring at each other with the eyes of the dead Jokanaan - as depicted by Beardsley - remaining open and staring inquisitively into Salomé's face. Here Beardsley is attempting to illustrate the glaring result of the perpetual and reciprocal process of petrification between the two characters. In the course of the play they both have become, as it were, each other's alter egos. Salomé seems to have won the struggle for identity because, not only

possessing some elements of the hermaphrodite androgyne, she also has the support of the patriarchal power of Herod, the Tetrarch, behind her. But, by insisting that the Tetrarch gives the order for Jokanaan to be beheaded, she loses any reference point, as we have seen above, with regard to her identity. However, her joy of possessing and clasping the head of Jokanaan before her – as illustrated by Beardsley – and thus regaining a greater sense of identity will only be short-lived. Jokanaan's staring but lifeless eyes can no longer bestow any identity-affirming gaze on her which might retrieve her of her own sense of being 'alive'.

Apart from Salomé and Jokanaan, there is a third ontologically insecure character always hovering in the background, namely Herod, the Tetrarch. He is not only denigrated for being sterile by his wife, Hérodiad, who is also Salomé's mother, but also for the fact that he comes from a poor family and, to strengthen his political position has married his brother's sister. The audience learn, too, that he has possibly killed his own brother. All of this is perhaps the reason for Herod displaying similar symptoms of ontological insecurity, especially when, towards the grisly end of the play, he says: 'I will not look at things, I will not suffer things to look at me' (Wilde, *CP*, p.413). Some time previously, when he says to Salomé: 'I have looked at you too much' (Wilde, *CP*, p.408), he realises that he is, as it were, like putty in her hands. His stepdaughter, like a vampire, has drained him of his authority just as she then – again vampire-like – tries to draw her own identity out of Jokanaan's head. Consequently Herod, in order to gain control once more over his wavering authority, and because he knows he is not immune to his stepdaughter's 'gaze' stealing from him command of his own being, the only possible solution seems to be to take complete control over Salomé. For him that means killing her. In some of

his characters, throughout different levels in the whole play, Wilde shows us this oscillating process of how they turn others into lifeless objects whilst themselves, they are being dehumanised.

Apart from the almost intuitive psychological treatment of characters – something very modern and unusual for a late nineteenth-century playwright - Wilde goes back to classical drama in so much as he has a couple of minor characters, namely Hérodiad and her page, performing the role which the chorus had in ancient Greek drama. They were omniscient, stood apart from the action, and commented on the plot, often foreshadowing what was to come. For instance, Hérodiad and her page are continually warning not to respond to Salomé's gaze. More personally perhaps right at the beginning of the play when the page describes the moon, which is similar to a projection of Salomé, he sees a dead woman which foreshadows Salomé's fate:

How strange the moon seems! She is like a
woman rising from a tomb. She is like a dead
woman. You would fancy she was looking for
dead things. (Wilde, *CP*, p. 381)

But even before Salomé was killed by her stepfather, she was not alive. She was petrified. Just like Dorian Gray - a living, yet at the same time dead individual, without emotions.

The plot in *Salomé* is very similar to Rachilde's novel *Monsieur Vénus*. Here, at the end of the novel, the heroine, Raoule Vénérande, also turns into a vampire-like woman, trying to suck her 'identity' out of her lover Jacques. In order to possess him completely, she has him killed in a duel. The reference point of her 'identity', of course, is now lost. In order to

recover this 'identity' she fabricates a replica life-size doll out of Jacques' corpse with no satisfying result. Of course, the same is true of Salomé. Jokanaan's dead eyes cannot give her back a sense of selfhood. However, Oscar Wilde prepares a more tragic fate for his heroine.

7. Conclusion

Ever since Plato and Ovid there have been two traditions concerning androgyny which have influenced Western European cultures. What was particularly interesting for me in my thesis was how these two traditions developed in the nineteenth century, because that was the time when a decisive rift occurred between two concepts of androgyny. As far as Plato is concerned, his idea of those spherical creatures each seeking their lost half became a basic image for the wholeness of an individual. This was taken up by sexologists such as Karl Heinrich Ulrichs in order to evoke positive images of men who feel half feminine – so-called Uranians.

Ovid, however, in his *Metamorphoses* develops two separate strands of androgynous concepts which particularly influenced writers during the so-called Decadence period in the nineteenth century. One concept consisted of an androgynous individual displaying male and female characteristics equally. This idea is reminiscent of the Hermaphroditus statue in the Musée du Louvre and I name this kind of androgyny accordingly 'hermaphrodite androgyny'. The other concept emerges from an idea of androgyny that strives to erase and obliterate all kinds of both male and female signifiers. This concept I call 'asexual androgyny'. Both these forms of androgyny were defined by any individual's complete self-sufficiency. However, in the nineteenth century, far from conveying an image of a healthy new wholeness, it turned out that the concepts derived from Ovid were often used as coded references in art and literature to deride and denigrate characters or individuals or even stigmatise them as sexual deviants, and all that at a time when there existed no terms at all for gender non-conforming individuals. In the nineteenth century, and especially so in fin-de-siècle literature, describing an individual in modern terms as a 'male asexual

androgynous' or a 'female hermaphrodite androgynous' did not signify a healthy character, but indicated what we would nowadays consider a repressed form of male or female homosexuality.

It was only made possible to obtain a psychological insight into androgynous characters in nineteenth century literature from the fact that authors of the Decadence were not only simply interested in characters outside bourgeois norms, but they also strove to portray them as minutely as possible. They wanted to take Realism onto a higher plane and that meant describing realistically what was actually going on inside a character's mind. In this context it becomes evident why Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly tried to arrive at an intense psychological study of such a complex androgynous character as the 'dandy'. It is now a matter of conjecture whether they arrived at such minute psychographs of androgynous characters from mere 'outward' objective observation, or whether it was due to observing themselves as well, which might mean that psychological depictions of androgynous characters in their works are far more autobiographical than we would think them to be.

Surprisingly, in the works of the many different authors, both of these types of androgynous characters in nineteenth-century literature display the same psychological mechanisms. This is similar to what, in his book *The Divided Self*, R.D. Laing has termed 'ontological insecurity'. These psychological mechanisms not only indicate that an individual is suffering from some form of stigma but, more importantly, they help him to cope with it. Moreover, the fact that heightened self-consciousness is firmly linked to this state of ontological insecurity explains why asexual and hermaphrodite androgynes cannot ever really relate sexually, let alone emotionally to other

individuals. They thus appear to the semi-ignorant observer cold and self-sufficient.

Nowadays, calling an individual ‘Camp’ - usually male - turns out to be a similar method of coping with the stigma of homosexuality and reveals some of the mechanisms Laing depicts when discussing ontological insecurity, an analysis of which is included in my thesis.

To return to nineteenth-century literature, we must bear in mind that everything that Oscar Wilde had read formed the basis of his work, not forgetting, of course, his own witticisms and those of others. He went even so far as to reuse his famous ‘Hyacinth letter’ to John Gray (the model for Dorian Gray) for his later lover Lord Alfred Douglas. Now it is a matter of debate whether he was imitating the psychological analyses of androgynous characters from, for example Théophile Gautier and Rachilde, or whether he had arrived at those psychographs in his works either after his own observations or by simply natural genius. At any rate, considering what works influenced Wilde proved to be an indispensable guide to discovering other androgynous characters in nineteenth-century literature. Doing this has possibly also proved that Wilde was definitely interested in defining homoerotic passion and endowing it with artistic form.

Finally I do hope that I have been able to show in my thesis that when ‘hermaphrodite’ or ‘asexual’ androgynous characters in nineteenth-century literature display the behaviour patterns of ontologically insecure characters, that this then might prove to be an invaluable parameter for detecting the original stigma attached to sexual deviancy in modern literature.

8. Bibliography

Primary Literature

Baudelaire, Charles, *Oeuvres Complètes II* (Paris : Gallimard, 1976).

—, *Journaux Intimes : Fusées, Mon cœur mis à nu, Carnet*, (Paris : Librairie José Corti, 1949).

—, *Les Fleurs du Mal / Die Blumen des Bösen* (München: dtv, 1991).

Bulwer-Lytton, Edward George, *Pelham or the Adventures of a Gentleman* (Doylestown: Wildside Press, 2004).

Byron, Lord, *Byron's Poetry*, edited By Frank D. McConnell (New York: Norton, 1978).

D'Aurevilly, Jules Barbey, *Dandyism* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1988).

Disraeli, Benjamin, *Contarini Fleming: A Psychological Romance* (London: Peter Davies, 1927).

—, *Vivian Grey* (Teddington: Echo Library, 2007).

Gautier, Théophile, *Mademoiselle Maupin* (London: Penguin, 2005).

Hofmannsthal, Hugo von, *Gesammelte Werke: Reden und Aufsätze I, 1891-1913* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1979).

—, *Gesammelte Werke: Reden und Aufsätze III, 1925-1929* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1979).

—, *Erzählungen, Erfundene Gespräche und Briefe, Reisen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1979).

Huysmans, Joris-Karl, *A Rebours* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978).

Kierkegaard, Søren, *Die Krankheit zum Tode* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1997).

—, *The Sickness unto Death* (London: Penguin, 2008).

Laing, R.D., *Self and Others* (London: Penguin, 1990).

—, *The Divided Self* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1975).

—, *The Politics of Experience and the Bird of Paradise* (Penguin: London, 1967).

—, *Wisdom, Madness and Folly* (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1998).

Ovid, *Metamorphosen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994).

—, *Metamorphoses*, transl. by Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Loeb Classical Library, 1984)

Petronius, *The Satyricon*, transl. by P.G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Pater, Walter, *Miscellaneous Studies* (London: Macmillan, 1895).

—, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

Platon, *Das Gastmahl oder Von der Liebe* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1979).

Rachilde, *Monsieur Vénus* (Sawtry: Dedalus, 1992).

Shakespeare, William, *Sonnets – Sonette*, transl. by Stefan George (Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1989).

Swinburne, Charles Algernon, *Swinburne's Collected Poetical Works*, Vol. I (London: William Heinemann, 1935).

Wilde, Oscar, *The Complete Plays* (London: Methuen, 1988). (**CP**)

—, *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, edited by J. B. Foreman (London: Collins, 1986). (**CWW**)

- , *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, edited by Merlin Holland & Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Fourth Estate, 2000). (*CL*)
- , *The Picture of Dorian Gray: An Annotated and Uncensored Edition*, edited by Nicholas Frankel (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011).
- , *Oscar Wilde: The Picture of Dorian Gray*, edited by Donald L. Lawler (New York & London: Norton, 1988). (*NPD*)

Secondary Literature

- Abbott, Elizabeth, *A History of Celibacy* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1999).
- Ackroyd, Peter, *Dressing Up: Transvestism and Drag: The History of an Obsession* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979).
- Asholt, Wolfgang & Fähnders, Walter (eds.), *Fin de siècle: Erzählungen, Gedichte, Essays* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1993).
- Aurnhammer, Achim, *Androgynie: Studien zu einem Motiv in der europäischen Literatur* (Köln & Wien: Böhlau, 1986).
- Badinter, Elisabeth, *On Masculine Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).
- Barbey D'Aurevilly, *Über das Dandytum* (Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2006).
- Barsoum, Marlène, *Théophile Gautier's Mademoiselle Maupin: Toward a Definition of the „Androgynous Discourse“* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001).
- Bashant, Wendy, 'Redressing Androgyny: Hermaphroditic Bodies in Victorian England', in *The Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies* 4 (Fall 1995).

- Bauer, Roger, *Die schöne Décadence: Geschichte eines literarischen Paradoxons* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2001).
- Beckson, Karl, *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890s: An Anthology of British Poetry and Prose* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1982).
- Beerbohm, Max, *The Works of Max Beerbohm* (London: Heinemann, 1922).
- Behrendt, Patricia Flanagan, *Oscar Wilde: Eros and Aesthetics* (London: Macmillan, 1991).
- Bergman, David (ed.), *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993).
- Bernheimer, Charles, *Decadent Subjects: The Idea of Decadence in Art, Literature, Philosophy, and Culture of the Fin de Siècle in Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).
- Bersani, Leo, *Homos* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995).
- Böker, Uwe & Corballis, Richard & Hibbard, Julie (eds.), *The Importance of Reinventing Oscar: Versions of Wilde During the Last 100 Years* (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2002).
- Boone, Joseph A, 'Vacation Cruises; or, The Homoerotics of Orientalism', in *PMLA Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, Vol. 110, No. 1 (January 1995), pp. 89-107.
- Booth, Mark, *Camp* (London: Quartet Books, 1983).
- Bornstein, Kate, 'Gender Terror, Gender Rage', in Stryker, Susan (ed.), *The transgender studies reader* (London: Routledge, 2006).
- , *My Gender Workbook* (New York: Routledge, 1998).
- Bredbeck, Gregory W., 'Narcissus in the Wilde', in Meyer, Moe (ed.), *The politics and poetics of Camp* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 51-74.

Bridle, Susan, 'Gender Outlaw: An interview with Kate Bornstein', in *What is Enlightenment Magazine* (Winter 1999).

Brisson, Luc, *Sexual Ambivalence: Androgyny and Hermaphroditism in Graeco-Roman Antiquity* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002).

Bristow, Joseph (ed.), *Oscar Wilde and Modern Culture* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2008).

—, *Effeminate England: Homoerotic Writing after 1885* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

Bronski, Michael, *Culture Clash* (Boston: South End Press, 1984).

Buber, Martin, *I and Thou*, transl. by Ronald Gregor (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937).

Bullough, Vern L. & Bullough, Bonnie, *Cross Dressing, Sex, and Gender* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

Burston, Daniel, *The Crucible of Experience: R.D. Laing and the Crisis of Psychotherapy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000).

—, *The Wing of Madness: The Life and Work of R.D. Laing* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996).

Busst, A. J. L., 'The Image of the Androgyne in the Nineteenth Century', in Fletcher, Ian, *Romantic Mythologies* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967).

Byron, Lord, *Alas! The love of Women!': Byron's Letters and Journals*, edited by Leslie A. Marchand, Vol. 3, 1813-1814 (London: John Murray, 1974).

Carlyle, Thomas, *Sartor Resartus* (London: Everyman, 1984).

Carpenter, Edward, *Love's Coming-of-Age* (London: Methuen, 1914).

—, *Intermediate Types among Primitive Folk: A Study in Social Evolution* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1919).

- Carter, A.E, *The Idea of Décadence in French literature 1830-1900* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1968).
- Chedgzoy, Kate, *Shakespeare's Queer Children* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).
- Cleto, Fabio (ed.), *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).
- Cohen, Ed, *Talk on the Wilde Side: Toward a Genealogy of a Discourse on Male Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1993).
- Cohen, William A., *Sex Scandal: The Private Parts of Victorian Fiction* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1996).
- Constable, Liz & Denisoff, Dennis & Potolsky, Matthew (eds.), *Perennial Decay: On the Aesthetics & Politics of Decadence* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).
- Cook, Ellen Piel, *Psychological Androgyny* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1985).
- Cruise, Colin, *Love Revealed: Simeon Solomon and the Pre-Raphaelites* (London: Merrell, 2005).
- Danson, Lawrence, *Wilde's Intentions: The Artist in his Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).
- Davidson, Arnold I., 'Sex and the Emergence of Sexuality', in *Critical Inquiry*, Volume 14, No.1 (Autumn 1987).
- Davis, Whitney, *Queer Beauty: Sexuality and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Freud and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).
- Dellamora, Richard, *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

- Dierkes-Thrun, Petra, *Salome's Modernity: Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetics of Transgression* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2011).
- Dollimore, Jonathan, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).
- Donogue, Denis, 'The Antimonian Pater: 1894-1994', in Shaffer, E.S. (ed.), *Comparative Criticism – An Annual Journal: Walter Pater and the Culture of the Fin-de-Siècle* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.3-20.
- , 'Distance, Death and Desire in Salome' in: Raby, Peter, *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.118-142.
- Douglas, Alfred, *The True History of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (London: Martin Secker, 1933).
- Dowling, Linda, *Hellenism & Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (London: Cornell University Press, 1996).
- Dynes, Wayne R, (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990).
- Ehmann, Peter, *Zur Ätiologie und Phänomenologie Ambisexueller und Androgyner Daseinswelten* (Bonn, 1976).
- Ellis, Havelock, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1915).
- Ellmann, Richard, *Oscar Wilde* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1987).
- Erbe, Günter, *Dandys: Virtuosen der Lebenskunst* (Köln: Böhlau, 2002).
- Feldman, Jessica R., *Gender on the Divide: The Dandy in Modernist Literature* (London: Cornell University Press, 1993).
- Feldman, Stephen, 'Androgyne Online', in *Transgender Tapestry Magazine*, Issue 107 (Fall/Winter, 2004).

Fillin-Yeh, Susan, *Dandies: Fashion and Finesse in Art and Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

Flaubert, Gustave, *Trois Contes – Drei Erzählungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1983).

Fletcher, Ian (ed.), *Romantic Mythologies* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967).

Foldy, Michael S., *The Trials of Oscar Wilde: Deviance, Morality, and Late-Victorian Society* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1997).

Foucault, Michel, *The History of Sexuality: 1 – The Will to Knowledge* (London: Penguin, 1998).

Foulkes, Nick. *Last of the Dandies: The Scandalous Life and Escapades of Count d'Orsay* (London: Little, Brown, 2003).

Fox, Paul (ed.), *Decadences, Morality and Aesthetics in British Literature* Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2006.

Freud, Sigmund, 'Der Humor', in Freud, Sigmund. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, (1927-1931), Vol. XXI, transl. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1995), pp.160-166.

—, *Eine Kindheitserinnerung des Leonardo da Vinci* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1990).

—, *Jokes and their Relations to the Unconscious* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966).

—, 'Negation', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XIX (1923-1925), transl. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1961).

- , 'On Narcissism: An Introduction', in *On Metapsychology* (London: Penguin, 1991).
- , *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (London: Hogarth Press, 1955).
- , *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (London: Hogarth Press, 1959).
- Gagnier, Regenia A. (ed.), *Critical Essays on Oscar Wilde* (New York: Macmillan, 1991).
- , *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1987).
- Garber, Marjorie, *Vice Versa: Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1995).
- Gerber, Helmut, 'The Editor's Fence', in *English Literature in Transition* 6 (1963).
- Gill, Davies & Malcolm, David & Simmons, John (eds.), *Critical Essays on Ronald Firbank, English Novelist, 1886-1926* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2004).
- Glick, Elisa, *Materializing Queer Desire: Oscar Wilde to Andy Warhol* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009).
- Gnüg, Hiltrud, *Kult der Kälte: Der klassische Dandy im Spiegel der Weltliteratur* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1988).
- Goffman, Erving, *Stigma* (London: Penguin, 1990).
- , *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1959).
- Goncourt, Edmond de, *La Faustin* (Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1899).
- Gray, John, *The Selected Prose of John Gray*, edited by Jerusha Hull McCormack (Greensboro: ELT Press, 1992).
- Green, Martin, *Children of the Sun* (London: Pimlico, 1977).

Greenstade, William. *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Greer, Germaine, *The Boy* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003).

Greif, Hans Jürgen, *Huysmans' „A Rebours“ und die Dekadenz* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1971).

Haggerty, George E., *Men in Love: Masculinity and Sexuality in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

Halpern, Richard, *Shakespeare's Perfume: Sodomy and Sublimity in the Sonnets, Wilde, Freud, and Lacan* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

Hannon, Patrice, 'Aesthetic Criticism, Useless Art: Wilde, Zola and the "Portrait of Mr W.H."', in: Gagnier, Regenia A. (ed.), *Critical Essays on Oscar Wilde* (New York: Macmillan, 1991), pp.186-202.

Hanson, Ellis, *Decadence and Catholicism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1997).

Hargreaves, Tracy, *Androgyny in Modern Literature* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

Heasley, Robert, 'Crossing the Borders of Gendered Sexuality: Queer Masculinities of Straight Men', in: Ingraham, Chrys (ed.), *Thinking straight: The Power, Promise and Paradox of Heterosexuality* (New York, 2004), pp.109-129.

Heilbrun, Carolyn G., *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* (New York: Knopf, 1973).

Heuer, Erich, *Entstehungsgeschichte von Disraelis Erstlingsroman „Vivian Grey“* (Berlin: Dissertation Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, 1925).

Heyden-Rynsch, Verena (ed.), *Riten der Selbstaflösung* (München: Matthes & Seitz, 1982).

Holland, Merlin, *Irish Peacock & Scarlet Marquess: The Real Trial of Oscar Wilde* (London & New York: Fourth Estate, 2003).

- Holmes, Diana, *Rachilde: Decadence, Gender and the Woman Writer* (Oxford: Berg, 2001).
- Hyde, Montgomery H., *Famous Trials 7: Oscar Wilde* (London: Penguin, 1962).
- Ingraham, Chrys (ed.), *Thinking straight: The Power, Promise and Paradox of Heterosexuality* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
- Inman, Billie Andrew, 'John ,Dorian' Gray and the theme of subservient love in Pater's works of the 1890s', in Shaffer, E.S.(ed.) ,*Comparative Criticism – An annual journal: Walter Pater and the culture of the fin-de-siècle* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.85-108.
- Isay, Richard A, *Being Homosexual: Gay Men and Their Development* (New York: Farrar-Strauss-Giroux, 1989).
- Isherwood, Christopher, *The World in the Evening* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
- Jens, Walter (ed.), *Kindlers Neues Literatur Lexikon*, Vol. 9 (München: Kindler, 1996).
- Kane, Michael. *Modern Men: Mapping Masculinity in English and German Literature, 1880-1930* (London: Cassell, 1999).
- Keane, Robert N. (ed.), *Oscar Wilde: The Man, His Writings, and his World* (New York: AMS Press, 2003).
- Kellogg-Dennis, Patricia 'Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*: Symbolist Princess', in Sandulescu, C. George. *Rediscovering Oscar Wilde* (Gerrards Cross, 1994).
- Kelly, Ian, *Beau Brummell: The Ultimate Dandy* (London: Hodder, 2005).
- Kendall, Christopher & Martino, Wayne (eds.), *Gendered Outcasts and Sexual Outlaws: Sexual Oppression and Gender Hierarchies in Queer Men's Lives* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2006).

Kiernan, Robert F., *Frivolity Unbound: Six Masters of the Camp Novel* (New York: A Frederick Ungar Book, 1990).

Kingcaid, Renee A., *Neurosis & Narrative: The Decadent Short Fiction of Proust, Lourrain and Rachilde* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992).

Klee, Wanda G., *Leibhaftige Dekadenz: Studien zur Körperlichkeit in ausgewählten Werken von Joris-Karl Huysmans und Oscar Wilde* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 2001).

Kleinhans, Chuck, 'Taking out the Trash: Camp and the Politics of Parody', in Meyer, Moe (ed.), *The Politics and Poetics of Camp* (London: Routledge, 1994).

Knox, Melissa., 'Losing One's Head: Wilde's Confession in *Salomé*', in Sandulescu, C. George, *Rediscovering Oscar Wilde* (Gerrards Cross, 1994).

—, *Oscar Wilde in the 1990s: The Critic as Creator* (New York: Camden House, 2001).

—, *Oscar Wilde: A Long and Lovely Suicide* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1994).

Kohl, Norbert, *Oscar Wilde: The Works of a Conformist Rebel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

Kott, Jan, *Shakespeare heute* (München: dtv, 1970).

Krafft-Ebing, Richard von, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, translated by Charles Gilbert Chaddock, 7th edition (Philadelphia: F.A. Davis, 1908).

Kuhn, William, *The Politics of Pleasure: A Portrait of Benjamin Disraeli* (London: Pocket Books, 2007).

Laing, Adrian, *R.D. Laing: A Life* (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing, 2006).

Leger, Sally & McCracken, Scott (eds.), *Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Lilar, Suzanne, *Aspects of Love in western society* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965).

Lind, Earl, *Autobiography of an Androgyne* (Amsterdam: Fredonia Books, 2005).

Maier, Wolfgang, *Oscar Wilde: The Picture of Dorian Gray. Eine kritische Analyse der anglistischen Forschung von 1962 bis 1982* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1984).

Mancoff, Debra N., *Jane Morris: The Pre-Raphaelite Mode of Beauty*. San Francisco: Pomegranate, 2000.

Marcovitch, Heather, *The Art of the Pose: Oscar Wilde's Performance Theory* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010).

Marshall, Gail (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to The Fin De Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

McCormack, Jerusha Hull, *John Gray: Poet, Dandy, Priest* (Hanover & London: Brandeis University Press, 1991).

—, *The Man Who Was Dorian Gray* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

McKenna, Neil, *The Secret Life of Oscar Wilde* (London: Century, 2003).

Messinger, S. et al., 'Life as Theatre: Some Notes on the Dramaturgic Approach to Social Reality', in *Sociometry*, Vol.25, No.1, (1962).

Meyer, Moe (ed.), *The Politics and Poetics of Camp* (London: Routledge, 1994).

- , *An Archaeology of Posing: Essays on Camp, Drag, and Sexuality* (LaVergne, USA: Macater Press, 2010).
- Moers, Ellen, *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1959).
- Moore, George, *Celibate Lives* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1927).
- Morrill, Cynthia, 'Revamping the Gay Sensibility', in Meyer, Moe (ed.), *The Politics and Poetics of Camp* (London: Routledge, 1994).
- Mullan, Bob. R.D., *Laing: A Personal View* (London: Duckworth, 1999).
- Müller, Karl Otfried, *Geschichten Hellenischer Stämme und Städte*, Vol. III (Breslau: Verlag Josef Mar und Komp., 1824).
- Neuer Berliner Kunstverein (ed.), *EVA & ADELE* (Stuttgart/Ostfildern: Cantz, 1999).
- Newton, Esther, 'Role Models', in Bergman, David (ed.), *Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993).
- Nicolson, Nigel, *Portrait of a Marriage* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973).
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1956).
- Nunokawa, Jeff, *Tame Passions of Wilde: The Styles of Manageable Desire* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003).
- Pacteau, Francette, 'The Impossible Referent: representations of the androgyne', in Burgin, Victor & Donald, James & Kaplan, Cora (eds.), *Formations of Fantasy* (New York: Methuen, 1986).
- Paglia, Camille, *Die Masken der Sexualität* (Berlin: Byblos Verlag, 1992).
- Péladan, Joséphin, *Der Androgyn* (München: Georg Müller, 1924).

Pfister, Manfred & Schulte-Middelich, Bernd (eds.), *Die ,Nineties: Das englische Fin de siècle zwischen Dekadenz und Sozialkritik* (München: Francke Verlag, 1983).

Pfister, Manfred, *Oscar Wilde >>The picture of Dorian Gray<<* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1986).

Powell, Kerry, *Acting Wilde: Victorian Sexuality, Theatre, And Oscar Wilde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Praz, Mario, *Liebe, Tod und Teufel: Die schwarze Romantik* (München: dtv, 1988).

Prinz, Ursula (ed.), *Androgyn: Sehnsucht nach Vollkommenheit* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1986).

Psomiades, Kathy Alexis, *Beauty's Body: Femininity and Representation in British Aestheticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

Puvogel, Renate, 'Wherever We are is Museum', in Neuer Berliner Kunstverein (ed.), *EVA & ADELE* (Stuttgart/Ostfildern: Cantz, 1999).

Raby, Peter (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Rachilde, *Madame La Mort and Other Plays*, transl. & ed. by Kiki Gounaridou & Frazer Lively (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998)

Rado, Lisa, *The Modern Androgyne Imagination: A Failed Sublime* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000).

Raffalovich, Marc-André, *Uranisme et Unisexualité* (Paris, 1896).

- Rattner, Josef & Danzer, Gerhard (eds.) *Kunst und Krankheit in der Psychoanalyse* (München: Quintessenz, 1993).
- Reißner, Simone, 'Über Oscar Wilde – Eine psychoanalytische Betrachtung', in *Zeitschrift für Klassische Psychoanalyse*, Heft/Vol. 1 (September 2007), pp.5-34.
- Rimmer, Dave, *New Romantics: The Look* (London: Omnibus Press, 2003).
- Robb, Graham, *Strangers: Homosexual Love in the Nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke and Oxford: Picador, 2003).
- Robins, Ashley H., *Oscar Wilde: The Great Drama of His Life* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2011).
- Rock, Mick, 'Lock Back in Glamour: Ziggy Stardust and the Glitter Years', in *Guardian Weekly* (April 12-18, 2001), p.16.
- Roden, Frederick S. (ed.), *Palgrave Advances in Oscar Wilde Studies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).
- Rodensky, Lisa (ed.), *Decadent Poetry from Wilde to Naidu* (London: Penguin, 2006).
- Ross, Alex, 'Deceptive Picture: How Oscar Wilde painted over "Dorian Gray"' in *The New Yorker* (August 8, 2011), pp.64-70.
- Rycroft, Charles (ed.), *Psychoanalysis Observed* (London: Penguin, 1968).
- Sandulescu, C. George (ed.), *Rediscovering Oscar Wilde* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1994).
- Satzinger, Christa, *The French Influences on Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray and Salome* (Salzburg: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1994).

Schickedanz, Hans-Joachim, *Der Dandy: Text und Bilder aus dem 19. Jahrhundert* (Dortmund: Harenberg, 1980).

—, *Ästhetische Rebellion und rebellische Ästheten* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000).

Schiffer, James (ed.), *Shakespeare's Sonnets: Critical Essays* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1999).

Schlaffer, Hannelore, *Mode, Schule der Frauen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007).

Schmidgall, Gary, *The Stranger Wilde: Interpreting Oscar* (London: Abacus, 1994).

Schröder, Horst, *Annotations to Oscar Wilde, The Portrait of Mr W.H.* (Braunschweig, 1986).

—, *Oscar Wilde, The Portrait of Mr W.H. – Its Composition, Publication and Reception* (Braunschweig, 1984).

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

—, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990).

Self, Will, *Dorian* (London: Penguin, 2002).

Sell, Ingrid, 'Third Gender: A Qualitative Study of the Experience of Individuals who identify as being neither Man nor Woman', unpublished doctoral thesis (Ann Arbor/Michigan: University of Michigan, 2001).

Showalter, Elaine, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (London: Virago, 1990).

Shrimpton, Nicholas, 'Pater and the "aesthetical sect"' in Shaffer, E.S. (ed.), *Comparative Criticism – An annual journal: Walter Pater and the culture of the fin-de-siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) p.61-84.

Simmons, Jessica, 'Algernon Charles Swinburne and the Philosophy of Androgyny, Hermaphrodeity, and Victorian Sexual Mores', in The Victorian Web (Accessed on 14th May 2008).

Sinfield, Alan, *On Sexuality and Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

—, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde and the Queer Moment* (London: Cassell, 1994).

Singer, June, *Androgyny* (London: Routledge, 1976).

Small, Ian, *Oscar Wilde: Recent Research. A Supplement to 'Oscar Wilde Revalued'* (Greensboro: ELT Press, 2000).

Smith, Rupert, 'A Brief History of Camp', in *Attitude Magazine* (London: Vitality Publishing Ltd, July 2010) pp. 68-69.

Sontag, Susan, *A Susan Sontag Reader* (London: Penguin, 1983).

Spackman, Barbara, 'Interventions', in Constable, Liz & Denisoff, Dennis & Potolsky, Matthew (eds.), *Perennial Decay: On the Aesthetics and Politics of Decadence* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press).

Stanton, Domna C., *The Aristocrat as Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

Stokes, John, *Oscar Wilde: Myths, Miracles, and Imitations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Stryker, Susan (ed.), *The Transgender Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 2006).

Sturgis, Matthew, *Passionate Attitudes: The English Decadence of the Eighteen Nineties* (London: Macmillan, 1995).

Summers, Claude J., *Gay Fictions: Wilde to Stonewall* (New York: Continuum, 1990).

Summers, Della (ed.), *Dictionary of Contemporary English* (München: Langenscheidt – Longman, 1995).

Sussman, Herbert. *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Symonds, John Addington, *In the Key of Blue and Other Prose Essays* (London: Elkin Matthews and John Lane, 1893).

—, *Male Love: A Problem in Greek Ethics and Other Writings* (New York: Pagan Press, 1983).

Symons, Arthur, *Collected Works of Arthur Symonds Vol. 8: Studies in Two Literatures* (London: Martin Secker, 1924).

—, *Collected Works of Arthur Symonds, Vol. 5: Spiritual Adventures* (London: Martin Secker, 1924).

—, 'The Decadent Movement in Literature', in Beckson, Karl (ed.), *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890's* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1982).

Taddeo, Julie Anne, *Lytton Strachey and the Search for Modern Sexual Identity* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2002).

Ulrichs, Karl Heinrich, *Forschungen über das Räthsel der mannmännlichen Liebe: VI. Gladius furens, VII. Memnon*, Vol. 8 (Hamburg: Männerschwarm, 1994)

- Waldrep, Shelton, *The Aesthetics of Self-Invention* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).
- Ware, J. Redding, *Passing English of the Victorian Era* (New York: Dutton, 1909).
- Weil, Kari, *Androgyny and the Denial of Difference* (Charlottesville & London: University Press of Virginia, 1992).
- Weininger, Otto, *Sex and Character* (London: William Heinemann, 1906).
- West, Shearer, *Fin de Siècle: Art and Society in an Age of Uncertainty* (London: Bloomsbury, 1993).
- White, Chris (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century Writings on Homosexuality – A Sourcebook* (London: Routledge, 1999).
- Wiener, Oswald, 'Eine Art Einzige', in: Heyden-Rynsch, Verena (ed.), *Riten der Selbstaflösung* (München: Matthes & Seitz, 1982), pp.35-78.
- Willsher, James (ed.), *The Dedalus Book of English Decadence* (Sawtry: Dedalus, 2004).
- Wilson, Glenn & Rahman, Qazi (eds.), *Born Gay* (London: Peter Owen Publishers, 2005).
- Wintermans, Caspar, *Lord Alfred Douglas: Ein Leben im Schatten von Oscar Wilde* (München: Blessing, 2001).
- Woolf, Virginia, *The Common Reader* (New York: Harcourt, 1948).
- , *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Vol. 3 1925-30*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982).
- , *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Vol.2 1920-24*, edited by Anne Olivier Bell (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982)
- Wright, Nicholas, *Cressida* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2000).

Wright, Thomas, *Built of Books: How Reading Defined the Life of Oscar Wilde* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2008).

Wunberg, Gotthart, *Die Wiener Moderne: Literatur, Kunst und Musik zwischen 1890 und 1910* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981).

Zolla, Elémire *The Androgyne: Fusion of the Sexes* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1981).

9. List of Illustrations

Fig. 1: *Venus Verticordia* by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1864-1868)
Rossetti Cotes Art Gallery and Museum, Bournemouth (UK).

Fig. 2: *Lady Lilith* by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1868)
Bancroft Collection, Wilmington Society of Fine Arts, Delaware (USA).

Fig. 3: *Astarte Syriaca* by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1877)
Manchester City Art Gallery (UK).

Fig. 4: *Perseus and the Sea Nymphs* by Edward Burne-Jones (1875-1877)
Staatsgalerie Stuttgart (Germany).

Fig. 5: *Ophelia* by John Everett Millais (1851-1852)
Tate Gallery London (UK).

Fig. 6: *Beata Beatrix* by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1863-1870)
Tate Gallery London (UK).

Fig. 7: *Portrait of an Italian Youth* by Simeon Solomon (1869)
University of Wales, Aberystwyth (UK).

Fig. 8: *Whereever We Are Is Museum* by Eva & Adele. Stuttgart: Cantz Verlag, 1999, p.153.

Fig. 9: *Salomé with John the Baptist's Head* by Aubrey Beardsley (1893)
Published, with a selection of Beardsley's drawings in *The Studio* to illustrate an article by Joseph Pennell, 'A New Illustrator'.



Figure 1:

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Venus Verticordia*, 1864–8 (A)



Figure 2: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Lady Lilith*, 1868



Figure 3: 'Astarte Syriaca' by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1877)



Figure 4:
Edward Burne-Jones
Perseus und die Meeresnympfen, 1875–7
Öl auf Leinwand
Staatsgalerie Stuttgart



Figure 5: 'Ophelia' by John Everett Millais (1851-1852)



Figure 6: 'Beata Beatrix' by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1863)

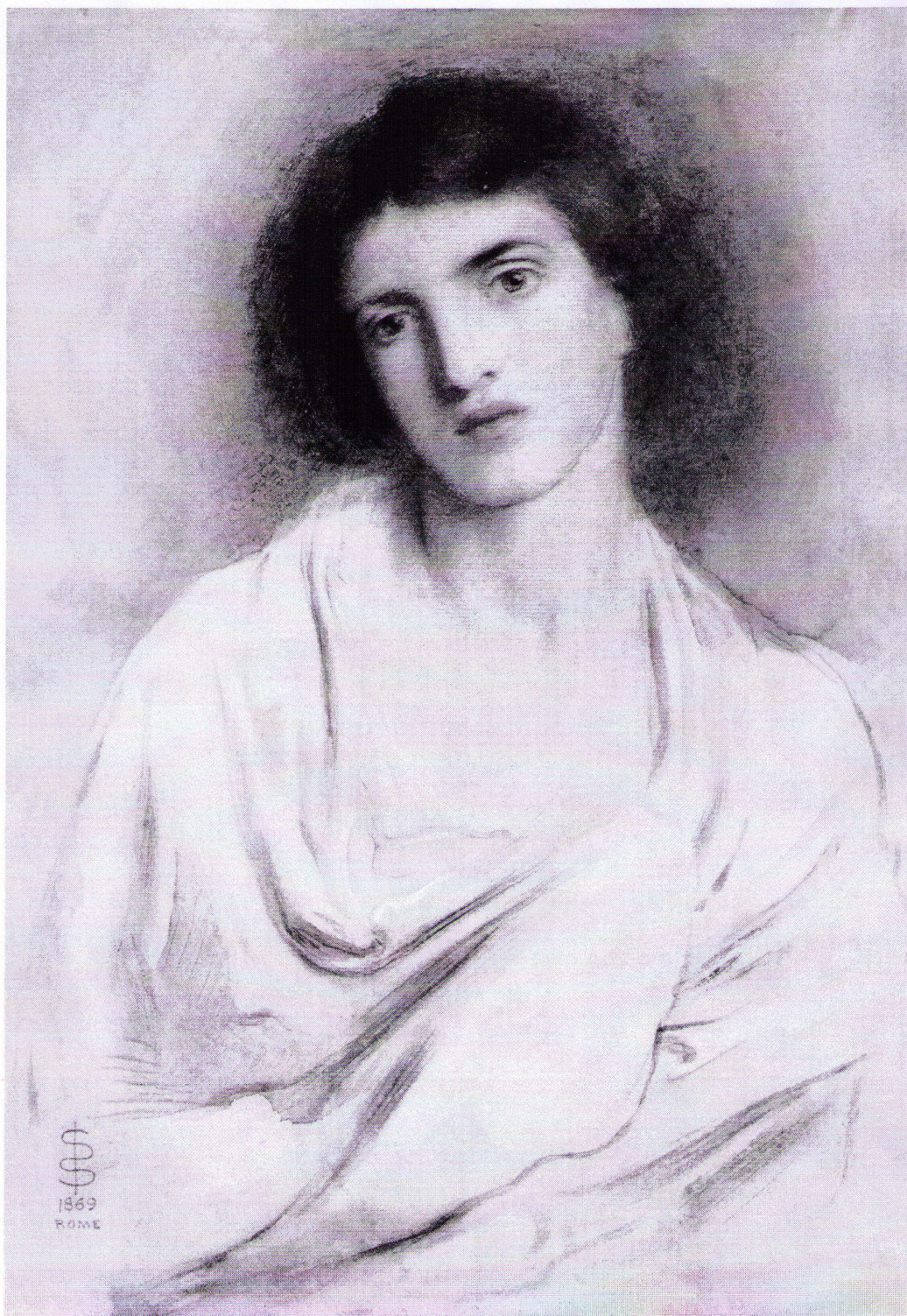


Figure 7: 'Portrait of an Italian Youth' by Simeon Solomon (1869)

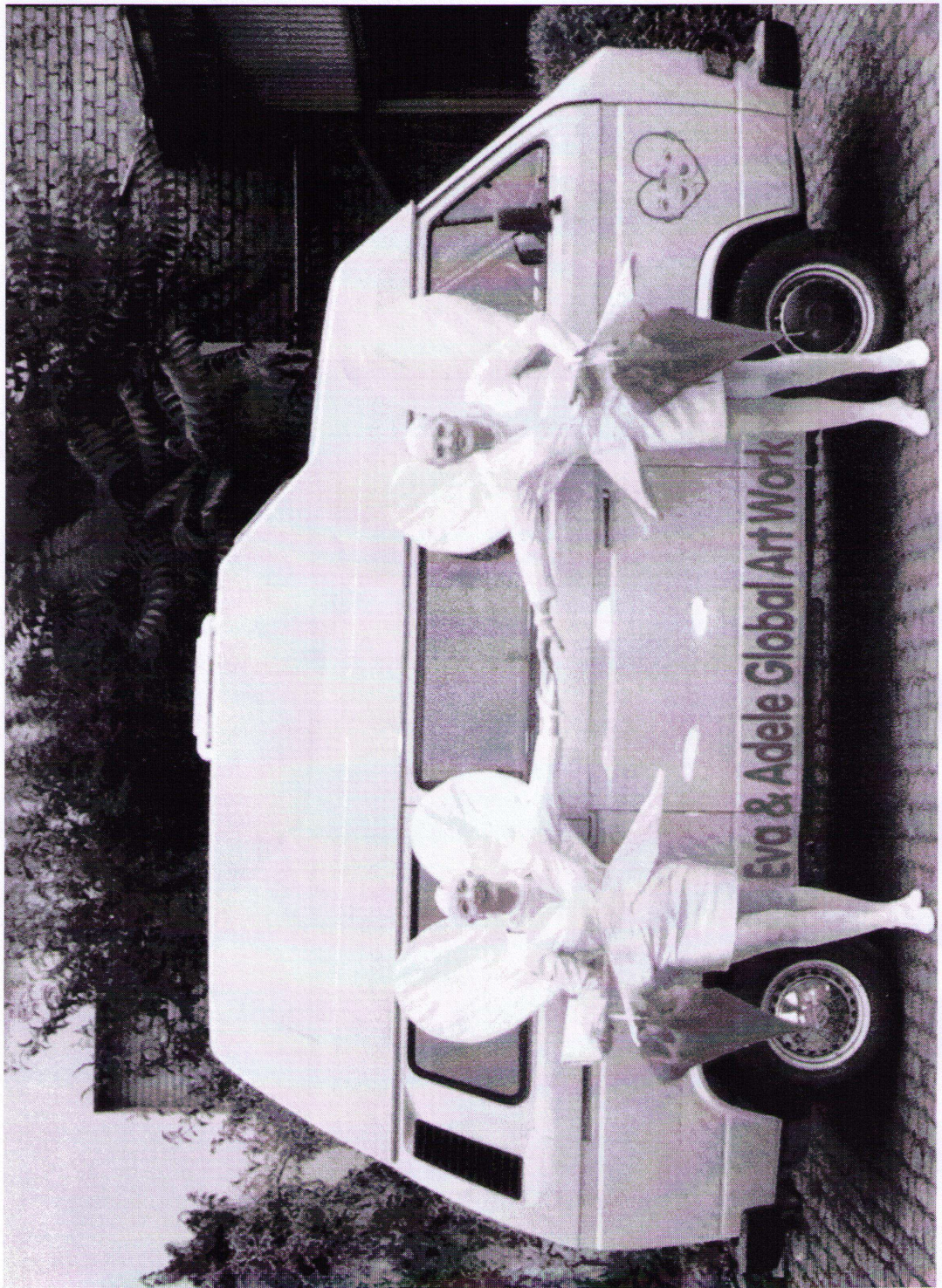


Figure 8: 'Whereever we are is Museum' by Eva & Adele (1999)

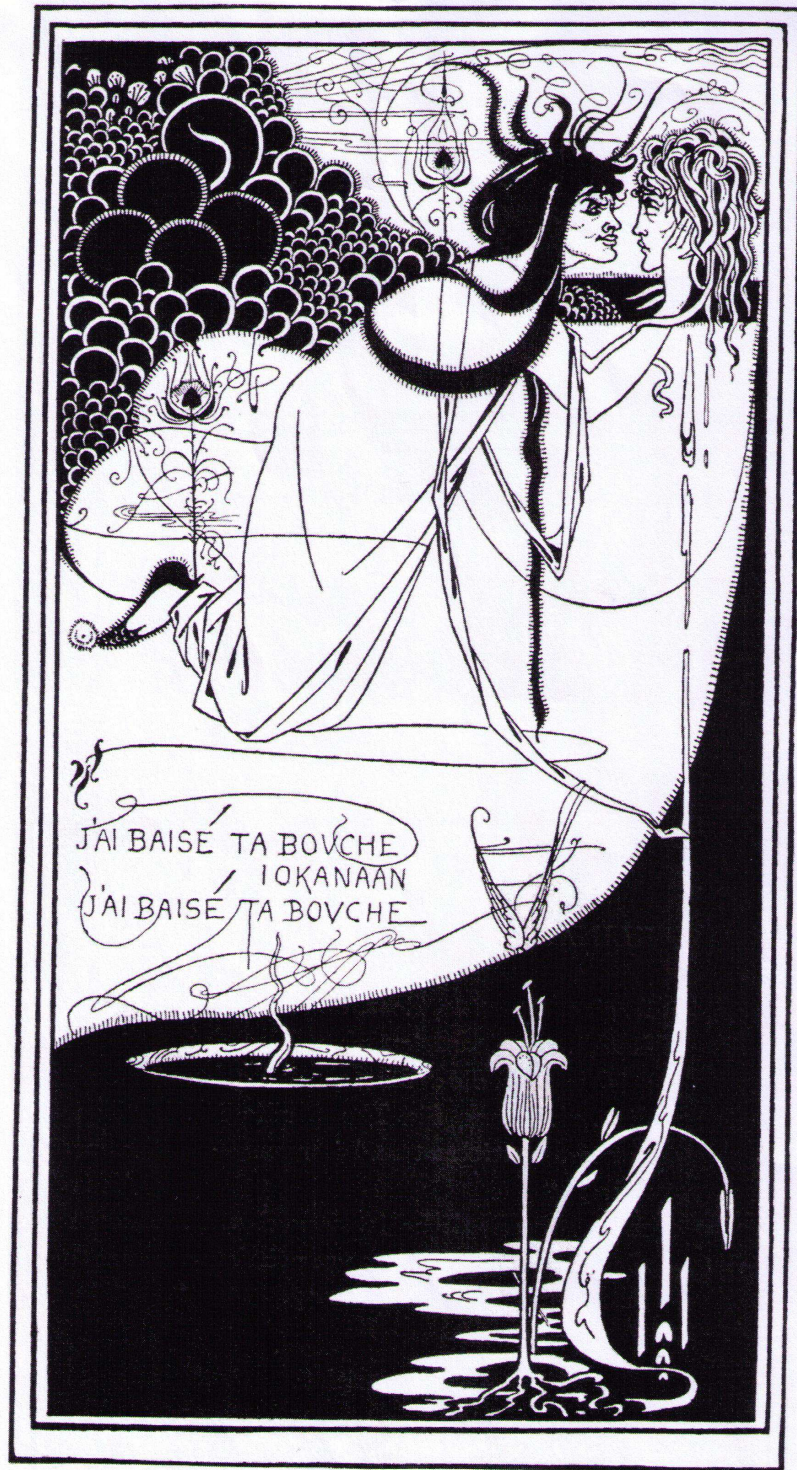


Figure 9: Salomé with John the Baptist's Head (1893)
by Aubrey Beardsley