

**The Aesthetics of Effacement:  
A Comparative Study of the Literary  
Output of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde**

**PhD Thesis 2019**

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## SUMMARY

This thesis marks the first comprehensive comparative study of the literary output of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde, from an intersectional perspective blending genre theory, queer theory, postcolonial theory and Jungian psychoanalysis, to examine the authors as sexually and ethnically closeted while estimating the impact of this closeting on their fiction.

The thesis concludes that Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde have significant parallels in their conception of the artistic process, explicable by a shared exposure anxiety, significant stylistic parallels, explicable by a shared imperative to generate interpretative suspense and facilitate plausibly deniable self-expression, and significant thematic parallels in their treatment of sexuality, ethnicity and identity, explicable by a shared experience of sexual and ethnic closeting. By establishing that all major sexual themes in the fiction of Nikolai Gogol have direct parallels in the fiction of Oscar Wilde, this thesis contributes to the contextualization of Gogol as a closeted writer, while proposing new aesthetic frameworks for the evaluation of Oscar Wilde.

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## Introduction

“The highest criticism is that which reveals in the work of art what the artist had not put there”

- Oscar Wilde, *The Critic as Artist*<sup>1</sup>

“None but an Irishman should ever try tackling Gogol” - Vladimir Nabokov, *Nikolai Gogol*<sup>2</sup>

The goal of this thesis is to make the first comprehensive review of stylistic and thematic parallels in the literary output of Nikolai Gogol<sup>3</sup> and Oscar Wilde, including drama and poetry, within an interpretative framework that potentially explains their correspondence as the result of a shared experience of sexual and ethnic closeting. The fact that Gogol and Wilde belong to two distinct geographical regions, literary traditions and time periods, lessens the possibility that their aesthetic similarities derive from a common culture. The works of Nikolai Gogol (1809-1852) are not cited by critics, or by the author himself, as a major influence on Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), although Wilde wrote approving literary criticism of the work of Dostoevsky,<sup>4</sup> who has been noted for his creative debt to Gogol.<sup>5</sup> Wilde's first performed play, in August 1883

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1 Wilde, Oscar, *De Profundis, The Ballad of Reading Gaol & Other Writings*, p. 243

2 Nabokov, *Nikolai Gogol* p. 38, referring to Gogol's colloquial and absurdist use of the Russian language which Nabokov considers paralleled only by Hiberno-English and therefore suited only to an Irish translator.

3 The standard transliteration from the Russian Николай Гоголь, 'Nikolai Gogol', is used throughout this work in preference to the Ukrainian variant 'Mykola Hohol' (Микола Гоголь), partly because Gogol published in the Russian language, but particularly because this variant is familiar to an English-language readership.

4 Wilde, 'Injury and Insult' (Pall Mall Gazette, 2 May 1887) in Jackson ed., *Aristotle at Afternoon Tea: The Rare Oscar Wilde*, pp. 88-90

5 Early works directly inspired by Gogol include Dostoevsky's *Poor Folk*, a reworking of 'The

in New York, first published 1880, was *Vera, or the Nihilists*, set in Russia and influenced by translations of Russian literature and anarchist propaganda, specifically Sergei Nechayev's *Catechism of a Revolutionary*. Although Wilde's literary appreciation for the novels of Turgenev, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky was mainstream in Victorian Britain,<sup>6</sup> his romanticization of anarchist terrorism as a form of idealism in *Vera* and his idealization of the anarchist philosopher Peter Kropotkin in *De Profundis* (written 1895-97, first published 1905) as "a man with the soul of that beautiful white Christ that seems coming out of Russia"<sup>7</sup> was sharply discordant with the dominant Victorian discourse on the danger, bloodthirstiness and criminality of anarchism, which tended to deny or downplay its political idealism.<sup>8</sup> Considering the absence of references to Gogol within the writings of Wilde, major parallels in the stylistics of the two can more easily be attributed to "convergent evolution", a biological term for unrelated organisms which acquire similar forms due to similar environmental influences. A similar view is adopted by Marina Romanets, who compares Irish and Ukrainian literary traditions through the lens of their shared experience of colonial assimilation pressure and defensive nationalism, rather than claims of direct influence by one literary tradition upon the other.<sup>9</sup> This study adopts Romanets' concept of colonial assimilation pressure as a force productive of literary parallels between the Ukrainian and Irish, while considering its intersection with, and operational

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Overcoat', *The Landlady*, which Karlinsky has attributed to the influence of Gogol's 'Terrible Vengeance' (*The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*, p. 44), and 'Notes From The Underground', whose conception as a first person narrative of mental collapse is closely related to Gogol's 'Diary of a Madman'.

6 Beasley and Bullock eds., *Russia in Britain, 1880–1940*

7 Wilde, *De Profundis, The Ballad of Reading Gaol & Other Writings*, p.84

8 Shpayer-Makov, 'The Reception of Peter Kropotkin in Britain, 1886-1917'

9 Romanets, *Anamorphosic Texts and Reconfigured Visions*

resemblance to, the assimilation pressure of heteronormativity.

Each from a minor gentry background, growing up on the periphery of 19<sup>th</sup>-century empires, in Ukrainian or Irish cultures stereotypically viewed as comically provincial by the imperial culture, both journeyed to the cosmopolitan capital of Empire - St. Petersburg for Gogol and London for Wilde - as young men, and won their greatest acclaim as playwrights satirizing the imperial culture in its own language. The peaks of their careers were followed by periods of social attack and exile which, in many ways, illustrate the dangers of self-revelation for both men. In Wilde's case, social attack and exile followed the revelation of his homosexuality through public trial and imprisonment. Gogol's case was more complex, with self-imposed exile in western Europe following perceived misinterpretation of *The Inspector General*, first performed on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1836 in St. Petersburg, but he too faced scathing social attack after an attempt at philosophical self-revelation with the 1847 publication of *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends*.

In **Part One** of the thesis, titled '**The Haunted Portrait**', both authors' attitude to the artistic process and its impact on their aesthetics is examined and compared. Strikingly, in Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (first serialized 1890, published 1891) and Gogol's short story 'Portrait', the writers choose an identical device in the image of the haunted portrait, and in each case use this device to explore issues of artistic authenticity and corruption of the soul, within a Faustian Gothic horror which poses mimesis itself as a source of dread. Using Noel Carroll's 1990 study of the analytic aesthetics of horror, *The Philosophy of Horror*, **Chapter Two** of the thesis, '**The Artistic Process as Faustian Gothic Horror**', examines both authors' positioning of the art within the generic expectations of Faustian Gothic horror. Can the conventions of the horror genre be used to locate the authors' primary sources of



aversion or anxiety within the artistic process?

The three following chapters undertake a thematic analysis of the artistic process, as it is portrayed in the fiction of Oscar Wilde and Nikolai Gogol. In **Chapter Three, 'Artwork As Site of Exposure'**, both authors' treatment of artworks is compared and contrasted, with particular attention to their recurrent preoccupation with the theme of artwork as site of exposure for its creator's moral character. In **Chapter Four, 'Artistic Creation as Destroyer of Artist'**, the authors' concept of the relationship between artwork and artist is compared and contrasted, with particular attention to both authors' recurrent theme of the artist violently destroyed by artistic creation. Does the violence directed against artists, and its consistent repetition across the authors' fiction, express the intensity of threat perceived in the artistic process? In **Chapter Five, 'Aversion to Spectators'**, both authors' portrayals of the relationship between artist and society is compared and contrasted. Do the authors share an aversion to reader interpretation or spectator scrutiny? This fifth chapter concludes with an assessment of the extent to which Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde may be claimed to exhibit a parallel exposure anxiety in their fiction. Would such exposure anxiety plausibly motivate aversion to reader interpretation and the development of an “aesthetic of effacement” for the purpose of plausibly deniable self-expression?

**Chapter Six, 'The Aesthetics of Effacement'**, which concludes **Part One** of the thesis, surveys the shared aesthetic choices of both authors and suggests a motivation for parallels between the two in a shared impulse towards interpretative suspense and plausible deniability of expression. “Interpretative suspense” is used within this thesis to distinguish suspense generated through uncertainty of interpretation, as opposed to suspense over uncertainty of narrative outcome, established as the conventional goal of drama by Aristotle's *Poetics*. This wider concept

of “interpretative suspense” is proposed to encompass the “hesitation” which Tzvetan Todorov asserts as the defining feature of his genre of 'the Fantastic', a concept which Neil Cornwell has expanded to encompass magic realism and surrealism. It also includes the “cognitive threat” which Noel Carroll proposes as a defining feature of the horror genre, the sustained suspense between plausibility and implausibility which characterizes the poetics of farce, and the uncertainty of symbolic interpretation which is the primary interest of fable. If this reading is accepted, then the literary fiction of Oscar Wilde and Nikolai Gogol sharing a reliance on the genres of fable, farce, horror, Todorov's fantastic and magic realism as templates upon which to innovate, while structuring reader expectations through their generic conventions, may be accounted for by a shared imperative to maximize interpretative suspense. Apart from their convergent choices of genre, both authors make extensive use of the stylistic devices of apophasis and antinomy throughout their fiction. Can the function of all these techniques be described as the heightening of interpretative suspense, plausibly motivated by the exposure anxiety assessed in the preceding chapters?

Aristotle's *Poetics* is the foundational work of Western genre theory, establishing the orthodox European philosophy of dramatic technique, prioritizing the generation of narrative suspense and maximal audience identification with the protagonist. Both Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde had a documented interest in Classical Grecian philosophy, yet both would repeatedly rupture the conventional narrative expectations created by Aristotle's model, through deprioritization of plot and protagonist, and through the negative positioning of identification figures in antagonistic or marginalized roles. Using Aristotle's *Poetics* as the model of conventional narrative expectations, the second half of the sixth chapter examines Gogol and Wilde's techniques for rupturing those expectations, as a strategy for

effacing authorial intent, in parallel to their wholesale generation of interpretative suspense. Aristotle's *Poetics* is chosen over more contemporary Russian and Victorian British theories of narratology as a source for the broader Western cultural expectations of narrative uniting the two authors. Are these aesthetic choices united by their functionality in the effacement of authorial intent, to the point that they qualify as an “aesthetic of effacement”?

From recurring motifs of mistaken identity to stylistic preferences for absurdity and paradox, from the undermining of narratorial omniscience inherent in the 'skaz' style, to the substitution of socially revered concepts with banal inanimate objects, the literary output of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde displays an aesthetic of subversion which questions the possibility of fixed identity, in many respects anticipating the "ontological flicker" which Brian McHale cites as a fundamental feature of postmodernism.<sup>10</sup> If postmodernism is claimed as the product of the twentieth century's "crisis of representation", could an analogous crisis of representation produce parallel features in the work of nineteenth-century writers? **Part Two** of the thesis, '**The Nightingale and the Nose**', is devoted to assessing whether Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde may be described as ethnically and sexually closeted, and how this closeting shapes their work.

'**The Nightingale and the Nose**' opens with **Chapter Seven, 'Diagnosis of Sexuality and Ethnicity'**, a survey of the dominant sexual and ethnic cultures of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century British and Russian Empires, as both censorship cultures and assimilation pressures, and the response of both authors to those cultures. Does the imperial ethnic discourse represent an anglonormativity or russonormativity analogous to the heteronormativity of the dominant sexual discourse, and could this plausibly motivate

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10 see McHale, Brian, *Postmodernist Fiction*

high overlap in the symbolism used by Gogol and Wilde to represent the ethnic and the sexual? The presumption of Gogol's homosexuality forms the basis of Simon Karlinsky's 1976 study *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*, giving grounds to explore a potentially closer parallel between Gogol and Oscar Wilde, in a shared alienated perspective of closeted homosexuality. Nikolai Gogol's later works, from the mid-1830s onwards, do not overtly express the author's Ukrainian identity and explicitly identify their narrator and characters as Russian (though in a culture where this term was potentially inclusive of the "Little Russian", or Ukrainian), while Oscar Wilde's published fiction does not overtly express his Irish identity or Irish themes. When considered alongside both authors' consistent private identification as Ukrainian or Irish, this effacement justifies their reading as ethnically closeted in their most successful fiction, a contention supported by their reception as Russian or English respectively by significant critics of the period. Was this ethnic crossing engineered by the authors themselves, or primarily the creation of russonormative or anglonormative assimilation pressure? Was it exaggerated to express the psychology of more intensely closeted sexuality?

A published author's self-expression may be censored unconsciously by psychological dissociation, or consciously censored in response to anticipated social stigma, or legally censored by the state. Published literature is a public text, shaped by the assumed psychology of the intended reader as much as by the psychology of the author. Published fiction was cited by the state as evidence of its author's homosexual sympathies in Oscar Wilde's libel trial. The 1849 trial of Charles Gavan Duffy for publishing revolutionary Irish nationalist writings, particularly those of Oscar Wilde's mother, Jane "Speranza" Wilde, like the 1847 arrest of Gogol's admirer Taras Shevchenko for revolutionary Ukrainian nationalist writing, demonstrate that

revolutionary Irish or Ukrainian nationalism was not only socially stigmatized, but actively legally suppressed in the 19th century, though works of cultural nationalism were openly published in early 19<sup>th</sup> century Ukraine and late 19<sup>th</sup> century Ireland.

The products of internal psychological repression and those of enforced legal repression, of subconscious conflict and conscious conflict, may be expressed by the same symbolic (or 'archetypal') structures of the imagination. In the research of psychoanalyst Carl Jung, the unconscious psychological narratives of dreams were found to echo the forms of conscious, public narratives in mythology and literature, both using the same archetypes to reconcile repressed aspects of self: "fantasies guided by unconscious regulators coincide with the records of man's mental activity as known to us from tradition and ethnological research".<sup>11</sup> Jung's extensive empirical study of the patterns in which these psychological dynamics are typically symbolized has produced a model of the imagination's response to repression that is highly applicable to the works of both Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde, explicable by a shared experience of closeting, and invoked within literary criticism of Oscar Wilde by both Patricia Behrendt and Clifton Snider.

Oscar Wilde's first published book, 1881's *Poems*, is structured by five long poems, 'The Garden of Eros', 'The Burden of Itys', 'Charmides', 'Panthea' and 'Humanitad'. In Patricia Behrendt's 1991 study *Oscar Wilde: Eros and Aesthetics*, she claims that "critical assumptions that Wilde's use of myth is superficially formal have undermined full recognition of the organized pattern of sexual motifs which he employs"<sup>12</sup> and identifies the five epic poems in *Poems* as a Jungian cycle: "in Jungian terms, the poet has traced the individuation of the narrator from blissful ignorance,

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11 Jung, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, p. 203

12 Behrendt, *Oscar Wilde: Eros and Aesthetics* p. 28

through the encounter with the dark side of the psyche, and toward a state of consciousness in which the interior aspects of the self seem reconciled".<sup>13</sup> However, she does not develop this observation by an application of Jungian concepts to the detailed analysis of the poetry. A dismissive critical attitude towards Wilde's *Poems*, as unoriginal and lacking substance, was inaugurated by its rejection by the Oxford Union on grounds of plagiarism, as well as by repeated accusations of insincerity in its original reviews.<sup>14</sup> As late as 2011, Jarlath Killeen still refers to Wilde's "neglected poetry" in his introduction to critical evaluations of the author's work.<sup>15</sup> This thesis, by contrast, analyses *Poems* as a Jungian individuation cycle directly expressive of its author's experience of psychological repression and fundamental to his later symbolic vocabulary, in which each poem corresponds to a stage of the Jungian cycle: Lost Paradise ('The Garden of Eros'); Dissociation ('The Burden of Itys'); Realization of the Shadow ('Charmides'); Individuation ('Panthea') and Regressive Restoration of Persona ('Humanitad').

In contrast to studies that prioritize Wilde's critically and commercially successful works, particularly *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*, this thesis therefore uses his first published work, *Poems*, as the primary source for Wilde's personal symbolism, reflecting the chronological evolution of the author's own artistic imagination. The conceptual cycle established in Wilde's *Poems* mirrors an approximate chronological cycle observable in the writing of Nikolai Gogol, from the motifs of Lost Paradise in the idylls of *Hanz Küchelgarten*, through the themes of Dissociation and Realization of Shadow in his 'Ukrainian tales', toward the Individuation narrative and alienated persona of *Dead Souls*. **Chapters Eight** to

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13 Behrendt, p. 55

14 Fitzsimons, *Wilde's Women*, pp. 91-92

15 Killeen, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 2

**Twelve**, therefore, use the framework of the Jungian cycle detected in Wilde's *Poems* to structure a detailed analysis of thematic correspondences between both authors across their entire literary output, assessing how far they are explicable by Jung's model: **Chapter Eight** is titled '*The Garden of Eros: Lost Paradise*', **Chapter Nine** '*The Burden of Itys: Dissociation*', **Chapter Ten** '*Charmides: Realization of the Shadow*', **Chapter Eleven** '*Panthea: Individuation*' and **Chapter Twelve** '*Humanitad: Regressive Restoration of Persona*'. Can the repressed element in each author's archetypal narrative be shown to be repeatedly associated with the Irish/Ukrainian and with the homoerotic, while the suppressive element is consistently associated with the Russian/English and the heterosexual?

A direct comparison of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde may contribute to scholarship by opening new perspectives. The rapid decline of the Irish language has long forced the recognition of an Anglo-Irish literature, though that term is now outmoded, applied in this thesis to the literature of the Protestant Irish gentry class which administered the British Empire in Ireland and to which Oscar Wilde belonged. Comparison with this definition of the Anglo-Irish could enable greater recognition of the analogous ethnic position of the Russified Ukrainian gentry class which administered the Russian Empire in Ukraine, and to which Nikolai Gogol belonged. The application of Anglo-Irish frameworks to Russo-Ukrainian<sup>16</sup> writing thus has potential to clarify a distinctive Russo-Ukrainian canon. Likewise, extensive scholarship on effaced homosexuality in the writings of Oscar Wilde can potentially illuminate this less-explored issue in the work of Nikolai Gogol. If the distinctive

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16 The term 'Russo-Ukrainian' is not widely used, but created in analogy to the use of 'Anglo-Irish', here referring specifically to literature written in the Russian language by the Russified Ukrainian gentry class under the Russian Empire. It is also applied to Gogol in Edyta Bojanowska's 2007 work *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism*

features of Gogol's treatment of sexuality can each be shown to have close parallel in the writing of Oscar Wilde, this would establish Gogol's writing as plausible manifestation of closeted homoerotic consciousness, though not positive evidence of the writer having such consciousness. Conversely, Nikolai Gogol, as the more obviously ontologically radical writer, has been the subject of extensive stylistic analysis. Exploring Oscar Wilde's use of similar techniques, within more conventional generic frameworks, can highlight the underappreciated ontological subversion of Wilde's work, while simultaneously contextualizing the function of Gogol's more radical aesthetic and its potential utility in closeted writing. The **Conclusion** of this thesis assesses how far these goals have been achieved.

In his 2000 summary of recent research on Oscar Wilde, Ian Small claims that "Wilde the Irish nationalist, Wilde the homosexual, Wilde the craftsman-writer, as well as Wilde the plagiarist [...] cannot be all of these things at the same time".<sup>17</sup> The contention of this thesis is not only that Oscar Wilde *could* be all of these things at the same time, but that Wilde's Irish nationalism and homosexuality motivated his aesthetic choices, as a craftsman-writer required to closet his identity to achieve commercial success, with plagiarism/pastiche being only one of his many strategies to efface authorial intent. Furthermore, Wilde's voluntary closeting of his Irish identity in his literary output may not be a direct expression of his disengagement from Irishness, but rather explained by its mental association with a homosexual identity whose closeting was enforced, suggested by Wilde's repeated equation of the sexual and ethnic in his work. Wilde's multiple identities not only coincide, but inextricably inform and constrain one another, making it difficult to interpret any one aspect in isolation. Similarly, while there have been studies examining Nikolai Gogol as a Ukrainian

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<sup>17</sup> Small, *Oscar Wilde: Recent Research*, p. 12



nationalist (Tomenko, Bojanowska), as a Russian realist (Belinsky, Gukovsky), as a closeted homosexual (Karlinsky) and as a formal innovator (Nabokov, Mann, Belii, Eikhenbaum), there has not, to my knowledge, been any study that examines Gogol as a Ukrainian nationalist homosexual who utilized formal innovation to closet his identity within an aesthetic of Russian realism. Highlighting Gogol's parallels with the homosexual nationalism of Oscar Wilde offers one possible approach toward such a profoundly intersectional reading. The suggestion in this thesis, that the authors' distinctive expression of their nationalism cannot be understood outside of their mental equation of nationalism and sexuality, as their aesthetics cannot be understood outside of the censorship pressures which compelled them, argues that intersectional reading is not only desirable but mandatory for the full appreciation of any single aspect of the authors' work.

All quotes that I have translated personally from Russian or Ukrainian are supplied in the original language in the footnotes, otherwise the translators are cited. Except where Russian names have a conventional spelling in English (such as Nikolai Gogol or Dostoevsky), the Library of Congress System of Transliteration (Appendix 1) is used for transliterated cyrillic terms.

## Chapter 1 – Literature Review

This literature review summarizes the arguments of critics of Wilde and Gogol in the area of genre theory, sexuality, ethnicity and Jungian psychoanalysis which were consulted for this thesis. **Section 1.1** examines the scarcity of comparative studies of the two authors, and accounts for it by reviewing the critical reception of Gogol and Wilde as Russian realist and aestheticist writers respectively, divided by the different generic expectations of these schools rather than united by their potentially shared imperatives as closeted authors. **Section 1.2** reviews works of genre theory used in this thesis to locate exposure anxiety and define the hallmarks of a putative “aesthetic of effacement” dictated by the impulse toward plausible deniability of expression. **Section 1.3** reviews critical approaches to analysis of both authors' sexuality and its potential closeting, concluding that the more advanced study of closeted sexuality within the work of Oscar Wilde may productively be applied to Nikolai Gogol. **Section 1.4** reviews critical approaches to analysis of both authors' ethnicity and its potential closeting, concluding that the more advanced study of closeted ethnicity within the work of Nikolai Gogol may productively be applied to Oscar Wilde. **Section 1.5** investigates the intersection of postcolonial and queer theory, positing the existence of a distinctive “metrocolonial homoerotic” canon whose expression of sexuality and ethnicity is distinctively fused. **Section 1.6** reviews the Jungian individuation cycle, suggesting that the psychological dynamics of repression, as formulated by Carl Gustav Jung, are extensively explanatory of shared thematic patterning in both authors' fiction.

### 1.1 The Comparison of Gogol and Wilde

This thesis marks the first comparative study of the entire fictional output of both authors. There are, however, two published works of criticism comparing Wilde and Gogol: first, a paper by Diana Nagyová, titled "The Use of Evil As a Subject Matter in the Creation of Beauty in the Portraits of O. Wilde and N.V. Gogol", which is available online; secondly, the paper "The 'Portrait' of M. Hohol and 'The Portrait of Dorian Gray' of O. Wilde: creative inheritance and artistic discovery" by Olena Mykolaivna Chaika of Glukhiv, which was given at the 10th International Conference on "The Creative Heritage of Mykola Hohol and the Modern World" in Nizhyn on 13-15 May 2009. Both these works are limited to comparison of the treatment of the haunted portrait as shared artistic metaphor in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and 'Portrait', and neither addresses exposure anxiety as a core conceptual feature of both portrayals of the artistic process. It is the analysis of the writers' shared use of the haunted portrait as metaphor for exposure anxiety which I take as my point of departure for the wider comparison of their conception of the artistic process, which takes up the bulk of **Part One** of this thesis, **'The Haunted Portrait'**.

Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde have been ascribed to divergent literary traditions, which may explain the scarcity of comparative studies of the two. The popular critical image of Gogol was inaugurated by his contemporary Vissarion Belinsky, who regarded Gogol as a founder of the school of Russian realism, in his rejection of heroic subjects and focus on the everyday, the poetics of the mass and the abject "little man" hero. Belinsky's conception of Gogol as a social satirist may have led him to reject the author's own conservative political statements in *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends*, with Belinsky's widely circulated 'Letter to Gogol' launching a tradition of regarding the explicitly articulated conservative politics of *Selected Passages* as an abandonment or reversal of the assumed progressive politics of

Gogol's earlier fiction. This reading was reinforced by the Soviet critic G. A. Gukovsky in his 1959 book *The Realism of Gogol*, who was politically motivated to vindicate Gogol for a Soviet literary canon by presenting him as a critical satirist of tsarist realities, necessitating acceptance of Belinsky's narrative of Gogol's later ideological reversal. This thesis suggests that Gogol's literary "aesthetic of effacement" may actually have been symptomatic of sexual or ethnic closeting, while Belinsky attributed it to an experience of political censorship under Tsarist autocracy, prompting his misinterpretation of Gogol as an anti-establishment social realist author.

A counterbalance to the Russian realist interpretation of Gogol was provided by Vladimir Nabokov's 1973 *Nikolai Gogol*, published in the USA, whose primary thrust was the reclaiming of Gogol as a "prose poet" master of aesthetics, whose work should not be read ideologically. Among the major English-language studies of Gogol are Donald Fanger's 1979 *The Creation of Nikolai Gogol*, Richard Peace's 1981 *The Enigma of Gogol: An Examination of the Writings of N.V. Gogol and their Place in the Russian Literary Tradition* and Robert Maguire's 1994 *Exploring Gogol*, which offer introductory surveys of Russian critical opinion on the total literary output of Gogol, mixed with original evaluations by these Western critics, influenced by the aestheticist position of Nabokov to counter the Soviet emphasis on social criticism. However, Nabokov's influential aestheticist approach shares with the Russian realist and Soviet approaches its unwillingness to analyse Gogol as a closeted writer.

Aesthetic analysis of Oscar Wilde, as suggested by Ian Small's reviews of critical research, 1993's *Oscar Wilde Revalued: An Essay on New Materials & Methods of Research* and 2000's *Oscar Wilde: Recent Research*, as well as Jarlath Killeen's 2011 anthology of critical essays, *Oscar Wilde*, has evaluated Wilde through the author's traceable interests in aestheticism, Celtic folklore, Classical Grecian literature and other

literary sources. By comparing Wilde to Nikolai Gogol, an author not proposed to be a direct influence on Wilde, this thesis shifts its primary focus to the psychological forces impacting the authors' aesthetic choices.

The foundational assumption of the Russian realist movement is that its primary goal is the mimetic representation of social reality to enable social criticism, while the foundational assumption of the aestheticist movement is that its primary goal is the creation of abstracted beauty and imaginative interest. This perceived divergence may explain why Gogol and Wilde have not been the subject of extensive comparative study prior to this thesis. Nevertheless, this thesis contends that both authors' aesthetic choices may be explained by a shared impulse to generate interpretative suspense and deprioritization, explicable by their utility in closeted writing. The goal of this thesis is to integrate aesthetic analysis of both authors within a potentially explanatory framework, established by observable evidence of exposure anxiety and sexual and ethnic closeting in their literary fiction.

## **1.2 Genre Theory As Expressive Of Exposure Anxiety**

The decision by both authors to use the genre of Gothic horror to frame their portrayals of art in 'Portrait' and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* suggests perceived sources of anxiety within the creative process itself. Noel Carroll's 1990 book *The Philosophy of Horror* creates a paradigm of analytic aesthetics for the horror genre, analogous to that created by Aristotle for tragedy in *Poetics*. He defines horror as a primarily narrative (literary, theatrical or film) genre stretching from the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century "English gothic novel, the German *Schauer-roman* and French *roman noir*" to the

present day.<sup>1</sup> Works by both Gogol and Wilde fit Carroll's definition of the horror genre, with Carroll explicitly identifying *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as a work of horror. Carroll describes two archetypal horror plots, the “overreacher plot” in which a character's own overreaching desires cause them to transgress natural or cosmic boundaries, becoming the catalyst of their doom, and the “complex discovery plot”, concerned with the onset, revelation and confrontation of a monstrous being. In **Chapter Two**, I argue that Nikolai Gogol's 'Portrait' and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* conform to the generic expectations of both plots, featuring an overreaching Faustian bargain as catalyst of doom and a haunted portrait as monstrous being. I therefore use the conventions of the horror genre, as defined by Carroll, to estimate the intended sources of aversion and anxiety within both texts' treatment of the artistic process, including the extent to which they cluster around the concepts of mimesis, scrutiny and exposure. **Chapters Three, Four and Five** are occupied by a comparative study of the thematic treatment of artwork, artist and spectators across the authors' work, to assess the extent to which it conforms to a hypothesis of shared exposure anxiety.

**Part One** concludes with an analysis in **Chapter Six** of how exposure anxiety, observed within both artists' fictional depictions of the artistic process in the preceding analysis, shapes and constrains their shared aesthetic choices. In spite of the perceived contrast between the artistic schools of Russian realism and aestheticism, Gogol and Wilde exhibit high convergence in their choices of genre, centering on works of farce (Gogol's *Inspector General*, 1836, and *Marriage*, 1842, Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, first performed 1895 in London), Gothic horror (Gogol's 'Terrible Vengeance', 1832, 'Vii', 1835, and 'Portrait', 1835/1842, Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian*

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1 Carroll, Noel, *The Philosophy of Horror*, p. 4

*Gray*, 1890/1891), folklore (Gogol's *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*, first published 1831, Wilde's *The Happy Prince And Other Tales*, first published 1888, and *A House of Pomegranates*, first published 1891) and magic realism, in the broad sense of realist treatment of supernatural subject matter, (Gogol's 'The Overcoat', 1842, and 'The Nose', 1836, and Wilde's 'The Canterville Ghost', first serialized 1887). In the case of both Gogol and Wilde, their regular rupture of the expectations of the genre within which they were working potentially transcends any restrictive view of genre. The above generic categorizations, however, refer to the basic genres which the authors are using as template and which thereby structure audience expectations through presumed familiarity with the genre's conventions. This thesis proposes that the shared characteristic of the genres which the authors are selecting as template is their primary reliance on "interpretative suspense", defined here as suspense generated between interpretative frameworks, as opposed to narrative suspense generated between predicted outcomes. The work of genre theorists is invoked to justify the contention that interpretative suspense is the primary mode of the genres in question.

Noel Carroll's concept of "cognitive threat" in *The Philosophy of Horror*, as his proposed defining feature of the horror genre, is characterized by the reader's hesitation between irreconcilable interpretative frameworks, with the monstrous being presenting "cognitive threat" through its interstitial conflation of categories of interpretation, such as the living and the dead in vampires and zombies, or the animate and inanimate in haunted objects. Tzvetan Todorov's 1973 structuralist work *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to A Literary Genre*, posits the existence of an entire literary genre defined by sustained hesitation between the natural and supernatural interpretative frameworks. Todorov's definition of 'the fantastic', that the work should present a sustained and unresolved hesitation between natural and supernatural explanation, can be applied to

works by Wilde and Gogol including 'Sorochinsky Market', 'Diary of a Madman', 'Portrait' (the 1842 rewrite) and 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime'. Todorov's theory has been elaborated by later commentators including Eric Rabkin, Christine Brooke-Rose and Rosemary Jackson. Neil Cornwell's 1990 work, *The Literary Fantastic: from Gothic to Postmodernism*, proposes "the fantastic" as a literary mode rather than a genre, and briefly raises the possibility of hesitation between rational and irrational interpretative frameworks (in surrealist or magic realist writing, a genre to which Gogol's 'Nose' could be ascribed, as could Wilde's 'The Canterville Ghost'), in his expanded conception of "the fantastic". The concept of "interpretative suspense" in this thesis would encompass the "cognitive threat" intrinsic to Carroll's definition of the horror genre, the "hesitation" intrinsic to Todorov's definition of the 'fantastic' genre, Cornwell's expansion of the fantastic mode to surrealism and magic realism, the sustained suspense between plausibility and implausibility that is the dominant mode of farce, as well as the suspense over symbolic interpretation which is the primary interest of fable, thus potentially motivating Gogol and Wilde's shared confinement within all these genres. This suggestion is explored in greater detail in **Chapter Six** of this thesis.

The comparatively greater ontological radicalism of Nikolai Gogol's writing has formed the basis of more developed genre criticism than that of Oscar Wilde. Boris Eikhenbaum's 1919 article 'How Gogol's *Overcoat* Was Made' is regarded as a foundational work of the critical school of Russian formalism, categorizing the author's deployment of *skaz* mimicry of orality in narration, while other classic Russian works of Gogolian aesthetic theory include the Soviet poet Andrei Belyi's 1934 work *The Mastery of Gogol*, and critic Iurii Mann's 1978 *The Poetics of Gogol*, which categorizes Gogol's variations of the fantastic, applies Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of ambivalence, travesty and carnivalization, and makes a detailed analysis of themes and



characterization. The 1989 volume *Languages of the Unsayable*, edited by Budick and Iser, explores "negativity" as a literary concept, whose usage has been charted in the work of Gogol by the 1999 volume *Gogol: Exploring Absence*, edited by Sven Spieker. Because literary negativity generates interpretative suspense, through the withholding of signs or the generation of contradictory signs, this aspect of aesthetics is particularly significant to a discourse on closeting. In Spieker's volume, Renate Lachmann's ideas of hypertrophic and hypotrophic negativity and Mikhail Epshtein's concepts of artistic satire, artistic apophasis and artistic irony, as categories of a negative aesthetic applied to Nikolai Gogol, are also highly productive when applied to Oscar Wilde, opening inquiry into the structural instability concealed within his more superficially conventional writing.

Florina Tufescu's *Oscar Wilde's Plagiarism: The Triumph of Art Over Ego* chronicles repeated instances of plagiarism throughout Wilde's literary output, sufficiently overt to be considered a modernist performative plagiarism rather than a covert absence of originality. By contextualizing this plagiarism within the borrowings of authors with which Wilde was familiar, as well as the emerging modernist philosophy of art, Tufescu prioritizes its generation of artifice rather than its potential as a strategy for effaced authorial self-expression of stigmatized aspects of self.

By applying paradigms of aesthetic theory to the work of Oscar Wilde that were previously applied to Nikolai Gogol, particularly through detailed analysis of Wilde's use of antinomy, apophasis, hypertrophy and hypotrophy as strategies to intensify interpretative suspense and deprioritization, this thesis contributes to the study of Oscar Wilde. At the same time, the tradition of studying Nikolai Gogol's aesthetic techniques from a purely formal perspective, influentially championed by Vladimir Nabokov and the school of Russian formalism, may be counterbalanced by his comparison with

Oscar Wilde, whose sexual and ethnic closeting is better documented and more routinely read into the significance of his writing. Examination of the sexual and ethnic closeting of both authors occupies **Part Two** of the thesis, '**The Nightingale and the Nose**'.

### **1.3 Analysis of Sexuality**

**Chapter Seven** reviews evidence of the authors' sexual and ethnic identification to assess how far each can be diagnosed or claimed to be closeted. The public documentation of Wilde's homosexuality through his trials has led to frequent literary analysis of the impact of this homosexuality on his writing. Patricia Behrendt's 1991 study, *Oscar Wilde: Eros and Aesthetics*, sought to define the nature of Wilde's erotic drive through its expression in his first volume of poetry and his Socratic dialogues, to counterbalance scholarly focus on his more commercially and critically successful works. In her analysis of the Socratic dialogues ('The Critic as Artist' and 'The Decay of Lying'), Behrendt reads the pedagogic relationship established between the male characters as a displaced expression of the dynamics of their putative pederastic relationship. In her study of Wilde's *Poems*, Behrendt identifies a Jungian individuation cycle: this inspired my selection of *Poems* as the framing device for the final five chapters of this thesis, since I observed the cycle's thematic parallels within the fiction of Nikolai Gogol. Behrendt's analysis notably lacks any reference to a culture of compulsory heterosexuality, as a force constraining or persecuting the homosexual writer. In the absence of such a concept, the poetry's repeated reference to sacrifice, deadness and suffering are interpreted as directly representative of Wilde's own desires, allegedly demonstrating their predatory and egotistic nature. Behrendt also reads female figures as directly representative of Wilde's putative misogyny toward women, without

taking account of their enforced usage in sexual narratives under compulsory heterosexuality, as a force potentially distorting the female image in closeted homosexual writing, an issue which this thesis extensively addresses in **Chapters Eight to Twelve**.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's 1994 work of queer theory, *The Epistemology of the Closet*, includes a chapter on *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in which she analyses the scopophilic dynamics established between the men as a displaced representation of their putative sexual dynamics, the same approach which Behrendt applied to the pedagogic dynamics of Wilde's Socratic dialogues. Thus, Dorian Gray's scopophilic attraction to his own portrait becomes, for Kosofsky Sedgwick, representative of a modern concept of homosexuality as an attraction based on similarity, while Hallward and Wotton's scopophilic attraction to the uninitiated Dorian represents a classical concept of pederasty, as an attraction based on differentiation. Sedgwick suggests the maxim that

Repeatedly to ask how certain categorizations work, which enactments they are performing and what relations they are creating, rather than what they essentially mean, has been my principal strategy.<sup>2</sup>

While Kosofsky Sedgwick's apparent anti-intentionalism might seem to preclude the use of a Jungian psychoanalytic framework, her "phenomenological" approach to close-reading the symbolic relations and categorizations established within the text, without seeking to impose external meaning, mirrors Jung's own philosophy of dream interpretation expressed in his final work, *Man and his Symbols*: "only the

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2 Kosofsky Sedgwick, Eve, *The Epistemology of the Closet*, p. 27

material that is clearly and visibly part of a dream should be used in interpreting it".<sup>3</sup>

In his 2006 study of early modern closeted writing, *Closeted Writing and Lesbian and Gay Literature*, David Robinson phrases the problem of anti-intentionalist tendencies within queer theory as follows:

Another [...] problem with avoiding the issue of authorial intention, and thus of closeted writing, is that it deforms lesbian and gay criticism. [...] Our abandonment of speculation about authorial intention has not been freely chosen. After all, Barthes and Foucault, while undeniably brilliant, were also gay men who remained closeted for most of their lives and in most of their writings, and their theories and methods are partially constrained by that closeting, as they are partially enabled by it.<sup>4</sup>

Robinson's approach may be characterized as 'neo-intentionalist', in seeking to reclaim authorial intention as a valid subject of inquiry, within the wider panorama of meanings offered by a given text, rather than to limit the text's meaning to authorial intent. His characterization of certain scholars as "closeted intentionalists" points to the extent to which writing, as an act of communication, inherently requires an assumption of intended meaning. The fact that any hypothesis of authorial intent must be qualified, provisional and subject to revision, should not invalidate it as a subject of academic inquiry; the same can be said of a hypothesis in any scientific field from physics to linguistics, and is a precondition of the scientific method itself.

Neil McKenna's 2003 book *The Secret Life of Oscar Wilde* situates Wilde within a Victorian 'Uranian' milieu in which Grecian pederasty was routinely invoked as

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3 Jung, *Man and his Symbols*, p. 29

4 Robinson, *Closeted Writing and Lesbian and Gay Literature*, p. 82

metaphor and cultural precedent for homoeroticism, rendering Wilde's use of these tropes in his fiction into an open code to initiated readers. The focus of this study is to demonstrate that Wilde's sexual coding has conceptual parallels to the more obscure and idiosyncratic coding with which Nikolai Gogol treats sexuality, potentially explicable by shared psychological forces of sexual closeting, an alternate focus from McKenna's detailed chronicling of the author's biographical sexuality.

Nikolai Gogol's homoerotic fragment 'Nights at the Villa', unpublished during his lifetime, was included in the 1996 anthology of Russian gay writing *Out of the Blue: Russia's Hidden Gay Literature*, edited by Kevin Moss, thus effectively adding Gogol to a proposed canon of gay Russian writers recognized in the West. Simon Karlinsky's 1976 work, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*, is exclusively dedicated to the theme of Gogol's putative homosexuality and its influence in shaping his work. Karlinsky does not, however, apply any unified methodology to the interpretation of sexual themes in the writing of Nikolai Gogol. He sometimes cites the work of Freudian critics to interpret sexual significance in Gogol's symbolism, but does not systematically apply Freudian interpretation. Most notably, Karlinsky, as Behrendt does for Wilde, reads female figures as directly representative of their author's attitude to women, within a discourse of alleged misogyny. Ethnicity is also read as directly representative of Gogol's attitude to ethnic groups, indicative of xenophobia, rather than as potentially symbolic of internal psychosexual conflict. Karlinsky does not acknowledge the difficulty in differentiating Gogol's internal self-censorship from socially imposed censorship, reading all evidence of sexual suppression as expressive of the author's internalized homophobia. This assumed internalized homophobia is, in turn, proposed as the major factor in Gogol's final psychological breakdown and

creative crisis.<sup>5</sup>

Eleanor Fitzsimons' 2015 study *Wilde's Women: How Oscar Wilde Was Shaped By The Women He Knew* documents Wilde's supportive relationships with women and proto-feminist politics, which give grounds for questioning Patricia Behrendt's reading of Wilde's putative misogyny. In view of this evidence of Wilde's commitment to female sexual liberation and feminist politics, extensive parallels between the portrayal of women in the fiction of Wilde and Gogol would likewise cast doubt on Karlinsky's view that Gogol's fiction is direct evidence of his putative misogyny. The generally more advanced state of queer theory in the West, and of its application to Oscar Wilde in particular, raises the possibility that new perspectives on Nikolai Gogol might be opened through his comparison to Wilde, and through the application of techniques to the analysis of sexuality in the writings of Nikolai Gogol such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's phenomenological approach. While the first part of **Chapter Seven** surveys the extent to which both authors may be conclusively defined as sexually closeted, the second part is dedicated to surveying evidence of their ethnic closeting and its interpretation.

#### **1.4 Analysis of Ethnicity**

Both authors may be claimed to be ethnically closeted in their major fiction, through omission of depictions of their homeland, its people or culture, an approach whose closeting utility can be illustrated by noting the reception of the authors by some contemporary critics as being, respectively, Russian and English. Oscar Wilde omitted direct representation of Irish themes from his entire fictional output, while expressing

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5 “his fear of his homosexual inclinations and his suppression of them is one of the principal themes of his writings, one of the main causes of his personal tragedy, and a contributing factor to his death”, Karlinsky, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*, pp. 15-16

Irish nationalist sympathies as a private individual, lecturer and essayist. His express political involvement in the Eighty Club, to support Gladstone's Liberal Party after their adoption of a Home Rule Bill for Ireland, is discussed in Thomas Wright's 2014 article 'Party Political Animal: Oscar Wilde, Gladstonian Liberal and Eighty Club Member'.<sup>6</sup> Nikolai Gogol established his reputation with folkloric images of Ukraine, but substantially increased in prestige when shifting to Russian topics in 1836, after which he too omitted direct depiction of Ukraine and even reimagined the ethnicity of the Ukrainian Cossacks as Russian in his 1842 rewrite of *Taras Bulba*. Marina Romanets' *Anamorphotic Texts and Reconfigured Visions: Improvised Traditions in Contemporary Ukrainian and Irish Literature* stands as one example of a wider comparison between Irish and Ukrainian literary traditions, but focusses on Ukrainian language texts rather than Russo-Ukrainian texts. This thesis therefore contributes to scholarship as a detailed comparative study of Anglo-Irish and Russo-Ukrainian fiction.

The reclamation of the fiction of Oscar Wilde into the Irish canon was first undertaken by his contemporaries William Butler Yeats and George Bernard Shaw. In 1970's *Oscar Wilde, the Critical Heritage*, edited by Karl Beckson, reviews by Yeats are preserved in which he locates Wilde's Irishness within his apparently ethnically unmarked work, as expressed by both the alienated consciousness displayed in his satire of the English and in the allegedly characteristically Celtic quality of his rhetorical mastery. My main sources for biographical information on Oscar Wilde are H. Montgomery Hyde's *Oscar Wilde: A Biography*, Richard Ellmann's *Oscar Wilde* and the transcripts from Wilde's libel trial supplied in Merlin Holland's *Irish Peacock & Scarlet Marquess; The Real Trial of Oscar Wilde*. Each speculates on biographical

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<sup>6</sup> Wright, 'Party Political Animal', *Times Literary Supplement*, June 6, 2014

sources for plot points or characters within Wilde's literary work. Both Ellmann and Hyde acknowledge Wilde as Irish, but neither places emphasis on this identity or its impact on his writing. Alan Warner's 1981 *A Guide to Anglo-Irish Literature* regards Wilde as Irish, but relegates him and Bernard Shaw to a category of "outsiders" (those outside the country or choosing external themes for their writing) who are excluded from the consideration of Warner's study. Davis Coakley's 1994 work, *Oscar Wilde: The Importance of Being Irish*, more securely anchors Wilde in the Irish canon through a survey of his Irish sources and influences. Jarlath Killeen's 2011 *Oscar Wilde* is an anthology of critical essays on the author, with many Irish critics contributing. The essays are divided according to the genres in which Wilde wrote, with additional essays on Wilde's biography and Wilde as a Victorian, but no dedicated chapter on his Irishness. In the introduction, Killeen locates Wilde's attraction to folklore and aphoristic imagination as characteristically Irish, recalling Yeats' approach.

George Grabowicz's *Toward a History of Ukrainian Literature: Articles, Essays, Polemics*, which establishes Ukrainian literature as part of the postcolonial critical canon, reclaims Gogol's Ukrainian literary identity by locating his stylistic choices within a Ukrainian model established by Ivan Kotliarevsky, and explores the potential Ukrainian nationalism in Gogol's concept of contrast between a heroic Cossack past and a present characterized by an aesthetic of deadness. Mykola Tomenko's study, *The Ukrainian Romantic Mykola Hohol*, gathers evidence of Gogol's Ukrainian Romanticism by surveying explicit reference to Ukraine in his private correspondence and published writings, and includes the text of his father's surviving Ukrainian language play, recalling Davis Coakley's approach to reclaiming Wilde for the Irish canon. Grigorii Samoilenko's *Nikolai Gogol and Nyzhin* is a survey of the evidence concerning Gogol's time studying in Nyzhin, which proposes the provincial Ukrainian



city as the inspiration for the locations of *The Inspector General* and the city of N. in the first volume of *Dead Souls*, implying the deliberate closeting of their Ukrainian origin by the writer.

Edyta Bojanowska's *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism* draws on Gogol's published fiction and non-fiction as a whole, as well as private writing including correspondence, noting points of contrast between private and public expressions of ethnic allegiance or concepts of national relations, while surveying critical reception of Gogol by his contemporaries as a factor pressuring his transition from explicit Ukrainian themes to declared Russian allegiance. Her final analysis implies ethnic closeting, as it suggests Gogol's "lifelong cultural belonging to Ukraine"<sup>7</sup> in contrast to a civic commitment to Russian nationalism which was "not a deeply and sincerely held conviction, but a rather contrived aspect of his public persona."<sup>8</sup> As Karlinsky did with homosexuality, Bojanowska concludes her dedicated study of Gogol's nationalism by positing it as a primary identity crisis motivating his final creative crisis: "the incineration of the *Dead Souls* sequel had much to do with Gogol's frustrated efforts to find a positive attitude toward Russia and, at the same time, retain some measure of artistic integrity."<sup>9</sup>

Ukrainian nationalist critic Evhen Malaniuk's 1935 work *Hohol - Gogol* situates the Ukrainian identity of Gogol within a metanarrative of Gogol's conflicted national character as the source of his tragedy,<sup>10</sup> anticipating Karlinsky's psychological narrative of Gogol's "spiritual death" through irreconcilable identities, while ascribing its cause to the ethnic rather than the sexual. Malaniuk's narrative is echoed by Yuri Barabash in

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7 Bojanowska, *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism*, p. 371

8 Bojanowska, p. 369

9 Bojanowska, p. 373

10 Available in full in the Ukrainian language on <http://ukrajnci.ru/kultura/7-evgen-malanyuk-gogol-ool.html> (Accessed: 02/10/2017)

2006's *Selected Studies - Skovoroda, Gogol, Shevchenko*, which proposes that Gogol suffered from Carl Jung's conception of *enantiodromia*, a psychological tension of opposites, between the mentality of a Ukrainian and the "self-imposed mission of an imperial-Great Russian patriot", a burden which "broke Gogol".<sup>11</sup> Barabash's study centres on the ethnic binaries and oppositions established in Gogol's public and private writings. Although the material that he quotes reveals a marked distinction between the Ukrainian nationalist binaries in Gogol's private correspondence and their erasure in his published works, Barabash does not comment on this, but reads both sources as undifferentiated evidence of the author's evolving ethnic consciousness, within a discourse of ethnic crossing rather than ethnic closeting. Vladimir Zviniatskovsky's 2010 work *Defeating Fear With Laughter* directly proposes the concept of an ethnically closeted Gogol, referring to his erasure of explicit Ukrainian ethnicity from the 1842 rewrite of *Taras Bulba* as removal of "the ambitions of nationhood of that same Ukrainian elite from which Gogol came and to which he kept a spiritual connection in the deepest secrecy",<sup>12</sup> and adds a reading of Gogol's short story 'Rome' as a work of closeted Ukrainian nationalism.

It may thus be claimed that ethnic closeting in the biography and writings of Nikolai Gogol has received wider ranging and more intensive study than the issue has in the writings of Oscar Wilde, both because Gogol's writings feature a tangible shift from Ukrainian themes to Russian themes that includes the relabelling of Ukrainian materials as Russian, and because the psychological dynamics of the authors' crisis of identity, whose Jungian aspect has been observed by Barabash in the case of Gogol and

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11 "поміж питомим менталітетом українця і покладеною на самого себе місією імперско-великоросійського патріота... заломив Гоголя" Barabash, *Vybrani Studii - Skovoroda. Hohol'. Shevchenko*. p. 393

12 "о государственных амбициях той самой украинской элиты, из которой вышел Гоголь и духовную связь с которой в глубочайшей тайне он хранил», Zviniatskovsky, *Pobezhdaiushchii Strakh Smekhom*, p. 137

Behrendt in the case of Wilde, are ascribed to crisis of ethnic identity in Ukrainian scholarship on Gogol and to crisis of sexual identity in scholarship on Wilde. Application of the Ukrainian model, of Gogol's Jungian ethnic closeting, to the work of Oscar Wilde, thus has the potential to contribute to analysis of Wilde's Irishness, as a closeted factor in his published fiction.

### **1.5 The Intersection of Postcolonial and Queer Theory**

Michèle Mendelssohn's 2018 work, *Making Oscar Wilde*, proposes that Wilde's American tour constructed his persona and trademark style. Although his American experience of public speaking and celebrity probably influenced his commercial craftsmanship, my thesis contends that Wilde's previous works, *Poems* and *Vera*, are foundational to his artistic imagination, with *Poems* establishing a symbolism that would resonate throughout his later works and *Vera* originating the prototype of the Wildean dandy in the character of Prince Paul Maraloffski. Mendelssohn makes a detailed study of the racial stigma placed on Oscar Wilde during his tour of the USA, caused by an anti-Irish populist wave that equated the Irish in racial inferiority with 'Negroes'. Evidence of Wilde's own attitude to race and to his Black servants is sparse, which Mendelssohn interprets as indicating disregard, though it could equally represent a closeting of opinion equivalent to Wilde's closeting of his Irish nationalism in a hostile British environment. Her work illustrates the ambiguity of Wilde's position, equated with Black Americans through a shared identification as colonized, yet able to invoke his whiteness to claim belonging to the dominant group, indicating the essentially performative nature of Irish racial stigma, which therefore parallels homosexual stigma in the complex psychological dynamics of "passing".

The founder of postcolonial theory, Edward Said, included Ireland in the canon

of postcolonial nations with his essay 'Yeats and Decolonization', claiming that the absence of racial difference between the Irish and their English colonizers did not fundamentally alter the colonial relationship in which "a clear-cut and absolute hierarchical distinction should remain constant between ruler and ruled, whether or not the latter is white".<sup>13</sup> Said's paradigm of postcolonial theory, of a stable hierarchy in which the colonized must resist or internalize the values of the colonizer, has been complicated - most notably by Homi Bhabha's conceptions of hybridity, mimicry and ambivalence - but the potential erasure of Said's clear-cut hierarchical distinction, through the assimilability of Irish whiteness, remains a complicating factor in Ireland's inclusion in the postcolonial canon, one which it shares with Ukraine.

Joseph Valente's 2002 work, *Dracula's Crypt: Bram Stoker, Irishness, and the Question of Blood*, maps Bram Stoker's ethnic consciousness as an Anglo-Irish writer onto his most famous novel, *Dracula*, which is unmarked by explicit Irishness, like the fiction of Oscar Wilde. Valente proposes that the Irish be categorized as a "metrocolonial" people, occupying an ambiguous, intermediate position between metropolitan assimilation and colonial subjugation, much like Mendelssohn's book revealed in Wilde's ambiguous racial categorization in the USA. Valente claims that "the Irish people at large found themselves at once agents and objects, participant-victims as it were, of Britain's far-flung imperial mission – in short, a 'metrocolonial people'."<sup>14</sup> This definition of the "metrocolonial" would apply equally to Ukraine and, in particular, to the Russified Ukrainian gentry class to which Nikolai Gogol belonged.

It would also apply to the position of a closeted homosexual, as an assimilated participant in a culture of compulsory heterosexuality of which he is simultaneously the

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13 Said, 'Yeats and Decolonization', in Bayoumi & Rubin ed., *The Edward Said Reader*, pp. 291-313

14 Valente, *Dracula's Crypt*, p. 3

victim. Although he briefly acknowledges the theme of homoerotic desire in the work of Stoker, the most compelling evidence for which is the author's confessional 1872 letter to Walt Whitman, while noting that Stoker heavily sexualizes his portrayals of ethnic tensions,<sup>15</sup> Valente does not consider the psychological parallels between the metrocolonial and closeted homosexual states, or how they might intersect and inform one another. Comparison with Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde might, on the contrary, allow the conception of a distinctive, 19<sup>th</sup>-century homoerotic metrocolonial canon, whose ethnic tensions are characteristically intensified and sexualized to serve as displaced expressions of the more heavily censored sexual identity. By using the paradigm of Valente's metrocolonial "participant-victim" in conjunction with the closeted homoerotic, as dual identities each constraining the expression of the other, this study contributes towards such an intersectional reading.

## 1.6 Psychological Dynamics of Repression

*In The Shadow of Gogol*, by the Russian commentator Abram Tertz (Andrei Siniavskii), repeats the psychological narrative of Gogol's crisis of identity, but without reference to either the sexual or ethnic. Instead, Tertz proposes that Gogol was psychologically destroyed by the conflict between his artistic vocation and his morally redemptive vocation, within the metanarrative of a shamanic quest to raise the dead. Biographical accounts of Nikolai Gogol's manic and depressive episodes by acquaintances, combined with what medical researcher Eric Lewin Altschuler calls "one of the earliest, and most complete, descriptions of schizophrenia" in Gogol's 'Diary of a Madman',<sup>16</sup> as well as the narrator's account of auditory hallucinations at the

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15 Valente, *Dracula's Crypt*, p. 19

16 Altschuler, 'One of the oldest cases of schizophrenia in Gogol's *Diary of a Madman*',

conclusion of 'Old World Landowners', might suggest a diagnosis such as bipolar or schizoaffective disorder, psychological conditions that have been correlated with shamanic or mystical experience, as in Roland Fischer's 'A Cartography of the Ecstatic and Meditative States'. Fischer's account of visual contraction and "bird's eye view", as well as rhythmic aural or visual hallucination, as characteristic of psychotic experience, may be applicable to Nikolai Gogol's recurrent motifs of visionary and demonic flight, featured in 'Nevsky Prospekt', 'The Night Before Christmas', 'Diary of a Madman', 'Vii', *Dead Souls* and other works, and defined as a "demonic chronotope" by Mikhail Epshtein.<sup>17</sup> Since there is no corresponding evidence of mood disorder in the biography of Oscar Wilde, this thesis treats the issues as a point of differentiation rather than comparison, potentially productive of the higher emotional and visionary intensification with which Gogol treats thematically similar material.

Yuri Barabash's identification of Jungian *enantiodromia* as a major psychological dynamic underlying Gogol's literary output, like Patricia Behrendt's identification of a Jungian individuation cycle in Oscar Wilde's *Poems*, suggests that Carl Jung's model of the imagination's typical response to repression is applicable to both authors. The final five chapters of this thesis utilize a Jungian framework to structure a comparative analysis of Gogol and Wilde's thematic treatment of sexuality and ethnicity in their literary fiction.

In his final work, *Man and his Symbols*, Carl Gustav Jung cautioned against an overly dogmatic application of his symbolic and archetypal frameworks: "no individual symbolic image can be said to have a dogmatically fixed, generalized meaning".<sup>18</sup>

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<http://europepmc.org/articles/PMC1121915> (Accessed 07/10/2017)

17 Epshtein, Mikhail, "The Irony of Style: The Demonic Element in Gogol's Concept of Russia" in Spieker, Sven ed. *Gogol: Exploring Absence*, p. 57

18 Jung, *Man and his Symbols*, p. 30

Following Jung's reasoning, the symbols of Gogol and Wilde are interpreted in this thesis as having idiosyncratic and personal meaning, which may only be deduced by a detailed analysis of the context in which the images and motifs recur, the concepts with which they are associated, as well as the relations consistently established between them. This study places great emphasis on recurrent patterning of symbol and motif within the work of Gogol and Wilde, without assuming that symbols have any transferable meaning between the two authors, and without seeking their meaning in external sources. Two exceptions are made to this rule. The first is where a shared external source may explain an identical choice of symbol by both authors, as with their shared use of a haunted portrait within a Faustian plot, which I argue is traceable to a common source in Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*. The second is where the author himself presumes the reader's familiarity with the external source of his imagery, as with Wilde's reliance on Classical Grecian mythological allusions in *Poems*.

A Jungian approach, which assumes all symbolic systems to have idiosyncratic meaning to their author, being almost arbitrary clothing of archetypal psychological concepts, has the major advantage of enabling a comparative study of the entire literary output of Gogol and Wilde within the scope of a thesis, by de-emphasizing the significance of external sources. Its disadvantage is that it risks neglecting cultural context, although as an intercultural comparative study, the focus of this thesis is necessarily on the transcultural. Bearing in mind Carl Jung's own cautions against the dogmatic imposing of psychoanalytical narratives, this study limits its analysis to identifying Jungian concepts such as Lost Paradise, Dissociation, Ego, Self, Shadow, Persona and Individuation, while the relationship between these concepts is not assumed or imposed but derived from close comparative study of Wilde and Gogol's own fiction.

Jung laid out the basic dynamics of the individuation process in *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, as derived from his analysis of thousands of dreams, from a technique of free association art therapy with patients which he termed “active imagination”,<sup>19</sup> and from his wide reading of philosophers, artists and mythology to assess the transcultural and transhistorical nature of the phenomena described, claiming that, in order to assert that an imaginative pattern is universal or “archetypal”, “we have to establish that the same or similar phenomena can be shown to occur in the folklore of other peoples and races and in the texts that have come down to us from earlier centuries and epochs.”<sup>20</sup> Although the writings of Oscar Wilde were available to Jung, and their author's homosexuality was revealed by his public trials, and although Wilde's own writings propose a transhistorical and transcultural canon of historical geniuses with homoerotic imaginations, including Plato, Montaigne, Michelangelo, Shakespeare and Winckelmann, to which number Wilde himself could have been added, Jung conducted no wide-ranging transcultural and transhistorical survey of homoerotic male psychology before proposing it as a deviation from a presumed heterosexual norm, induced by alleged mother complex and retarded development.<sup>21</sup> In *The Development of Personality*, Jung relates an account of his own attempted “cure” of a homosexual patient, while he states dogmatically that “the homosexuality of adolescence is only a profound misunderstanding of the otherwise very appropriate need for masculine guidance”.<sup>22</sup>

An application of Jungian psychological models to homosexual authors may be controversial for this reason, but the essence of Jung's individuation process is a

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19 Jung, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, p. 204

20 Jung, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, p. 227

21 Jung, *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, p. 12

22 Jung, *The Development of Personality*, p. 159



modelling of the imagination's typical response to repression, more relevant to closeted psychology than to the psychology of the dominant group. In *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, Jung expands on the description of the individuation process offered in *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*. Many of his descriptions of icons of individuation, from their characteristic ego inflation and solar attributes to the *coniunctio oppositorum* (marriage of opposites) which is their hallmark, are directly relevant to the fiction of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde, explanatory of otherwise obscure features. A transcultural and transhistorical survey of the homoerotic imagination of writers, toward which the comparison of Gogol and Wilde might contribute, could thus derive a more reliable model of the homoerotic male imagination, by applying Jung's own methodology where he himself did not. For these reasons, Carl Jung's interpretation of homosexual psychology is not utilized in this analysis, only his wider model of the imagination's typical response to repression. This thesis employs a psychological model of the homoerotic imagination which is not the creation of Carl Gustav Jung, but of Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde in his first published work, *Poems*, whose patterns I apply to both Wilde's wider oeuvre and the fiction of Nikolai Gogol.

To summarize – this comparative study of the literary fiction of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde contributes to existing scholarship in a number of fields: as a comparative study of Russo-Ukrainian and Anglo-Irish literature; as an application of Gogolian aesthetics of negativity to the work of Oscar Wilde; as an exploration of the intersection of the metrocolonial and homoerotic imaginations, toward the possible contextualization of Nikolai Gogol as a closeted writer; and as a step toward a transhistorical and transcultural Jungian model of the homoerotic male imagination. The conclusion of the thesis assesses the degree to which these goals have been

attained.

# PART 1 - THE HAUNTED PORTRAIT

"Better if you had never existed! Never lived in the world, but been the creation of an inspired artist!" - Nikolai Gogol, *Nevsky Prospekt*<sup>1</sup>

"A very charming artistic basis for ethics, Dorian! I congratulate you on it. But how are you going to begin?" - Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "лучше бы ты вовсе не существовала! Не жила в мире, а была бы создание вдохновенного художника!" quoted from p. 32 of the 2006 Azazel' edition of *Собрание сочинений в семи томах (Collected Works in 7 Volumes)*, volume 3 (henceforth abbreviated to *SS 3*)

<sup>2</sup> Chapter 8 of the 1891 version. Quoted from *The Complete Illustrated Stories, Plays & Poems of Oscar Wilde* (henceforth abbreviated to *CI*), p. 67

## Chapter 2 – The Artistic Process As Faustian Gothic Horror

**Part One** of this thesis begins with a comparative study of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde's conception of the artistic process, as portrayed in their fiction, and concludes with an examination of how this conception of the perils of artistic creation may shape and constrain their aesthetic choices, motivating a shared reliance on interpretative suspense and deprioritization. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and 'Portrait', Wilde and Gogol mirror each other in their choice of the haunted portrait as the basis of a Faustian Gothic horror, producing the closest thematic parallel in their literary output, comparison of which forms the focus of this chapter. **Chapter Three** compares and contrasts the authors' portrayals of artworks within their fiction, with a particular focus on the recurrent theme of artwork as site of exposure for the moral character of the artist. **Chapter Four** examines the recurrent theme, across the fiction of both authors, of the artist violently destroyed by the artistic process. **Chapter Five** examines both authors' recurrent portrayal of spectators and readers as threatening and penetrative, concluding with an assessment of whether the recurrent patterns observed by all four chapters may be claimed to collectively indicate chronic preoccupation with exposure anxiety through artwork. **Chapter Six** surveys the authors' shared aesthetic choices, collectively grouped by their function in inducing interpretative suspense and deprioritization, to assess their utility as cloaking techniques and as plausible response to exposure anxiety.

The goal of this chapter is to examine how each author positions the artistic process within the generic expectations of Faustian Gothic horror, in Gogol's 'Portrait' and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in order to estimate their perceived anxiety within the artistic process. **Section 2.1** examines 'Portrait' and *The Picture of Dorian*

*Gray* as archetypal horror plots, conforming to the generic expectations defined by Noël Carroll's *The Philosophy of Horror*. **Section 2.2** examines both authors' potential adaptation of a shared source in Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, to explain coincidence of imagery while assessing shared divergence from Maturin by Gogol and Wilde. **Section 2.3** utilizes Noël Carroll's paradigms of horror effects in order to estimate the principle sources of intended horror in the texts.

Originally published in 1835's *Arabesques*, with greater emphasis on the demonic supernatural, Gogol's 1842 *Complete Works* rewrite of 'Portrait' strengthened its artistic theme and rewrote the story's final moral into a statement on the philosophy of art. It is therefore this later version which is used, unless otherwise stated, to be compared to the 1891 *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in which Wilde's rewrite strengthened the artistic dimension of the plot by de-emphasizing its erotic aspect. In both texts, Gogol and Wilde offer artist protagonists, Andrei Petrovich Chartkov and Basil Hallward, who are not depicted as autonomous creators, nor yet as passive instruments of divine inspiration, but as menaced by the threatening perils of the creative process. Both narratives depict the full incarnation of the soul in art as a source of horror, while simultaneously portraying inauthenticity as the destroyer of talent. Their artist figures are caught between these opposing threats, of exposure and banality, in narratives that position the artwork as destroyer of the artist and social pressure as an agent of soullessness. To what extent may the primary peril symbolically conveyed through these narratives, which resonates in the wider depiction of the artistic process by both authors, be claimed to be fear of exposure?

## **2.1 'Portrait' and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* As Archetypal Horror Plots**

Both Gogol and Wilde choose the Faustian plot - the temptation, corruption and

damnation of an overreaching hero through demonic bargain - to depict the artistic process, within a generic frame of Gothic horror, with a haunted portrait as its central monster. Noel Carroll's *The Philosophy of Horror* approaches an analytic aesthetics of the horror genre by defining its key features. Carroll identifies two archetypal horror plots: the “complex discovery plot”, which concerns the onset, discovery and confrontation of a monstrous being, and the “overreacher plot”, which concerns a character's transgression of a natural or cosmic boundary as catalyst for their doom.<sup>1</sup> *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and 'Portrait' function as examples of both models simultaneously.

As a "complex discovery plot", each narrative positions the haunted portrait itself as a monstrous being: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is structured around the onset of Dorian's monstrous "true face" in the haunted portrait, its discovery by the artist Basil Hallward, Dorian's final confrontation with the monstrous portrait and the exposure of his hideous true face to the general public, which corresponds to the expected feature that Carroll terms “confirmation”, while 'Portrait' depicts the haunted portrait's discovery by Chartkov, its confirmation by the general public at the auction, and the artist B.'s final confrontation with the portrait (successful in destroying it in the 1835 original *Arabesques* version and unsuccessful in the 1842 *Complete Works* rewrite). Carroll describes a “mirroring effect” in horror, where the fear and aversion displayed by fictional characters towards the monstrous being is intended to cue a similar response in the reader, as well as a “horrific metonymy”, where the central horrific being is surrounded by objects of general phobia and disgust which confirm its horrific nature. The location of both “mirroring effect” and “horrific metonymy” are used in **Section 2.3** to estimate the precise source of intended horror within each

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<sup>1</sup> For full discussion of the “complex discovery plot” and “overreacher plot” see Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*, pp. 90 - 125

author's concept of the haunted portrait as monstrous being.

As Faustian narratives, both texts satisfy Carroll's definition of an "overreacher" horror plot, in which a character's own overreaching desires are the catalyst of their doom: the catastrophes of Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* are attributable to Basil Hallward's overreaching desire to realistically portray his worshipped Dorian and Dorian Gray's overreaching desire for eternal youth and full sensual freedom, which lead him to make a prayer for the portrait to age in his stead. The catastrophes of Gogol's 1842 *Complete Works* edition of 'Portrait' are attributable to the artist Chartkov's overreaching desire for wealth and social acclaim, and to B.'s unnamed artist father's overreaching desire to portray the face of the devil. Within the "overreacher plot", the primary source of anxiety may be located by its function as the catalyst of the overreaching protagonist's doom. Wilde's narrative portrays an artist (Hallward) destroyed by his temptation to accurately portray the object of his worship, while Gogol's 'Portrait' portrays an artist (B.'s father) almost destroyed by his temptation to accurately portray the object of his fear. In each case, the muse of the haunted portrait is a source of threat to the artist, the accurate portrayal of whom amounts to Faustian transgression, though the threat is suggestively homoerotic in Wilde's narrative and demonic in Gogol's. Dorian Gray and Chartkov are both destroyed by their overreaching desire for social acclaim, though Gray's temptation is to attain acclaim through eternal youth and beauty, while Chartkov's temptation is to attain acclaim through wealth and admired artistry. Temptation toward accurate mimesis and social acclaim is thus depicted as the catalyst for Faustian transgression and doom in the work of both authors, implying their status as sources of anxiety.

In the rush of popular editions which followed the expiration of Gogol's

copyright in 1902, 'Portrait' rated only 19<sup>th</sup> of his works.<sup>2</sup> The influential 19<sup>th</sup>-century critic Vissarion Belinsky characterised it as an "unsuccessful attempt of Mr. Gogol's in the fantastic manner" whose second half is "unbearably bad both from the point of view of main idea and from the point of view of details",<sup>3</sup> while Vasily Gippius claims that "there is no consistency of ideas in the story".<sup>4</sup> Donald Fanger dismisses it briefly as "an allegorical fable rendered in terms of apocalyptic earnestness".<sup>5</sup> A possible motive for such critical and commercial unpopularity is suggested by Simon Karlinsky: "one particular artist's sell-out is too slender a theme to support the great mystical concept of the Antichrist all by itself".<sup>6</sup> As the downfall of the artist Chartkov is measured purely by the loss of his artistic talent, with his crimes consisting only of the destruction of legally purchased artworks, it appears to be regarded by many critics as too trivial to justify the metaphysical crisis, corruption and damnation of soul that are integral to the genre of Faustian horror. Taken collectively, these commentaries point to a major disparity between the emotional intensity and horrific potential perceived by Gogol in the topic of artistic corruption, and his readership's widespread perception of its triviality.

The perceived deficit of serious transgression within 'Portrait' is avoided in the Faustian plot of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by the addition of a murder, a tragic lover's suicide, other unexplored "sins", some incidental drug-taking and frequenting of prostitutes. However, these transgressions are nevertheless subordinated to the dominant theme of art. Art is prioritised over the tragic love plot of *Sybil Vane*, first by the protagonist's rejection of Sybil's love upon her loss of artistic talent, and finally by

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2 Moeller-Sally, *Gogol's Afterlife*, pp. 90 - 91

3 "неудачная попытка г. Гоголя в фантастическом роде" (vol. 1, p. 303) "невыносимо дурно и со стороны главной мысли и со стороны подробностей" (vol. 6, p. 426) in Belinsky, Vissarion, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*

4 Gippius, V. V., *Gogol*, trans. Robert A. Maguire, p. 103

5 Fanger, Donald, *The Creation of Nikolai Gogol*, p.114

6 Karlinsky, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*, p. 113



his being led by Henry Wotton to frame the entire incident as a work of art, to negate its emotional impact. The murder depicted is that of an artist, Hallward, by his muse, prompted by the revelation of an artwork. The remaining sins are marginalised. As such, while the Faustian plot's demand for serious "evil" is satisfied in Wilde's narrative by the presence of murder and romantic cruelty, it is possible to argue that the main concern of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is, as in 'Portrait', horror of mimesis and anxiety over artistic corruption. The problem of art, by functioning in Wilde's text as the motivating force for murder and revealing its capability of vanquishing love, is even augmented in its weight and centrality through its power to subordinate love and death. Effectively, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* may have been personally legible to Oscar Wilde as an expression of the innate horrific potential of artistic corruption, in a manner similar to Gogol's 'Portrait', while justifying its generic choice of Faustian Gothic horror to its intended readership by the use of murder and suicide to express its artistic themes. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's contention, that Wilde's novel "can be read either as having a thematically empty 'modernist' meaning or as having a thematically full 'homosexual' meaning",<sup>7</sup> suggests a reader resistance to the horrific potential of the "thematically empty" artistic dimension of the plot that is comparable to that expressed by the critics of Gogol cited above.

## 2.2 Adaptation of Maturin

Charles Maturin's 1820 Faustian Gothic horror *Melmoth the Wanderer* has been identified as a source for *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.<sup>8</sup> As his grand-uncle by marriage, Maturin is a known influence on Wilde, to the point that, in exile, Wilde himself

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7 Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet*, pp. 165-166

8 See Poteet, Louis J., 'Dorian Gray and the Gothic Novel' in *Modern Fiction Studies*, 17, 2, pp. 239 – 248, Coakley, Davis, *Oscar Wilde: The Importance of Being Irish*, pp. 6-8, and Zeender, Marie Noëlle, 'John Melmoth and Dorian Gray: The Two-Faced Mirror' in Sandulescu ed., *Rediscovering Oscar Wilde* pp. 432-440

adopted the pseudonym 'Sebastian Melmoth'. Donald Fanger lists *Melmoth the Wanderer* as a source for Gogol's 'Portrait', Maturin's novel having appeared in the Russian language in 1833, two years before the first published version of 'Portrait'.<sup>9</sup> Appearing so close chronologically to 'Portrait', and being so personally connected to Wilde, *Melmoth the Wanderer* stands as a plausible common source for the two works, potentially explaining both their identical central trope in the haunted portrait, as well as their common choice of genre in Faustian Gothic horror. Maturin's narrative first introduces its eponymous antihero, a demonic figure who has sold his soul for 150 years of life without ageing, through a portrait with riveting eyes which seem to move as his descendant, John Melmoth, gazes on them. By the third chapter, this descendant will have torn down, cut up and burned the portrait, but not before

it fell at his feet, and he shuddered as it fell [...] as the wrinkled and torn canvas fell to the floor, its undulations gave the portrait the appearance of smiling<sup>10</sup>

Thus, without confirming the portrait's supernatural nature, Maturin's novel briefly suggests the uncanny idea of a picture possessed by the spirit of its Mephistophelean subject, as an object of shuddering horror to its onlooker, themes present in both Wilde and Gogol's narratives. Wilde's narrative additionally incorporates *Melmoth the Wanderer's* theme of a bargain for agelessness, while Gogol presents his moneylender as a demonic corrupter whose eyes, like Melmoth's, are riveting and chilling with unearthly luminosity, and who visits the artist Chartkov in dreams, as Melmoth visits his descendant's dream after the destruction of his portrait.

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9 Fanger, Donald, *The Creation of Nikolai Gogol*, p.114

10 Maturin, Charles, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, p. 60

The element of the Antichrist<sup>11</sup> in Gogol's original 1835 *Arabesques* version of 'Portrait' also strongly echoes the theological concerns at the heart of *Melmoth the Wanderer*, while this religious aspect is hinted at less overtly in Wilde's narrative.

The shared divergence of Wilde and Gogol's use of the haunted portrait from that of Maturin, however, is significant: the introduction of the artist as an element of plot. Maturin's portrait relates only to its subject, whose spirit it may be haunted by, and to its shuddering onlooker. By introducing the painter of the portrait – Basil Hallward in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and the father of B. in 'Portrait' – as a major character, Wilde and Gogol both convert the atmospheric horror of Maturin's haunted portrait into an expression of the relationship between artist and artwork. Gogol adds further artists: Chartkov, as Faustian victim of the portrait's influence, the artist B. as narrator and would-be destroyer of the haunted portrait, and the minor character of another cheerful painter who falls victim to the portrait. The pivotal role played by the painter Basil Hallward in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, as well as the novel's numerous dialogues on the philosophy of artistic creation and appreciation, likewise position art and the artistic process as a central theme of Wilde's work.

In the 1842 'Portrait', the embodiment of demonic forces within the figure of the moneylender and his portrait is explicit. The living moneylender is described by the father of B. as “a devil, a perfect devil!” and a “diabolical phenomenon”, while a former owner describes the portrait itself by claiming that “the unclean force sits in it”.<sup>12</sup> A Faustian bargain is implicit in the artist Chartkov's acceptance of a package of money which falls from the moneylender's portrait, and his use of that money to

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11 The Antichrist is only an explicit element of the plot in the 1835 version of the text published in *Arabesques* (SS7, pp. 350 – 400). Gavriel Shapiro traces the apocalyptic and explicit theological schema of the 1835 *Portrait* to the philosopher Johann Jung-Stilling, then popular among Russian Freemasons, claiming that 'in his 1842 edition of 'The Portrait', however, Gogol deleted the obvious allusions to Jung-Stilling's eschatological predictions since they were already outdated', Shapiro, *Nikolai Gogol and the Baroque Cultural Heritage*, p. 173

12 “Дьявол, совершенный дьявол!” p. 141, “дьявольское явление” p. 153, “в нем сидит нечистая сила” p. 148 (SS 3)

purchase the successful appearance, press acclaim and wealthy surroundings to which he had aspired. The price of this bargain becomes apparent in the loss of Chartkov's artistic talent and in his eventual madness and death, marking him as a classic overreaching hero. In the second part of the narrative, the artist B. tells the story of the painting of the possessed portrait by his father. It could be argued that a Faustian bargain is also made by B.'s father, in accepting the commission to paint the demonic moneylender's portrait, to use as a model within his own overreaching desire to paint the face of the devil. B.'s father abandons the portrait half-completed and the moneylender refuses to pay him, which may explain why this character is able to escape full damnation and regain artistic inspiration. Nevertheless, he can do so only after losing family members and undergoing a lengthy period of monastic asceticism in order to expurgate the sin he committed by loosing the evil of the portrait on the world. Acceptance of money and desire for worldly success, are thus positioned as temptations ruinous to the talent of both artist protagonists, Chartkov and the father of B..

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the diabolical element is less explicit, in conformity with the reduced prominence of religious imagery in Wilde's text when compared with Gogol's. The Faustian bargain is struck by Dorian's exclamation, defined later as a "prayer", that he would give his soul to remain always young while the portrait grows old in his stead. The bargain appears tacitly accepted when the portrait's ageing in Dorian's stead is observed, and is later confirmed in its Faustian nature by a prostitute's calling Dorian "the devil's bargain".<sup>13</sup> The closest the narrative possesses to a Mephistophelean figure is Lord Henry Wotton, who functions as a corrupter of Dorian through his advice and philosophies, and whose tempting statements on the value of youth and beauty provoke Dorian to the "prayer" that

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<sup>13</sup> Chapter 16, *CI*, p. 128

constitutes the demonic bargain. Wilde's artist figure, Basil Hallward, may be said to more subtly represent a Faustian figure, in that his eventual murder by Dorian is punishment for his overreaching ambition to accurately portray Dorian's beauty, to which Hallward was tempted by Dorian as Mephistophelean muse. Contrasted to his "unconscious, ideal, and remote" abstracted portrayals of Dorian in the guise of Adonis, Paris or Narcissus, Basil characterises as a "fatal day" the day in which he attempts to represent Dorian "as you actually are [...] in your own dress and in your own time".<sup>14</sup> Basil's decision to portray Dorian with mimetic accuracy is thereby suggested as a form of Faustian overreaching, which becomes the catalyst for both of their dooms. The positioning of overly accurate mimesis as fatal transgression and as temptation to the artist suggests, by the conventions of the "overreacher plot", that it serves as a primary source of anxiety in Wilde's text, in tandem with the excessive worship of male beauty.

Chris Baldick notes of Melmoth that he is "not just a Faust, he is a Mephistopheles at the same time; more exactly he is a Faust whose punishment is to become a Mephistophelean tempter".<sup>15</sup> A similar ambiguity is observable within the original, 1835 *Arabesques* version of 'Portrait', in the status of the moneylender, here humanised by the name Petromikhali, as a damned soul and possible Faustian object of pity, as well as a Mephistophelean source of corrupting temptation. Petromikhali is characterized by lines which emphasise the character's vulnerability.<sup>16</sup> When the moonlight shines onto the portrait on the artist's wall, "it seemed that a tear quivered on the old man's eyelashes".<sup>17</sup> The artist who paints his portrait is tempted to use him as a model for "one possessed by demons"<sup>18</sup> not as a model for the devil himself, as in the

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14 Chapter 9, *CI*, p. 78

15 Baldick, Chris, 'Introduction' p. xvi of Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer*

16 "on his lips was a smile, sharp, caustic, and at the same time some kind of fear" ("в устах его была улыбка, резкая, язвительная, и вместе какой-то страх") *SS 7*, p. 353

17 "казалось, слеза дрожала на ресницах старика" *SS 7*, p. 358

18 "изобразить одержимого бесами" *SS 7*, p. 388

later 1842 rewrite for Gogol's *Collected Works*, where the anonymous moneylender is more abstracted and dehumanized. When pleading for his portrait not to be destroyed, Petromikhali explicitly states that transferring his soul to the portrait is the only way for him to postpone the terrible agonies of damnation that await him, suggesting a Faustian pact for eternal life through transference of soul into artwork, comparable to that of Dorian Gray. Thus, the duality of an antihero both Faustian and Mephistophelean, that Baldick notes within *Melmoth the Wanderer*, finds an echo in the original *Arabesques* edition of Gogol's text, through the Faustian bargain of the Mephistophelean Petromikhali. A similar duality can be detected in *Dorian Gray*: though he is himself the Faustian victim of his "devil's bargain", Dorian is also positioned, like Petromikhali, as a Mephistophelean corrupting influence over the artists Basil Hallward and Sybil Vane, who are robbed of artistic talent and destroyed by their overreaching love of him, as well as over the minor characters Alan Campbell and Adrian Singleton. The core concept, of the Faustian muse as Mephistophelean corrupter and temptation to the Faustian artist, thus remains consistent in both Gogol and Wilde's narratives, though the catalysts for the artist's doom diverge. Wilde's theme of the perilous temptation of male beauty is entirely absent in Gogol's narrative, although the sexual significance of the moneylender's Oriental characterization is considered in detail in **Chapter Ten** of this thesis.

To *Melmoth the Wanderer* may be traced the image of a charismatic and demonic seducer figure, Faustian and Mephistophelean at once, who haunts his portrait and rivets the onlooker with his gaze, within a framework of Gothic horror. Both Gogol and Wilde make use of all these aspects, but both appear to have independently added the figure of the artist as Faustian victim of the Mephistophelean temptations of his muse, suggesting a shared conception of the relationship between artist and artwork

which guided their response to Maturin's work. As discussed at the conclusion of **Section 2.1**, the perception that Faustian Gothic Horror was the appropriate medium to express the relationship of artist and artwork is not only shared between Gogol and Wilde, but significantly dissonant with the widespread perception of their readership.

### **2.3 Locating Anxiety Through Horror Effects**

Noel Carroll argues for a "mirroring effect" between the evaluative responses of characters within horror narratives and the ideal, or intended, reader response to objects of horror, as a "key feature" of the genre,<sup>19</sup> where the characteristic emotion of "art-horror" is defined by him as being produced in the reader by the combination of fear and bodily disgust described as provoked in fictional characters by the object of horror. The usefulness of such an analysis is that it enables the pinpointing of "monstrous beings" intended as sources of the readers' "art-horror", through observation of the characteristic fear and disgust which fictional characters demonstrate towards them. The intended source and intensity of the reader's anxiety may thereby be estimated, through the described anxiety of fictional characters.

Both *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and 'Portrait' fit this paradigm through the fear and bodily disgust that the haunted portrait evokes in its onlookers. When Dorian examines the cruel expression that first manifests the portrait's supernatural connection to his soul: "he shuddered, and felt afraid, and, going back to the couch, lay there, gazing at the picture in sickening horror"<sup>20</sup> while, on Basil Hallward's first seeing the portrait, "an exclamation of horror broke from the painter's lips [...] There was something in its expression that filled him with disgust and loathing."<sup>21</sup> A physical

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19 "in works of horror the responses of the characters seem to cue the emotional responses of the audiences", Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*, p. 17

20 Chapter 8, *CI* p. 66

21 Chapter 13, *CI* p. 106

aversion expressed as shuddering, disgust and loathing dominates over fear in the characters' reactions, as Carroll predicts in his description of the typical “mirroring effect” of the horror genre. Likewise, in the 1842 'Portrait', Chartkov experiences physical aversion at his first exposure to the portrait: "the eyes looked at him in such a way that he finally shuddered and, staggering backwards, pronounced in a stunned voice, 'it stares, it stares with human eyes!'"<sup>22</sup> Such amalgamations of aversion, fear and disgust position the haunted portrait itself as a monstrous being within the text and as a "cognitive threat", through its interstitial conflation of the animate and inanimate.<sup>23</sup>

In Gogol's later description of the painting of the portrait, the technique of cueing the reader's “art-horror” response is associated with the pursuit of representational accuracy and, in particular, to penetrating the mystery of the subject's eyes:

... as soon as he started to enter into them and delve deeply into them with his brush, in his soul there arose such a strange revulsion, such an incomprehensible weariness that he was forced to put down his brush for some time<sup>24</sup>

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the onlookers' personal connection to the portrait complicates the nature of the threat it presents: it represents his own sins to Dorian and reveals to Basil the true corruption of Dorian, the object of his idolatry. In 'Portrait', the source of the perceived threat can be located directly in the mimetic powers of the portrait itself. Chartkov has no personal knowledge of the portrait's subject, and the

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22 “глаза взглянули на него так, что он наконец вздрогнул и, попятившись назад, произнес изумленным голосом: “Глядит, глядит человеческими глазами!” ” *SS 3*, p. 94 – 95

23 See Carroll p. 43 for discussion of the cognitive threat of horror monsters as interstitial beings (*The Philosophy of Horror*)

24 “[он решился доискаться в них последней мелкой черты и оттенка, постигнуть их тайну...] Но как только начал он входить и углубляться в них кистью, в душе его возродилось такое странное отвращенье, такая непонятная тягость, что он должен был на несколько времени бросить кисть” *SS 3*, p. 145



horrified reaction it induces prompts a meditation on the proper boundaries of realism in art:

Is it that slavish, literal imitation of nature is already a transgression, and seems a vivid, inelegant scream? Or, if you take a subject impartially, without feeling, not sympathising with it, that it inevitably presents itself in its terrible actuality alone, not illuminated by the light of some elusive, hidden sense in all things; presents itself in that actuality that reveals itself when, desiring to comprehend a glorious human being, you arm yourself with an anatomical knife, cut open his innards and see a repulsive human being?<sup>25</sup>

Rather than diminishing the horror of the portrait through rationalizing explanation, the couching of Chartkov's meditations on mimesis within a horror vocabulary of transgression, scream, cutting and corpses invests the process of mimesis itself with horrific associations, beyond the specific case of the haunted portrait. Useful here is Carroll's conception of "horrific metonymy" as a means of reinforcing the horrific nature of a central "monster": "the horrific being is surrounded by objects that we antecedently take to be objects of disgust and/or phobia".<sup>26</sup> Thus, the effect of surrounding discussion of mimetic representation with the inherently, or antecedently, horrific imagery of cutting flesh, the "vivid scream" and the "repulsive" dissected corpse, is to establish the concept of unsympathetic mimesis as itself a "horrific being" for Gogol. This speech grounds the portrait's horror, not in any uncanny animation or

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25 «Или рабское, буквальное подражание натуре есть уже проступок и кажется ярким, нестройным криком? Или, если возьмешь предмет безучастно, бесчувственно, не сочувствуя с ним, он непременно предстанет только в одной ужасной своей действительности, не озаренный светом какой-то непостижимой, скрытой во всем мысли, предстанет в той действительности, какая открывается тогда, когда, желая постигнуть прекрасного человека, вооружаешься анатомическим ножом, рассекаешь его внутренность и видишь отвратительного человека?» *SS 3*, p. 95

26 Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*, p. 51

agency, though these become secondary sources of horror later, but first and foremost within its inherently horrific attribute of unsympathetic and excessively accurate mimesis, expressed through a horror vocabulary associating representational accuracy with repulsion and physical violation. Gogol's plot positions his pursuit of mimetic realism as the catalyst for the near doom of the father of B., painter of the portrait, just as it is "fatal" for Wilde's Basil Hallward. Likewise, Gogol's usage of horrific metonymy, to invest the concept of mimesis with horror and aversion in this opening passage, implies that it functions as a primary source of anxiety in his text.

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* also utilizes horrific metonymy to invest the concept of representational accuracy with threat, particularly in the representation of sin:

... something that had a corruption of its own, worse than the corruption of death itself – something that would breed horrors and yet would never die. What the worm was to the corpse, his sins would be to the painted image on the canvas<sup>27</sup>

Wilde's vocabulary of corpses, worms and decay mirrors the evocation of dissected corpses, screams and transgression in Gogol's discussion of unsympathetic mimesis, suggesting a conceptual parallel between the authors. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, later allusions to "the leprosy of sin" than which "the rotting of a corpse in a watery grave was not so fearful",<sup>28</sup> reinforce the association between the mimetic representation of sin and corpse and disease imagery. Aversion to realism, expressed ominously by the "fatal day" of Basil Hallward's mimetic portraiture, finds humorous expression in Wotton's "I hate vulgar realism in literature. The man who could call a

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27 Chapter 10, *CI* p. 81

28 Chapter 13, *CI*, p. 107

spade a spade should be compelled to use one.”<sup>29</sup>

Another recurrent feature of Gogol's haunted portrait is the ability of its gaze to penetrate the soul. "To bore into him" describes the gaze's effect on Chartkov repeatedly, "to gaze inside" Chartkov and spectators at the auction, while "thrust into his soul" is used of the portrait's gaze toward its original painter.<sup>30</sup> The moneylender's portrait is thus characterised by the dual horror of excessively accurate mimesis and excessively penetrative spectating gaze. This penetrating gaze reaches an apotheosis of maximal hyper-scrutiny in Chartkov's hallucinations before his painful death: "the room expanded and continued endlessly, in order to fit more of those motionless eyes".<sup>31</sup>

Noel Carroll suggests the Gothic horror plot of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as one of the double or alter-ego, referencing "the divided, disintegrating selves of fantasy fiction – Dr. Jekyll, Dorian Gray, werewolves..."<sup>32</sup> Yet, a comparison of Dorian Gray with the other proffered archetypes of "divided, disintegrating selves" reveals significant divergence. The horror of the figure of the werewolf or Mr. Hyde is largely located in the monster's uncontrolled agency. The portrait of Dorian Gray, by contrast, lacks independent agency and even represents Dorian's sins in a manner potentially positive, serving as his conscience.<sup>33</sup> Dorian Gray displays a robust unity of self in his conscious quest to explore his desires, seeking only to displace the visible stains which sin wreaks on his physiognomy. The haunted portrait itself is a stably immobile inanimate object which Dorian is capable of locking away and to which he can restrict access. Considering Henry Wotton's total insulation from the crimes that he inspires in Dorian Gray, alongside Dorian's own immunity to guilt, the ease with which all trace of

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29 Chapter 17, *CI* p. 131

30 "вперились в него" p. 94, 97, 99, "вперившимися на него глазами" p. 127 "портретами, вперившими в него свои неподвижные глаза" p. 129 "глядит просто к нему вовнутрь" p. 97 "устремлялись каждому вовнутрь" p. 132, "эти глаза вонзались ему в душу" p. 145 (*SS3*)

31 "комната расширялась и продолжалась бесконечно, чтобы более вместить этих неподвижных глаз." *SS3*, p. 129

32 Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*, p. 178

33 "it had made him conscious how unjust, how cruel, he had been to Sibyl Vane", Chapter 8, *CI*, p. 66

Basil's murder is erased, and the accidental death of James Vane which prevents him from avenging his sister's suicide, the drama of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* could be characterised less as a Freudian drama of repressed desires, than as a Wildean drama of repressed consequences. The haunted portrait, as visual representation of the consequences of sin, is the locus of the narrative's horrific effects, positioning exposure as the primary threat. Carroll's attempt to fit the narrative into the more conventional model of the alter-ego plot may be read as another example of dissonance between both authors' apparent perception of the horrific potential of unsympathetic mimesis, and the widespread perception of critics and readers that the threat of mimesis is insufficient to justify its positioning as the primary monster of a Gothic horror.

The destructive power of artistic realism and social pressure dominates both narratives' Faustian plots, with unsympathetic mimesis and penetrative spectating serving as the focus of their horrific effects. Although the shared imagery in 'Portrait' and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* may be explained by a common source in Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, both authors reinterpreted their source into an exploration of the horror of the artistic process, in a manner not only highly comparable, but dissonant from the widespread expectations of their readership. This shared conception of the artistic process may validly be compared and contrasted, not only through its positioning within the generic expectations of Faustian horror, but also through both authors' thematic treatment of art and artwork. If the generic choice of Faustian Gothic horror is taken to indicate intensity of dread in the image of the haunted portrait, then a thematic analysis of both authors' portrayal of artworks may clarify the nature of the threat. This analysis occupies **Chapter 3** of this thesis.

## Chapter 3 - Artwork as Site of Exposure

The goal of this chapter is to compare and contrast the representations of artworks within *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and 'Portrait'. Particular attention is paid to the frequency of an image's recurrence, and the consistency of context within which it recurs, as an estimate of its psychological significance to the author. **Section 3.1** compares and contrasts both authors' depiction of the portrait's ability to expose its painter's moral character. **Section 3.2** assesses the conflict established within *The Picture of Dorian Gray* between this theme, of artwork as exposure of its artist, and an aestheticist assertion of the abstraction and insincerity of art. **Section 3.3** examines the conception of Dorian Gray as a living artwork within *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and assesses whether Gray's characterization conforms to that of other artworks within the text.

### 3.1 The Portrait As Exposure Of Its Artist

The most prominent created artwork within both narratives is the haunted portrait itself: in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, a portrait of Dorian Gray by the artist Basil Hallward and, in 'Portrait', a portrait of the demonic moneylender by the father of B. These portraits are depicted as capable of incarnating the soul of their subject. In similar scenes, the moneylender of both versions of 'Portrait' casts himself at the artist's feet and begs him to finish the portrait as, if the artist "conveys [his features] faithfully, his life will be retained in the portrait by a supernatural force",<sup>1</sup> while Dorian begs Basil

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<sup>1</sup> "если он передаст их верно, жизнь его сверхъестественною силою удержится в портрете", SS 3, p. 145

not to destroy his portrait with a stifled sob, as "it would be murder![...] it is part of myself".<sup>2</sup> In 'Portrait', the moneylender dies on the same day that he parts with his portrait, while Dorian is killed by attempting to destroy his portrait, positing the representation itself as the source of life for its subject, a reversal of the traditional concept of art as dependent on life, to portray instead life dependent on art.

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* consistently presents the artwork as a displaced manifestation of the spiritual and moral tendencies of its artist, as evident in Basil Hallward's relationship to his original portrait of Dorian Gray:

... as I worked at it, every flake and film of colour seemed to me to reveal my secret. I grew afraid that others would know my idolatry. I felt, Dorian, that I had told too much, that I had put too much of myself into it. Then it was that I resolved never to allow the picture to be exhibited.<sup>3</sup>

Hallward's exposure anxiety is sharpened by fear of the world's judgement: "I will not bare my soul to their shallow prying eyes. My heart shall never be put under their microscope".<sup>4</sup> Himself capable of concealing his idolatrous passion for Dorian, it attains frightening legibility within his artwork. The artwork's power to involuntarily reveal its artist's secret is also demonstrated when Dorian Gray himself attempts to draw, being forced to stop as "every face that he drew seemed to have a fantastic likeness to Basil Hallward",<sup>5</sup> his portraiture exposing the guilt over Hallward's murder which Dorian is consciously repressing and capable of personally concealing. Hallward's statement, in the opening chapter, establishes the artist's self-exposure through portraiture as a general law:

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2 Chapter 2, *CI* p. 22

3 Chapter 9, *CI*, p. 79

4 Chapter 1, *CI*, p. 10

5 Chapter 14, *CI*, p. 110

every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter.

The sitter is merely the accident, the occasion. It is not he who is revealed by the painter; it is rather the painter who, on the coloured canvas, reveals himself<sup>6</sup>

This theme of the exposure of an artist's character in his art, with its resultant vulnerability to critical reading by the “world's microscope”, becomes the dominant theme of Gogol's 1842 rewrite of 'Portrait'. As its final moral, the monastically enlightened father of B. cautions his son that “he who has talent should be cleanest of all in spirit” as

a person who leaves home in light, festive clothes need only be sprayed with a single spot (пятно – also "stain") of dirt from under a wheel and the whole crowd clusters round and points the finger at him<sup>7</sup>

The dominant image in Gogol's metaphor is that social scorn and humiliating mockery result inevitably from the stain of sin upon artistic talent, likened to light, festive clothing in its fearful ability to expose stain. The image of the "stain of sin" is a dominant motif of Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.<sup>8</sup> As with Basil Hallward's fear of the world's "microscope", Gogol's driving image is public scorn through exposure, represented by the pointing fingers of the clustered crowd. The 1842 'Portrait' supplies several concrete examples of such public exposure of artist by artwork. When the father

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6 Chapter 1, *CI* p. 7

7 “Кто заключил в себе талант, тот чище всех должен быть душою ... Человеку, который вышел из дому в светлой, праздничной одежде, стоит только быть обрызгнуту одним пятном грязи из-под колеса, и уже весь народ обступил его, и указывает на него пальцем” *SS3*, p. 154

8 'unspotted from the world' p. 13 & 87, “stain your cheek with shame” p. 16, 'for every sin... a stain would fleck its fairness' p. 64, 'the stainless purity of his boyish life' p. 83, 'escaped the stain of age' p. 87, 'stained his flower-like bloom' p. 94, 'unstained purity of youth' p. 130, 'unstained purity of his boyhood' p. 148, 'his life might have been free from stain' p. 149 (*CI*)

of B. executes a technically flawless painting out of motives of jealousy against a rival, his picture is declined following the judgement of an ecclesiastical figure that:

... there is no holiness in the faces; there is even, on the contrary, something demonic in the eyes as though an unclean feeling had guided the hand of the artist<sup>9</sup>

These words render the "unclean feeling" of the artist legible to all the spectators, inflicting humiliation and rejection on the creator. Likewise, in the description of the wondrous painting of his artistic peer, the catalyst for Chartkov's spiritual crisis, spiritual attributes of humility and innocence,<sup>10</sup> rather than aesthetic attributes, are used to define the work's exceptionalism. It is not an encounter with a pure soul which makes Chartkov aware of his own soul's corruption, but an encounter with the artwork on which a pure soul is legible. The father of B., who functions as an archetype of the enlightened artist, declares that there can be no contemptible subject for great art as "the beautiful soul of the creator invisibly permeates through it",<sup>11</sup> recalling Basil Hallward's concept of talented artwork as a depiction of its artist rather than its sitter. Such direct causality, where the artwork becomes the site of exposure for its artist's soul, offers one potential solution to the problem of the critically perceived lack of Faustian drama in 'Portrait'. Under this reading, the declining quality of Chartkov's artwork directly represents the decline and corruption of his soul; the inclusion of socially reviled transgressions would only distract from this spiritual

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9 "нет святости в лицах; есть даже, напротив того, что-то демонское в глазах, как будто бы рукою художника водило нечистое чувство" SS3, p. 147. For a discussion of the possible relationship of this quote to Gogol's own later creative crisis, see Vodovozov 'Khudozhestvennoe, filosofskoe i avtobiograficheskoye znachenie povesti "Portret'" in Pokrovsky ed., *Nikolai Vasilyevich Gogol: yevo zhizn' i sochineniya*, pp 226-227

10 "humbly, divinely, innocently and simply, like genius, it rose over everything" ("Скромно, божественно, невинно и просто, как гений, восносилось оно над всем") SS3, p. 124

11 "сквозит невидимо сквозь него прекрасная душа создавшего", SS3, p. 152



narrative. Chartkov's intent to legally purchase and destroy talented works of art is defined as "the most hellish intention that a person ever experienced",<sup>12</sup> a maximum that excludes the possibility of deeper degradation, in accordance with Gogol's consistently expressed concept of artwork as primary expression of soul, for which human life is a secondary medium.

### **3.2 Thematic Antinomy Within *The Picture of Dorian Gray***

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* builds a thematic antinomy of conflicting codes, between an aestheticist ideology of artistic abstraction and the view of art as incarnation of its artist's soul explored above. When Basil Hallward states that "it often seems to me that art conceals the artist far more completely than it ever reveals him",<sup>13</sup> this assertion contradicts his repeatedly stated belief that his portrait of Dorian fearfully reveals his own "secret". Wilde's preface allies his own stated views with Henry Wotton's aestheticist philosophies on the amorality of art, stating "there is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book",<sup>14</sup> though these views are undermined by the directly depicted events of the novel itself, where immoral art is shown to have a corrupting and destructive influence, with Dorian Gray shown to be "poisoned by a book"<sup>15</sup> that Wotton gifts him with into a life of evil. The conflict established between the book's declarations of the amorality of art and its depictions of the moral influence of art lead biographer Richard Ellmann to claim that "Wilde the preface-writer and Wilde the novelist deconstruct each other."<sup>16</sup> The function of thematic antinomy, or self-contradiction, in Wilde's aesthetics is discussed in **Chapter Six**. Here, thematic antinomy between aestheticist and moral philosophies of art establish a plausible

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12 "самое адское намерение, какое когда-либо питал человек", SS3, p. 128

13 Chapter 9, *CI*, p. 79

14 *CI*, p. 3

15 Chapter 11, *CI*, p. 100

16 Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 315

deniability around its author's own views, or express his internal conflict on the topic. In spite of the aestheticist Wotton's praise of insincerity in art, Wilde's novel consistently depicts the quality of an artwork as dependent on its sincerity of self-expression. The realistic portrait of Dorian Gray, whose sincerity threatens Basil Hallward with the revelation of his "secret" to the world's "microscope", is repeatedly defined as his "best work".<sup>17</sup> Likewise, the performance of Sybil Vane that is characterised as "simply bad art"<sup>18</sup> is explained as a result of her sudden sense of the artificiality of the stage and her resulting insincerity of feeling.<sup>19</sup> The novel's wider conflict between attempted abstraction and actual self-revelation is crystallized in Basil Hallward's struggle to efface his real "best work", the portrait of Dorian Gray, in the name of his theoretical opposition to self-representation:

An artist should create beautiful things, but should put nothing of his own life into them. [...] We have lost the abstract sense of beauty. Some day I will show the world what it is; and for that reason the world shall never see my portrait of Dorian Gray<sup>20</sup>

Basil refuses to expose his emotionally authentic art to the world, taking refuge in a theoretical ideal of abstracted beauty that he is personally incapable of realizing, to the destruction of his talent. Effectively, in this moment, Basil Hallward expresses a conflict between his theoretical opinion and his actual art, which mirrors the conflict that Wilde establishes between his theoretical statements as preface-writer and narrator, and the directly portrayed events of his novel. Wilde's statement that "Basil Hallward is

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17 'it is your best work, Basil, the best thing you have ever done' p. 4, 'it is the best thing I have ever done' p.76 'it was really a masterpiece' p.145 (*CI*)

18 Chapter 7, *CI* p. 58

19 Chapter 7, *CI* p. 60

20 Chapter 1, *CI* p. 11

what I think I am",<sup>21</sup> may suggest the fictional painter's greater emotional investment in his representative art, horror at the sight of the morally corrupt artwork, and powerlessness to realize his own declared ideal of abstracted artwork, to be a mouthpiece for Wilde's own conflicts on the issue. Further evidence that anxiety over self-exposure through artwork may be a primary concern within Wilde's text can be inferred through comparison with Gogol's 'Portrait', where the same concern is expressed directly and consistently, without antinomy, as a topic meriting treatment as Gothic horror.

The primacy of exposure anxiety, as a factor constraining self-expression, would also raise questions over the role of aestheticism within the work of Oscar Wilde. The philosophy of "abstract Beauty" is placed in the mouth of Wilde's proxy, Basil Hallward, less as primary motivator for his artistic choices than as a comforting self-delusion, to justify the compelled closeting of his authentic self-expression, represented by the portrait of Dorian Gray. Lord Henry Wotton, the character who most consistently expresses aestheticist views on art, as well as the paradoxical wit for which Wilde was socially celebrated, was defined by Wilde himself as "what the world thinks me",<sup>22</sup> implying his secondary status as a persona or as a less authentic form of self-expression.

### **3.3 Dorian Gray As Living Artwork**

Aside from the representation of artwork in the form of portraits, the human Dorian Gray may also be viewed as a living artwork within Wilde's text.<sup>23</sup> Dorian's wholesale adoption of the tastes and views of Henry Wotton, becoming their physical

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21 Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 310

22 Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 319

23 "life has been your art. You have set yourself to music." Chapter 19, *CI* p. 146

manifestation,<sup>24</sup> explicitly constructs Dorian Gray as the artistic creation of Wotton.<sup>25</sup> Basil Hallward's equal role in creating Dorian Gray is suggested by Dorian's statement, when Hallward expresses a wish to see his soul, that "it is your own handiwork".<sup>26</sup> The monstrous nature of Dorian resides in his embodiment of immortality and amorality, qualities which both Wotton and Hallward attribute to artworks. Critical examination of the triangular relationship between the three men often focuses on its homoerotic undertones,<sup>27</sup> but speculating on the extent to which *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is preoccupied with its characters *desiring* a young man risks obscuring the extent to which it is preoccupied with its characters *creating* a young man. The triangular relationship of Hallward, Wotton and Dorian Gray serves as a multivalent symbol, freighted with both artistic and homoerotic potential meanings. The question then arises: if Dorian Gray can be read as a living artwork, does he conform to the wider pattern by serving as the legible site for the sins of his creators?

Basil Hallward's assertion that "one has a right to judge of a man by the effect he has over his friends"<sup>28</sup> offers an influenced person as the true site of legibility for the character of the influencer, as the artwork exposes the artist. Though Hallward's judgement is applied directly to Dorian Gray, this principle is implicitly applicable to Henry Wotton as influencer of Dorian. Wotton's statement that "it often happened that when we thought we were experimenting on others, we were really experimenting on ourselves"<sup>29</sup> refers nominally to Dorian's passion for Sybil Vane, but directly follows Wotton's definition of Dorian as an experimentation in his own "scientific analysis of

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24 "I am putting it into practice, as I do everything you say" Chapter 4, *CI* p. 34

25 "to a large extent the lad was his own creation" Chapter 4, *CI*, p. 41

26 Chapter 12, *CI* p. 104

27 See Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet*. Ian Small also cites Richard Dellamora, Brian Reade and Ed Cohen as providing readings that 'suggest that in *Dorian Gray* the erotic is [...] symbolically displaced on to the aesthetic' (Small, *Oscar Wilde Revalued*, p. 164) which suggests the homoerotic meaning as primary, for which the aesthetic references are merely symbol.

28 Chapter 12, *CI* p. 103

29 Chapter 4, *CI*, p. 42

the passions".<sup>30</sup> By confirming that Wotton believes he is experimenting on Dorian, Wotton's own logic implies that he is really experimenting on himself. The unrecognisably monstrous appearance of Dorian at the novel's end is therefore a dual revelation; it publicly reveals the vicious tendencies of Dorian, while simultaneously revealing the corrupting tendencies of Wotton's aestheticist philosophy through the haunting true appearance of his living artwork, Dorian. Patricia Behrendt associates Henry Wotton with a series of aristocratic dandy characters in "sinister and self-serving" antagonistic roles across Wilde's oeuvre, including Prince Paul Maraloffski, the Duke of Padua and the Lords Darlington and Illingworth,<sup>31</sup> suggesting that Wilde actively cultivated a public persona which he persistently identified in his fiction with antagonists and corrupting figures.

As Henry Wotton muses on Dorian Gray, his exercise of influence is notably portrayed as art-form:

Talking to him was like playing upon an exquisite violin. He answered to every touch and thrill of the bow.... there was something terribly enthralling in the exercise of influence. No other activity was like it. To project one's soul into some gracious form, and let it tarry there for a moment; to hear one's own intellectual views echoed back to one with all the music and passion of youth; to convey one's temperament into another as though it were a subtle fluid or a strange perfume [...] There was nothing that one could not do with him. He could be made a Titan or a toy.<sup>32</sup>

Apart from highlighting the boundless constructibility of Dorian into everything

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30 Chapter 4, *CI*, p. 42

31 Behrendt, *Oscar Wilde Eros and Aesthetics*, p. 74

32 Chapter 3, *CI* p. 27

from a "Titan" to a "toy", and defining "the exercise of influence" as a creativity analogous to the art-forms of music and perfumery, this quotation notably characterises Henry Wotton's influence as "projecting one's soul into a gracious form", in other words, the same transaction which Dorian performs with his portrait. Wotton repeats the concept that influence is associated with soul transference and musical resonance.<sup>33</sup> If Dorian's own soul is displaced into Hallward's artwork, Wilde's conception of "influence" as soul-infusion suggests that Wotton's soul is equally displaced into Dorian, whose sins Dorian has "borrowed" and made manifest, as Hallward's character is said to reveal itself on the canvas of his artwork. A confirmation that Dorian's transaction, of displacing his soul into the portrait, is conceived in parallel terms to Wotton's transaction, of displacing his soul into Dorian, may be found in Dorian's explanation of the relationship between himself and the portrait as a form of influence and vibration in which the inorganic and the living are interchangeable:

If thought could exercise its influence upon a living organism, might not thought exercise an influence upon dead and inorganic things? Nay, without thought or conscious desire, might not things external to ourselves vibrate in unison with our moods and passions, atom calling to atom in secret love of strange affinity?<sup>34</sup>

This image of "vibrating in unison with moods and passions" echoes Wotton's concept of the influenced "answering to every touch and thrill of the bow" to establish a recurring motif of musical resonance, associated with soul transference, within the core concept of "influence". It is not necessary to choose between reading Dorian Gray as

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33 "to influence a person is to give him one's own soul. He does not think his natural thoughts or burn with his natural passions. His virtues are not real to him. His sins, if there are such things as sins, are borrowed. He becomes an echo of someone else's music" Chapter 3, *CI*, p. 27

34 Chapter 8, *CI* p. 73

homoerotic object of desire or created object of art; erotic and artistic imagery are conflated in parallel descriptions of the “secret love of strange affinity” between man and man, and between man and artwork. This equation of “living organism” and “inorganic thing”, in their shared designation as both beloved and artwork, is observed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick:

the novel takes a plot that is distinctively one of male-male desire, the competition between Basil Hallward and Lord Henry Wotton for Dorian Gray's love, and condenses it into a plot of the mysterious bond of figural likeness and figural expiation between Dorian Gray and his own portrait<sup>35</sup>

While thematic doubling of the erotic and the artistic facilitates plausible deniability of the homoerotic, the capability of Wilde's artistic plot to function as an independent theme may be judged by its high correlation with the artistic theme of 'Portrait', which forms virtually the sole focus of Gogol's work. Where Gogol's narrative establishes the creation of art as its primary concern through a multiplicity of artist characters, whose roles echo and amplify each other, Wilde surrounds the artist Hallward with characters whose activities are conceived as art-forms, from Wotton's exercise of influence to Dorian's pursuit of sensation, that mirror, echo and amplify the literal artist Hallward's fraught relationship to his artwork. Like Gogol's multiple artists, Wilde's multiple artist-figures exhibit parallel patterns in their displacement of soul into artwork, suggesting multiple exposure anxieties contained within the concept of artistic self-revelation.

In conclusion, a thematic survey of the portrayal of artworks in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and 'Portrait' reveals a repeated and consistent motif, on the part of both

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35 Kosofsky Sedgwick, Eve, *The Epistemology of the Closet*, p. 160

authors, depicting the artwork as a truer representation of its creator's moral character than the artist himself is. This concept of artwork as site of exposure is associated with vulnerability and aversion, through the motif of anxiety over the revelation of stains of sin, an image repeatedly employed by both Gogol and Wilde. In Wilde's novel, the exercise of influence over another is associated with "secret love", echoing the concept of eroticized mentorship inherent in Classical Grecian pederasty, with the influenced person repeatedly suggested as the true site of exposure for the moral character of the influencer, as artwork is to artist. In Wilde's novel, a rhetoric of aestheticism, alleging the insincerity and abstraction of artwork, conflicts with his novel's own consistent representation of artwork as moral exposure of its artist, while Gogol's 'Portrait' consistently depicts the artwork as incarnation of its artist's soul. The intensity of anxiety associated with this concept may be judged by the recurrent theme, across the literary output of both authors, of artists violently destroyed by their artistic creations. A thematic survey of this motif forms the next chapter.



## Chapter 4 – Artistic Creation as Destroyer of Artist

The theme of the artist as mentally, emotionally and physically threatened by dangerous artistic creation, which unites both 'Portrait' and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, also features in Gogol's 'Nevsky Prospekt' and Wilde's 'The Nightingale and the Rose', with echoes in Gogol's 'Diary of a Madman' and 'The Overcoat' and Wilde's 'The Birthday of the Infanta'. A comparison of the theme's treatment in all these works is the subject of this chapter, where it is used to assess both authors' perception of the relationship between artist and artwork. As in the previous chapter, frequency of recurrence and the consistency of its context is assessed as an estimate of psychological significance to the author. Taken in conjunction with their clustering of horror effects around the concept of mimesis, explored in **Chapter Two**, and their repeated portrayal of artwork as site of exposure, assessed in **Chapter Three**, could repeated representations of the violent destruction of artists by their artistic inspiration indicate a perceived threat strong enough to plausibly motivate the development of an aesthetic of effacement, whose features are described in **Chapter Six**? **Section 4.1** surveys the theme of art as the destroyer of the artist across the literary output of both authors. **Section 4.2** analyses the parallel theme of love as the destroyer of the artist, in works by both Gogol and Wilde. **Section 4.3** considers further characters in Gogol's fiction who fit the same archetype as his doomed artists. **Section 4.4** compares those artists who are permitted to survive within both authors' narrative, and assesses whether they can be said to be uniformly characterized by their successful elimination of desire. The conclusion of the chapter reviews the consistency of the theme's recurrence and its likelihood to reflect the authors' own perceived threat in the artistic process.

#### 4.1 Art as Destroyer of the Artist

The threatening and tormenting power of artworks is manifested in 'Portrait' in the "signs of hopeless madness" and fevered death-throes of Andrei Petrovich Chartkov, during which he is menaced by "fearful portraits"<sup>1</sup> that cover the walls, ceiling and floor of his sick room as it stretches to infinity, maximally amplifying the power of the artwork and magnifying its destructive threat to murderous proportions. A hint of Nikolai Gogol's personal identification with the doomed painter is suggested when the young Chartkov, exhilarated by newfound worldly success, is depicted walking "up the pavement like a *gogol*",<sup>2</sup> referring to the characteristic swaggering strut of the golden-eye duck, called *gogol* in Russian, which critic Gavriel Shapiro regards as "concealed self-ridicule".<sup>3</sup> The destruction of Chartkov, by a roomful of tormenting phantom portraits, following the destruction of his talent after being seduced by the haunted portrait's temptations, represents a punishment of the artist that is echoed in the story's second half by the sufferings of the artist father of B., in the loss of his wife, daughter and infant son, which he considers "the punishment of heaven"<sup>4</sup> for creating the moneylender's portrait.

Like the moneylender's portrait, Dorian Gray's role within Wilde's narrative is as the catalyst for the destruction and downfall of artists; in this case, Sybil Vane and Basil Hallward. Basil's role as creator of Dorian is emphasised in the statement that Dorian's soul is Basil's "handiwork", immediately preceding Dorian's brutal stabbing of Hallward. This total, violent destruction of Hallward by his muse and "handiwork" follows Dorian's destruction of Hallward's artistic talent, noted by Wotton's remark that

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1 "признаки безнадежного сумасшествия ... Страшные портреты" SS 3, p. 129

2 "Прошелся по тротуару гоголем" SS 3, p. 107

3 Shapiro, Gavriel, *Nikolai Gogol and the Baroque Cultural Heritage*, p. 229

4 "почел он небесною казнию себе" SS 3, p. 150

"when you and he ceased to be great friends, he ceased to be a great artist".<sup>5</sup> Like Gogol's Chertkov, Hallward is punished first by the loss of his talent, then by his violent death.

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* places its remaining characters in equally dangerous relation to artistic creation. Dorian's creative pursuit of life as art-form is linked to the destruction of his moral character.<sup>6</sup> Though triggered by her spurned love for Dorian, Sybil Vane's suicide is also presented as a self-destructive artistic performance. As she "played that dreadful last scene"<sup>7</sup> her ability to convey "wonder" to the "spectators of the play"<sup>8</sup> comes at the cost of her own death, seen as a method whereby she "passed again into the sphere of art".<sup>9</sup>

This theme of simultaneous artistic apotheosis and self-destruction has recurrent echoes in the work of Wilde, who reputedly claimed that "the artistic life is a long and lovely suicide".<sup>10</sup> The nightingale, which must create a perfect red rose through simultaneous passionate song and the piercing of her heart's blood in 'The Nightingale and the Rose', unites the concept of perfect art and suicide in a manner similar to Sybil Vane. The music of the nightingale is described by the student for whom she sacrifices herself as "all style without any sincerity" whose notes "do not mean anything",<sup>11</sup> establishing a tension between the perceived insincerity of an artist's self-expression and its costly and destructive relationship to its creator. Similarly, Wilde's 'The Birthday of the Infanta' portrays a dwarf whose finest and most amusing performance as actor actually represents his agonized, self-loathing death throes, repeating the theme of the artist's self-destruction as artistic apotheosis, as well as of the discordance between a

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5 Chapter 19, *CI*, p. 144

6 "there were moments when he looked on evil simply as a mode through which he could realise his conception of the beautiful." Chapter 11, *CI*, p. 100

7 Chapter 8, *CI* p. 72

8 Chapter 8, *CI* p. 70

9 Chapter 9, *CI* p. 75

10 Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 270

11 *CI* p. 166

performance's fatal cost to its creator and its perceived triviality by spectators.

#### 4.2 Love as Destroyer of the Artist

In the original 1835 version of 'Portrait', published in *Arabesques*, the conception of the moneylender as corrupting muse resembles Wilde's conflation of romantic and artistic inspiration in the figure of Dorian Gray. Gogol's artist protagonist, originally called 'Chertkov', possesses no stated tendencies towards materialism until the haunted portrait of moneylender Petromikhali chides him for the fruitlessness of his labour and instructs him in the ways of the fashionable society portraitist, dictating the artist's future course before concluding that "I love you, and because of that I give you this advice".<sup>12</sup> The relationship between the corrupting muse and the suggestible artist is thereby established as a professed love that is ruinous to the influenced beloved. Though Petromikhali's professed love for Chertkov might be dismissed as merely a ploy to seduce the young man to his ruin, yet this loving ruin conforms to a wider pattern, common to both authors, of portraying love bonds as a catalyst for destruction and damnation for artists. In **Chapter Ten**, a connection is drawn between the Oriental characterization of Petromikhali's "vivid imprint of a Southern physiognomy",<sup>13</sup> and the Oriental characterization of Gogol's heterosexual predator in his horror 'Terrible Vengeance'. It may be suggested that Petromikhali is representative of an Oriental figure elsewhere associated with sexual corruption in Gogol's fiction, though the temptations of Petromikhali are largely restricted to the financial and the artistic.

A yet more exact parallel with Basil Hallward's destruction, by the object of his simultaneous romantic and artistic inspiration, may be found in the fate of Gogol's other

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12 "Я тебя люблю и потому даю тебе такие советы", *SS7*, p. 360

13 "яркий отпечаток южной физиогномии" – *SS7*, p.353

major artist character, Piskarev of 'Nevsky Prospekt'. The catalyst for Piskarev's destruction, the unnamed prostitute who functions as love object, is characterised as "his ideal... the original of dream paintings, she by which he lived",<sup>14</sup> confining the love object within "dream paintings" of his imagination, which motivate his retreat from reality by inducing sleep through opium. The perceived advantage of the love object's absolute constructibility as artwork is explicit: "better that you had not existed at all! Had not lived in the world, but were the creation of an inspired artist!"<sup>15</sup> As with Dorian Gray, the line between love object and artwork becomes blurred. Though Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick attributed this thematic doubling in Wilde's novel to an enforced closeting of the homoerotic,<sup>16</sup> such closeting of sexuality is not required in Gogol's heterosexual romance plot, suggesting that the interchangeability of love object and artwork can function as a distinct theme in its own right, potentially expressing both authors' perception that romance and art are parallel as fatal passions, or that they interchangeably induce exposure anxiety. A Persian opium-dealer notably serves as a conduit for Piskarev's erotic dreams of ideal womanhood in 'Nevsky Prospekt', while referring to himself in the feminine gender,<sup>17</sup> associating the gender-ambiguous Oriental with the ruinous seduction of an artist. The Persian and Piskarev are shown to be kin by their shared love of "dream paintings" of beautiful women, which introduces a sexual element to their transaction while maintaining its heterosexual target. The emphasis laid on the inefficiency of Piskarev's throat-slitting suicide, and the long, drawn-out and agonising death it leads to, like Chartkov's dying suffering and the fact that his agonized and contorted "corpse was terrible",<sup>18</sup> illustrates a violently

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14 "Его идеал ... оригинал мечтательных картин, та, которою он жил" SS 3, p. 34

15 "Лучше бы ты вовсе не существовала! Не жила в мире, а была бы создание вдохновенного художника!" SS 3, p. 32

16 Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, pp. 165-166

17 "а я сама чтобы лежала возле нее и курила трубку!" SS 3, p. 31

18 "Труп его был страшен" SS 3, p. 130

destructive impulse towards both artist protagonists in Gogol's work.

A similarly violent impulse may be read in Wilde's depiction of the murder of Basil Hallward, with its emphasis on frenzied, repeated stabbings, crushed head and the artist choking on his own blood:

He rushed at him, and dug the knife into the great vein that is behind the ear, crushing the man's head down onto the table, and stabbing again and again. There was a stifled groan, and the horrible sound of someone choking with blood. Three times the outstretched arms shot up convulsively, waving grotesque, stiff-fingered hands in the air. He stabbed him twice more, but the man did not move.<sup>19</sup>

The artists are marginalized at the moment of their deaths: Piskarev's death is seen from the perspective of anonymous witnesses who break down the door of his locked room; Chartkov's death is portrayed from the point of view of a mystified doctor; Hallward, at the point of his death, though seen through the eyes of his beloved and murderer, is portrayed in depersonalized language as "the man" and "someone".

*The Picture of Dorian Gray's* narrative continues after the death of Hallward, following Dorian as protagonist, while Hallward's significance is diminished by Wotton's statement that he was "really rather dull [...] if he is dead, I don't want to think about him"<sup>20</sup> and Dorian's consistent lack of remorse. Chartkov's death is followed by a second half of 'Portrait', which follows the father of B. as protagonist and in which Chartkov is never again referred to. Piskarev's death leads to his seamless replacement as protagonist by his friend Pirogov, who fails to attend Piskarev's funeral as "he had

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19 Chapter 13, *CI*, p. 107

20 Chapter 19, *CI*, p. 143

other things on his mind".<sup>21</sup> The effect is to undercut the tragic resonance of the artists' deaths through the narratives' refusal to treat them as climactic, the marked indifference of all remaining characters and the comic tone of many ensuing passages, particularly those of 'Nevsky Prospekt' and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Oscar Wilde's own statement that "Basil Hallward is what I think I am" adds further resonance to the destruction and marginalization of his character as an act of violent, symbolic self-effacement, legible too in Gogol's description of Chartkov strutting "like a *gogol*" before his own emphatically agonized and unmourned death. Where the marginalization of a character and their disposal mid-narrative might conventionally be read as signifying an author's lack of identification, both Gogol and Wilde appear to give this treatment to characters that they identify with themselves, suggesting the trivialization of their deaths as an effacement strategy to conceal their significance from readers, or as a form of narrative violence against these characters, in addition to the literal violence to which they are subjected by the plot.

Although the fusion of romantic and artistic inspiration, which is a central feature of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* through the doomed artists Sybil Vane and Basil Hallward, is barely present in Gogol's 1835 'Portrait' and wholly absent in his 1842 rewrite, comparison of Gogol's 'Nevsky Prospekt' with *The Picture of Dorian Gray* reveals a highly parallel concept of the intertwining of eroticism and artistry within the two texts, where the two forces are shown as equally destructive as well as interdependent. Gogol's maintenance of this motif within heterosexual romantic plots, where it is not required as a closeting device, suggests its capacity to function as an independent theme.

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21 "ему было вовсе не до того", SS3, p. 36

### 4.3 The Wider Resonance of Gogol's Doomed Artist Archetype

Further examples of the doomed artist archetype in the work of Gogol are suggested by Robert Maguire, who regards Aksenty Poprishchin and Akaky Akakievich Bashmachkin, of 'Diary of a Madman' and 'The Overcoat' respectively, as artist figures, with the diarist Poprishchin defined as "a character who works in words, that is, in the same medium as a writer, and is driven by many of the same impulses ... this is as close as Gogol came to dealing with his own craft in fiction".<sup>22</sup> Gogol's original conception of Poprishchin as an artist may be argued from the story's original title of 'Diary of a Mad Musician', and Poprishchin's characterization bears strong relationship to the archetype established by Piskarev and Chartkov. Poprishchin actively constructs his own alternate reality in the private writing of his diary, as Piskarev conjures his visually through "dream paintings" and, as with Piskarev, Poprishchin's destruction is triggered by the discrepancy between his imaginary world and actuality. The nature of the desires which mentally destroy Poprishchin combine Chartkov's urge for social acclaim with Piskarev's unrequited love.

If Poprishchin is accepted as representing a variant of the artist archetype, the writing activities of the copyist Akaky Akakievich may also be argued to represent an act of maximally unoriginal artistic creation, he being unable to make even small alterations to the texts copied, attempting which he "broke out in a complete sweat, rubbed his forehead and finally said 'No, better you let me copy something'".<sup>23</sup> Akaky Akakievich copies compulsively by night for his own pleasure, fulfilling the physical actions of a creative writer and experiencing the same emotions of absorption and thrill, but with a total creative lack. Abram Tertz has commented on the "likeness of Gogol" in the portrayal of Akaky Akakievich's copying, in the imaginative worlds that he is

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22 Maguire, Robert, *Exploring Gogol*, p. 49

23 "он вспотел совершенно, тер лоб и наконец сказал: 'Нет, лучше дайте я перепишу что-нибудь'» SS 3, p. 160



described as seeing opening before him in every letter, and his elation and gratification during the writing process.<sup>24</sup> Akaky Akakievich's doom may also be compared in its nature to that of all the other artist figures cited above, combining desire for love with desire for social acclaim. Though the object of his desire is an inanimate object, the titular overcoat, he is described as experiencing the same emotions of awakened passion over the sewing of his coat as a man preparing for marriage to an animate bride, and also receives a minimal boost to his social status from the coat. Thus, Akaky Akakievich Bashmachkin represents an abject travesty of the fatal, overreaching desires characteristic of Gogol's artist archetype, in desiring the most minimal form of warm embrace and status, while serving as a creatively impotent, vestigial writer.

Assuming that Maguire's contention is accepted, that Chartkov, Piskarev, Poprishchin and Bashmachkin are all variants of a single artist archetype in the work of Gogol, the representatives of this archetype can be seen to be united by their shared fates of mental breakdown, intense physical suffering and violent death. The beating and institutionalising of Poprishchin is the only exception to otherwise uniform fatality, perhaps because Poprishchin is the narrator of his own story and thus unable to narrate his own death, though his mental faculties are effectively destroyed by the story's end. Not only are these artist figures universally doomed to violent annihilation, but they are the only protagonists so doomed in the cycle of Gogol's 'Petersburg Tales'. Like Oscar Wilde's doomed painter, actress, nightingale and dwarf, the universal fate of Gogol's artist figures is violent destruction, a consistent recurrence which indicates the intensity of the perceived threat in artistic creation. The destruction of these artist figures is accompanied uniformly by an emphatically dismissive attitude by remaining characters, suggestive of social alienation on the part of the authors.

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24 "подобие Гоголя" in Tertz, *V teni Gogolia*, p. 138

#### 4.4 Elimination of Desire As Survival Strategy

The pre-revolutionary Russian commentator Shenrok suggests 'Portrait' and 'Nevsky Prospekt', written for joint inclusion in *Arabesques*, together form a binary:

... one presenting the artist-idealist, perishing out of utter unfamiliarity with the pettiness of daily life, the other an artist perishing from the swallowing by that same pettiness of his highest urges<sup>25</sup>

Taken collectively then, as Shenrok suggests, 'Nevsky Prospekt' and 'Portrait' represent a ruinous double-bind in which both excessive worldliness and excessive unworldliness are the catalyst for an artist's destruction. The only narrative of artistic redemption, that of the father of B., requires his extreme ascetic elimination of all desire. Insofar as Piskarev is defined by romantic desire, and Chartkov by desire for social acclaim, desire itself emerges as the common cause of the artists' destruction, with the elimination of all desire presented as an artist's only possible salvation. Shenrok's description could equally be applied to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, positioning Basil Hallward as "the artist-idealist, perishing out of utter unfamiliarity with the pettiness of daily life" and Dorian Gray as "an artist perishing from the swallowing by that same pettiness of his higher urges". The worldliness of Dorian, and the unworldly idealism of Basil, have an identically destructive end, with their shared characteristic being desire: Basil's destruction is perceived by the artist himself as punishment for worshipping Dorian too much, while Dorian is destroyed by self-

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25 “представляя одна – художника-идеалиста, гибнущего от полного незнакомства с пошлостью обыденной жизни, другая – художник погибшего от поглощения этою самою пошлостью его высших стремлений” Шенрок – 'Петербургские повести Гоголя' ('Gogol's Petersburg Tales') in Pokrovsky, V. ed., *Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol': Ego zhizn' i sochineniia*, p. 223

worship and lust for sensation. The survival of Lord Henry Wotton, as a form of artist whose artistic medium is influence, may be attributed to his character's successful elimination of desire, being characterized by cynical detachment, boredom and belief in art as a substitute for action. Wotton's amoral model for self-preservation appears diametrically opposed to the ascetic and moral model offered by the father of B., yet both models are nevertheless defined by their subjects' successful elimination of desire. Biographically, parallels can be drawn between the path to salvation chosen by the father of B. and the religious asceticism which Gogol himself practised toward the end of his life, just as Wotton resembles the dandy persona adopted by Wilde in social interactions, indicating that both authors personally followed paths which they portrayed in their fiction as possible escapes from the otherwise inevitable destruction of artists.

Aside from the violently destructive relationship which these works establish between suffering artist, fearfully revelatory artwork and corrupting muse, their vision of the making of art is, finally, also dependent on the pressures exerted by its intended spectators, whose essential hostility is suggested by their dismissive reception of the suffering deaths of artists. Closer analysis of the spectator's role forms the next chapter.

## Chapter 5 - Aversion to Spectators

In the three preceding chapters, Gogol and Wilde's association of the artistic process with exposure anxiety was analysed. **Chapter Two** concluded that the horror effects of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and 'Portrait' both notably cluster around the concept of mimesis itself. **Chapter Three** concluded that both authors shared a recurrent preoccupation with the theme of artwork as site of exposure for the moral character of the artist. **Chapter Four** concluded that both authors shared a recurrent preoccupation with the theme of the artist violently destroyed by artistic inspiration, which might be interpreted as an indicator of the intensity of the perceived threat, and which is also thematically associated with fatal love. If exposure is accepted as the primary anxiety dominating both authors' depiction of the artistic process, aversion to spectators could be a logical outcome of that anxiety. This aversion was briefly noted in the last chapter, in the marked indifference of all remaining characters to the violent, suffering destruction of the artist figures. The goal of this chapter is to survey the theme of aversion to spectators across the entire literary fiction of both authors, estimating its intensity by the degree to which the act of spectating is associated with cruelty or violation, as well as by frequency of recurrence and consistency of context. **Section 5.1** compares the theme of hostility toward interpretative critics in the writing of both authors. **Section 5.2** compares both authors' treatment of the mockery of crowds as a persecuting force, and their shared expressions of political hostility to populism. **Section 5.3** analyses the theme of public space as an agent of inauthenticity and social isolation as a prerequisite of artistic talent. **Section 5.4** analyzes the theme of the spectator as essentially predatory and invulnerable to conscience. The conclusion of the chapter reviews the common themes observed in Gogol and Wilde's perception of the

artistic process and whether their correspondences may be explained as symptoms of exposure anxiety.

### **5.1 Hostility to Interpretative Critics**

'Portrait' is one of only two of Gogol's prose works to be significantly rewritten for its inclusion in his 1842 Collected Works (the other is *Taras Bulba*). In addition to reducing the supernatural element and the religious theme of the Antichrist, while anonymizing the character of the moneylender to shift the focus onto artistic philosophy, Gogol added two further subplots to exemplify the tragic fate of doomed victims of the demonic moneylender: a "young grandee" patron of the arts and sciences, and a brilliantly attractive pair of mutually attached lovers. The narrative of the lovers, in which the young nobleman Prince R. borrows money to earn the hand of his beloved, before ending his life in maddened jealousy and painful suicide, illustrates the theme of fatal love, elsewhere associated with artists in Gogol's representation of Piskarev in 'Nevsky Prospekt'. The character of the "young grandee", patron of the arts, is therefore situated within a Faustian triptych of cautionary tales of overreaching desire, alongside Chartkov's ambitious artist and a doomed lover. The theme of the young grandee's overreaching subplot is the punishment of the over-interpretative critic.

Elevated to a "significant position" by the Empress Catherine II, the young grandee is forced to borrow money from the demonic moneylender after spending his own in overly generous patronage of the arts and sciences. His character then becomes corrupted:

In all works, he began to see the bad side, taking every word crookedly [...] he began to see in everything some kind of revolutionary tendency, in everything he

imagined hints. He became suspicious to such a degree that he finally began to suspect himself; began to compose terrible, unjust denunciations.<sup>1</sup>

Critical outcry over the perceived revolutionary tendencies of Gogol's *The Inspector General*, staged one year after the original 1835 publication of 'Portrait', might be seen as reflected in Gogol's decision to add an over-interpretative critic to his archetypes of the damned in his 1842 rewrite, whose detection of revolutionary tendencies in artworks recalls the critical reception of Gogol's play. In the same 1842 *Collected Works*, Gogol also published a more direct fictional response to the critics of *The Inspector General* in the one-act play *Theatrical Dispersal after the Presentation of a New Comedy* (henceforth referred to by its standard English translation, *After the Comedy*),<sup>2</sup> discussed below.

The "terrible, unjust denunciations" of the young grandee cause Catherine the Great to deliver a speech during which she appears "divinely beautiful", which states that "all creators of art are diamonds and pearls in the imperial crown" and contrasts the flourishing of Moliere and Shakespeare under the gracious protection of monarchs, with the rejection of Dante in his republican homeland. The speech affirms that it is not under monarchic rule that "creations of the mind are disdained and persecuted".<sup>3</sup> Catherine the Great, who defends "creations of the mind" from republican mob rule, would herself have been forbidden to rule under the republican manifestos of rebel Decembrists such as Pavel Pestel, who called for exclusively male suffrage and whose

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1 "Во всех сочинениях стал видеть дурную сторону, толковал криво всякое слово ... Он стал видеть во всем какое-то революционное направление, во всем ему чудились намеки. Он сделался подозрительным до такой степени, что начал наконец подозревать самого себя, стал сочинять ужасные, несправедливые доносы", *SS 3*, p. 137

2 Театральный разъезд после представления новой комедии, first draft in 1836 following the first staging of *The Inspector General*

3 "не под монархическим правлением... презираются и преследуются творенья ума... все производители искусств суть перлы и бриллианты в императорской короне... была в эту минуту божественно прекрасна", *SS 3*, p. 138

uprising triggered the repressive political atmosphere within which Nikolai Gogol composed his work. Rather than a mere pandering to official censors, inclusion of Catherine the Great's defence of the writer could equally be interpreted as expressing Gogol's sincere aversion to tyranny of the majority, an aversion expressed by Wilde in 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism': "there is this to be said in favour of the despot, that he, being an individual, may have culture, while the mob, being a monster, has none".<sup>4</sup>

Catherine II also appears as ideal and benevolent ruler in *The Night Before Christmas*, where her patronage of the satirist Denis Fonvizin is highlighted, while she is described "with the majestically smiling appearance which was so able to bend everything to its will and could only belong to a reigning woman".<sup>5</sup> Where Gogol's contemporary, Alexander Pushkin, would explore his complex relationship with Tsarist autocracy primarily through the male figure of Peter the Great, in works like *Poltava*, *The Bronze Horseman* and *The Moor of Peter the Great*, Gogol's fiction represents idealized Tsarist autocracy exclusively through the figure of Catherine the Great, a preference for the enlightened female despot that might be consistent with the perspective of a stigmatized sexual minority. The moral superiority of women is directly claimed in Gogol's *Selected Passages From Correspondence With Friends*: "I swear, women are much better than us, men. In them is more greatness of heart, more courage in everything noble".<sup>6</sup>

The enlightened despot Catherine the Great's punishment for the grandee is severe:

The grandee who had betrayed trust was made an example of and dismissed from

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4 Wilde, *De Profundis, the Ballad of Reading Gaol & Other Writings*, pp. 273-274

5 "величественно улыбающимся видом, который так умел покорять себе все и мог только принадлежать одной царствующей женщине" *SS I*, p. 273

6 "Клянусь, женщины гораздо лучше нас, мужчин. В них больше великодушия, больше отважности на все благородное" p. 137, *SS 6*

his post. But he read a far more terrible punishment on the faces of his countrymen. That was decided and universal contempt. The vain spirit suffered beyond words: pride, thwarted ambition, destroyed hopes – all united together, and in attacks of terrible madness and rage, his life was cut short.<sup>7</sup>

A comparison may here be drawn with Dante himself, cited as an exemplary author by Catherine II's speech, in his politically and personally motivated choices for many of the damned figures populating his *Inferno*, such as his enemy Filippo Argenti. As Dante wrote the *Inferno* in exile from Florence and inflicted fictional retribution on Florentine political factions, so Gogol, in self-imposed exile from Russia, may be seen to inflict fictional retribution on Russia's persecuting critics through this rewriting of 'Portrait'. The abrupt shift from painting to writing as the art-form under discussion is accompanied by a full vindication of the intellectual freedoms of the writer through the authority figure of Catherine II, and a painful death of convulsing insanity for the overly interpretative critic. This freedom from scrutiny, disdain or persecution, advocated for the writer, contrasts markedly with the precarious position of Gogol's painter characters, any impurity of whose intentions is held to be clearly legible in their artworks. As Gogol shifts from discussion of painting to writing, he invokes the protective authority figure of Catherine the Great against the persecution of "creations of the mind" and posits a punishment of madness, death and universal social rejection for one who "imagines hints in everything".

A similar injunction may be read in Oscar Wilde's preface to his rewritten 1891 edition of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*:

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7 “Обманувший доверенность вельможа был наказан примерно и отставлен от места. Но наказание гораздо ужаснейшее читал он на лицах своих соотечественников. Это было решительное и всеобщее презрение. Нельзя рассказать, как страдала тщеславная душа; гордость, обманутое честолюбие, разрушившиеся надежды – все соединилось вместе, и в припадках страшного безумия и бешенства прервалась его жизнь.”, SS 3, pp. 138-139



All art is at once surface and symbol. Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril. Those who read the symbol do so at their peril. It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors.<sup>8</sup>

The phrase "at their peril" implies a threat for the reader in the act of interpretation. In contrast to Basil Hallward's description of painting as a coloured canvas on which the painter reveals himself, and on which every portrait is of the artist and not the sitter, when the topic shifts to writing, Wilde reverses the formula and suggests that it is the spectator who is the subject perilously revealed by any attempt at interpretation. Rather than offering himself as writer, in parallel to the fictional Basil as painter, as a vulnerable, self-revealing creator, Wilde combines a threat of the "peril" of reading symbols with a promised reward for those "to whom beautiful things mean only Beauty" as "the cultivated" and "the elect" for whom "there is hope".<sup>9</sup> This dichotomy of threat and flattery appears to function as an attempt to coerce reader response towards an aestheticist denial of meaning, while expressing authorial aversion to reader interpretation, much like the coercive dichotomy that Gogol applies between his flattery of the divine beauty of the uncritical and protective Catherine, and his threat of suffering madness and death to the interpretative grandee.

Painting, then, appears to function for both Wilde and Gogol as a safer space, within which the concept of an art that mirrors the spiritual and moral tendencies of its creator can be explored, while writing is marked as a defensive space in which the position of the reader must be aggressively problematized and their moral character implicated in any interpretation. In Gogol's work, the shift from the painter figures of

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8 Preface, *CI* p. 3-4

9 *CI* p. 3

Chartkov and Piskarev toward the writer figures of Poprishchin and Bashmachkin is notably characterised by the maximal voiding of authorial intent: Poprishchin's degenerative insanity strips his final writings of legible intent, while Akaky Akakievich Bashmachkin's recreational writing is a purely mechanical copying, devoid of any self-expression whatsoever. Oscar Wilde's most profoundly sincere artist is the nightingale of 'The Nightingale and the Rose', whose self-expression is totally unintelligible to her hearers, while his philosophers, from Lord Henry Wotton to the characters of philosophical dialogues 'The Decay of Lying' and 'The Critic As Artist', are all occupied in elaborate defence of the value of lying and in denial of artistic meaning or morality. The hostility toward reader interpretation expressed by both authors could serve as a plausible motivator for such effacement of authorial intent.

## **5.2 Aversion to Populism and the Mockery of Crowds**

In *After the Comedy*, Gogol depicts the reaction of the theatrical crowd to a comedy satirising abuses in society, and the response of the play's eavesdropping author who, while Gogol claims that he is a "theoretical character" in whom is "depicted the position of the comic in society",<sup>10</sup> nevertheless resembles the position of Gogol himself following *The Inspector General*, marking him as Gogol's most autobiographical fictional portrait of a literary writer. In the masochistic belief that "he who has resolved to point out ridiculous aspects to others, should wisely accept having his own weak and ridiculous aspects pointed out",<sup>11</sup> the author hides himself to eavesdrop on the first impressions of the spectators emerging from his play, only to find them either unwilling to voice any opinion until a critic has dictated what that opinion should be, or disappointed by the absence of a conventional love plot. The social utility

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10 "лицо идеальное. В нем изображено положение комика в обществе", *SS 4*, p. 579

11 "Тот, кто решился указать смешные стороны другим, тот должен разумно принять указания слабых и смешных собственных сторон", *SS 4*, p. 580

of satirical comedy is defended by a character described only as "a very humbly dressed person", while others question the author's own character or dismiss his work as mere nursery rhymes. The author's high sensitivity to social opinion is revealed as he declares his intention of taking all criticism to heart.

Gogol's unnamed playwright adds "the comic is fortunate who was born in a nation where society still has not merged into one immobile mass, where it has not clothed itself in a single crust of old prejudice that encloses the thoughts of all into the same form and measure, where there's an opinion for every person,"<sup>12</sup> displaying a hostility to homogeneous group identity and a utopian aspiration towards individuation that resembles the philosophy of Wildean Individualism. Such hostility to the social group as "immobile mass", and the corresponding valorisation of individuality of thought, would serve as a plausible motivation for Gogol's political preference for the arbitrary power of an individual despot, such as Catherine the Great, over a republican tyranny of the majority, in the same way that Wilde's 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' visualized social justice as universal individualism, because "democracy means simply the bludgeoning of the people by the people for the people".<sup>13</sup>

It is worth noting Edyta Bojanowska's analysis of Gogol's private writing and historical note-taking, which she describes as expressing "his positive approach to limited monarchy and the notion of popular participation in governing".<sup>14</sup> However, Gogol's idealization of the democratic Cossack Sech in *Taras Bulba* focusses on its characterization as an anarchic society of maximal personal liberty, a personal sovereignty that he also idealizes in the figure of the despot Catherine. Oscar Wilde's

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12 "Счастье комику, который родился среди нации, где общество еще не слилось в одну недвижимую массу, где оно не облеклось одной корой старого предрассудка, заключающего мысли всех в одну и ту же форму и мерку, где что человек, то и мнение, где всякий сам создатель своего характера", *SS 4*, p. 619

13 Wilde, *De Profundis, The Ballad of Reading Gaol & Other Writings*, p. 258

14 Bojanowska, *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism*, p. 153

'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', published under the more lax censorship of British democracy, may contextualize the apparently contradictory politics of Nikolai Gogol, by its hostility to populist democracy and simultaneous attraction to anarchy and despotism. If populist threat to personal sovereignty is assumed to be the primary concern of both authors, then a seemingly paradoxical simultaneous attraction to both anarchy and autocracy becomes logical, as both are expressions of untrammelled personal sovereignty, in preference to the perceived tyranny of untrammelled democracy.

Gogol concludes *After the Comedy* by repudiating the accusations of some spectators that the satire reflects its author's own unfeeling nature, with the author's declaration that "he who often sheds deep, heartfelt tears, he, it seems, laughs more than everyone in the world!"<sup>15</sup> The play thus demonstrates, through the obliviousness of the spectators to the author's emotional sensitivity, the effectiveness of humour in effacing its author's heartfelt sufferings, yet Gogol portrays the audience's obliviousness as itself a source of suffering. The discordance between a performer's suffering and their comic reception by spectators is a repeated theme by both Gogol and Wilde. The sexually transgressive sorcerer of Gogol's 'Terrible Vengeance' is introduced in a comic performance that earns the approval of spectators as he "had already danced an admirable *kozachko* and already been able to make the crowd surrounding him laugh"<sup>16</sup> before the display of a religious icon exposes his grotesque, true features to the horrified crowd. The motivating force driving the sorcerer's crimes is described by his daughter as a curse that "it was as though it always appeared to him that everyone was laughing at him", a universal laughter whose threatening overtones are conveyed in its

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15 "кто льет часто душевные, глубокие слезы, тот, кажется, более всех смеется на свете!.." SS 4, p. 622

16 "уже он протанцевал на славу козачка и уже успел насмешить обступившую его толпу", SS 1, p. 284

characterisation as "baring teeth".<sup>17</sup> An analogous motif of suffering intensely to the sound of laughter is graphically presented by Wilde in the heartbroken death of the deformed dwarf of 'The Birthday of the Infanta' and its reception by spectators as humorous performance, recalling Mrs. Erlynne of 1892's *Lady Windermere's Fan*, who lives "afraid every moment lest the mask should be stripped from one's face, and all the while to hear the laughter, the horrible laughter of the world, a thing more tragic than all the tears the world has ever shed".<sup>18</sup>

In each of these examples, the characters appear profoundly ambivalent in their compulsion to conceal deformity or sin through deliberately provoking laughter, while simultaneously perceiving that laughter as "horrible" or grotesquely discordant with the suffering that inspires it. The idea that social approval can be achieved by a disfigured individual, through mockery of his own stigma, recurs in 'A Tale of How Ivan Ivanovich Quarrelled with Ivan Nikiforovich' (henceforth referred to by its standard English translation 'The Two Ivans'), in the figure of "squinting Ivan Ivanovich", who is always ironical and ridicules his own squint, purchasing his social acceptance through self-mockery: "everyone loved squinting Ivan Ivanovich a lot because he made jokes completely to the modern taste."<sup>19</sup> Hostility to laughter and indictment of spectators combine at the climax of *The Inspector General*, as the exasperated mayor breaks the theatrical illusion of the 'fourth wall' to confront the audience: "and they will all bare their teeth and clap their hands. What are you laughing at? You're laughing at yourselves!... Ekh you!"<sup>20</sup> In spite of their global success as social satirists and comics, both writers express aversion to the laughter of crowds as they do to the interpretation

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17 "будто ему все чудилось, что все смеются над ним [...] выскаливает зубы", *SS 1*, p. 286

18 *CI*, p. 355

19 "Все очень любили кривого Ивана Ивановича за то, что он отпускал шутки совершенно во вкусе нынешнем", *SS 2*, p. 656

20 "будут все скалить зубы и бить в ладоши. Чему смеетесь? - Над собою смеетесь! ... Эх вы!" *SS 4*, p. 398

of critics. Just as Wilde's preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and Gogol's portrayal of the grandee in the 1842 'Portrait', attempt to reverse the judgement of critics into self-indictment, so the Mayor's speech seeks to reverse the judgement implied in laughter by declaring it a self-mockery on the part of the spectators.

### 5.3 Public Space As Agent Of Inauthenticity

The narratives of 'Portrait' and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* are sharply divided between public and private spaces. Opening with the sentence "nowhere had so many people gathered as in front of the little picture shop on Shchukin courtyard"<sup>21</sup> and concluding with a crowd of spectators wondering whether they had imagined the strange gaze of the haunted portrait, 'Portrait' uses these images of spectating crowds to frame crossings between the social and the solitary. The first part of the narrative details Chartkov's journey of artistic corruption, embodied in his transition from the emphasised loneliness of "the poor little hovel on secluded Vasilevsky island" characterised by talented art made "so purely, so disinterestedly", to the crowded, fashionable space of his studio on Nevsky Prospekt, characterised by "lifeless, fashionable little pictures".<sup>22</sup> The second section of the story reverses the process, charting the father of B.'s journey of artistic purification from the shaming public exhibition of his spiritually impure work to the relative isolation of "one secluded monastic cell" and, finally, to the absolute isolation of a hermit's existence "in the wilderness", where he is able to complete the process of purification necessary to produce "a wonder of the brush" that strikes onlookers with "the unusual holiness of the

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21 "Нигде не останавливалось столько народа, как перед картинною лавочкою на Щукином дворе" SS 3, p. 85

22 "работались когда-то так чисто, так бескорыстно, там, в бедной лачужке на уединенном Васильевском острове" p. 127 "вынести из своей мастерской... все безжизненные модные картинки" SS 3, p. 126

figures".<sup>23</sup>

In each case, public space, characterised by social acceptance and spectatorship, is associated with lifeless or spiritually corrupted artworks, while isolated and secluded space is associated with artistic talent. Rather than regard society as any possible source of artistic inspiration, its role in inducing inauthenticity and corruption is explicit. The theme is established by Chartkov's professor, who associates the temptation of the world with destruction of talent.<sup>24</sup> The society lady who is Chartkov's first client is described "with even a somewhat touching expression" declaring "our balls, I confess, so murder the soul, so kill the remnants of feeling",<sup>25</sup> positing society as an agent of destruction for the soul and emotional life of all its members, not only artists. In his discussion of *Dead Souls*, Gogol similarly attacked "the proprieties of a pointlessly moving society which, finally, so altogether ensnare and encase a person that nothing is left in him of himself, but only a heap of requirements and habits belonging to the world".<sup>26</sup> As Chartkov is converted by social popularity into an authority figure, arbitrating over exams and committees, so he himself actively enforces monotony and inauthenticity.<sup>27</sup> This negative concept of socially endorsed authority stands in contrast to the positively portrayed authority figure of B.'s enlightened and monastic father, who advocates art as an expression of its creator's soul, or the enlightened despot Catherine the Great, who is equally free from the need to submit to the crowd, and therefore protective of artistic originality. In *Selected Passages From Correspondence With*

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23 "в одну уединенную обитель" "в пустынь" p. 150 "чудо кисти... были поражены необыкновенной святостью фигур" *SS 3*, p. 151

24 "The world already begins to draw you [...] But talent is ruined, not developed, by that." ("тебя уж начинает свет тянуть [...] Да ведь на этом губится, а не развертывается талант.") *SS 3*, p. 92

25 "с несколько даже трогательным выражением лица... "Наши балы, признаюсь, так убивают душу, так умерщвляют остатки чувств" *SS 3*, p. 111

26 "приличия без дела движущегося общества, которые до того, наконец, всего опутают и облекут человека, что и не останется в нем его самого, а куча только одних принадлежащих свету условий и привычек" *CI*, p. 686

27 "it was imperative that everything should be subjected to a single, strict order of accuracy and uniformity" ("все необходимо должно быть подвергнуто под один строгий порядок аккуратности и однообразья.") *SS 3*, p. 122

*Friends*, Gogol likewise depicts the Orthodox priesthood acquiring deeper knowledge of humanity from introspection in social isolation than from social experience.<sup>28</sup>

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Dorian's descent into corruption is book-ended by two extended depictions of parties, that of Lady Agatha in Chapter 3, which illustrates Henry Wotton's social power through his ability to morally influence the other guests,<sup>29</sup> and Lady Narborough's party of Chapter 15, in which Dorian Gray successfully performs socially in the immediate aftermath of his murder of Basil Hallward, knowing the "terrible pleasure of a double life", with the narrative noting the enhancement of his social success through his inauthenticity.<sup>30</sup> Situated within a pattern of contraction and dilation, between the triangular relationship of the three protagonists and the wider social setting, these extended dinner party scenes serve no narrative function beyond allowing the extended display of Dorian and Wotton's skills in social performance, by supplying them with endorsing spectators, or possibly suggesting that this social endorsement is actively spurring the growing inauthenticity of Dorian and Wotton, most vividly represented by the growing schism between Dorian's approved social face and the portrait of his soul. Within the social space, it is Wotton, the explicit advocate of insincerity, who dominates. His role as an enforcer of social norms is confirmed by his condemnation of Dorian's marriage to Sybil Vane as a "social mistake, which would have been abject, which, of course, I would not have allowed."<sup>31</sup> While Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* has been likened

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28 "they are prepared for society not in the midst of society, but far from it, in deep internal contemplation, in the examination of their own soul, for there are the laws of all and to everything" ("воспитываются для света не посреди света, но вдали от него, в глубоком внутреннем созерцании, в исследовании собственной души своей, ибо там законы всего и всему" ) *SS* 6, p. 47

29 "he charmed his listeners out of themselves and they followed his pipe laughing," Chapter 3, *CI* p. 31

30 "perhaps one never seems so much at one's ease as when one has to play a part" Chapter 15, *CI*, p. 118

31 Chapter 8, *CI* p. 69



to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*,<sup>32</sup> this comparison reveals a significant divergence in their attitude to society. Stevenson's conscientious figure of Dr. Jekyll is depicted as socially approved and aligned with his society's values, in contrast with the socially reviled and rejected transgressor, Mr. Hyde. Oscar Wilde represents his conscientious figure, Basil Hallward, as a social reject, while his transgressor figure, Henry Wotton, is perfectly aligned with the values of his society, suggesting Wilde's own alienated perspective.

Wilde's narrator appears to deny any conflict between the imperatives of society and those of an art whose insincerity can be "delightful" to its spectators.<sup>33</sup> Yet, the novel's direct representation of good and bad art contradicts this asserted compatibility of the "canons of art" with the canons of society. Thus Basil, the talented artist, is shown to be personally uninteresting and socially withdrawn, planning to "shut myself up 'til I have finished a great picture I have in my head"<sup>34</sup> when visiting Paris, with Wotton asserting that, while there are dreadful places in Paris, "Basil was not the sort of man to have gone to them".<sup>35</sup> Social isolation and sincerity are prerequisites for the production of good art in Wilde's narrative, if not in his stated philosophy.

Gogol similarly describes Chartkov's artist peer, the sight of whose exceptional work first reveals to Chartkov the loss of his own talent, as avoiding all social stimulation while in Italy, as Basil does in Paris: "there, like a hermit, he immersed himself in work and studies, distracted by nothing".<sup>36</sup> This motif of artistic inspiration through social and even sensory deprivation culminates in B.'s father, who spends several years alone in the wilderness, standing motionless with raised hands from dawn

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32 Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*, p. 178

33 "The canons of good society are, or should be, the same as the canons of art. Form is absolutely essential to it. It should have the dignity of a ceremony, as well as its unreality, and should combine the insincere character of a romantic play with the wit and beauty that make such plays delightful to us. Is insincerity such a terrible thing? I think not" Chapter 11, *CI* p. 97

34 Chapter 12, *CI* p. 101

35 Chapter 19, *CI* p. 144

36 "Там, как отшельник, погрузился он в труд и в не развлекаемые ничем занятия", *SS* 3, p. 123

to dusk while praying ceaselessly and living only on raw roots, as the precondition for his restored talent. The pattern of social isolation as a prerequisite for artistic talent, and of public space and spectating as an agent of inauthenticity, is consistent throughout the works of both authors.

#### **5.4 Predatory Spectators Invulnerable To Conscience**

With their shared emphasis on social withdrawal as a necessity for sincere art, the threatening power of spectators is foregrounded within both texts. Dorian Gray's impulse to "hide his soul from the eyes of men"<sup>37</sup> and "terror lest other eyes should look upon it"<sup>38</sup> makes him unwilling to leave the house for any length of time. He is plagued with doubts over the spying of servants. At the same time, Dorian's own descent into amorality and cruelty is conceived of as his acquiring the mentality of a spectator. When negating Dorian's guilt over Sybil Vane's suicide, Wotton draws attention to the "artistic elements of beauty" in the tragedy of her death, that render onlookers "no longer the actors, but the spectators of the play".<sup>39</sup> Such a statement implicitly associates the act of spectating with invulnerability to conscience, confirmed by Dorian's assertion that "to become the spectator of one's own life, as Harry says, is to escape the suffering of life."<sup>40</sup> In the moments before his brutal murder of Basil, Dorian Gray is described as displaying "simply the passion of the spectator, with perhaps a flicker of triumph in his eyes,"<sup>41</sup> conflating the mentality of the spectator with that of a murderer, in a shared immunity to conscience that is potentially life-threatening.

Spectating and spying are portrayed as the primary coercive tools in the enforcement of social norms. Just as Wotton recommends a spectator mentality to

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37 Chapter 10, *CI*, p. 83

38 Chapter 20, *CI* p. 150

39 Chapter 8, *CI* p. 70

40 Chapter 9, *CI* p. 76

41 Chapter 13, *CI* p. 106

Dorian for the suppression of his conscience, so the character of Mrs. Vane, who represents mercenary social values and hypocrisy in her "shallow secret nature", views her own emotional manipulation of her children from the external, spectating position of "an imaginary gallery"<sup>42</sup> and uses the threat of scrutiny as one of her coercive tools.<sup>43</sup> Wotton and Mrs. Vane are thus joined as enforcers of social values, while being equally marked themselves by the amoral invulnerability to conscience that they acquire through deliberately cultivating the mentality of spectators.

Nikolai Gogol's repeated references to the penetrative gaze of the moneylender's monstrous portrait were discussed in **Chapter Two**. By contrast, one of the characteristics of the benevolent and vulnerable artist Piskarev in 'Nevsky Prospekt' is that, allegedly in common with Petersburg artists as a class, "he does not thrust the hawk-eye of the spectator into you",<sup>44</sup> a statement which seems discordant with the generally accepted desirability of acute observation in visual artists, but entirely conforms to Gogol's wider association of penetrative gaze with threat and with emotional invulnerability, which would render acute spectating incompatible with his concept of the artist as a vulnerable being.

In conclusion, the works of both Gogol and Wilde portray public spaces as agents of inauthenticity, social isolation as a prerequisite of artistic talent, spectators as threatening, penetrative and invulnerable to conscience, the threat of social scrutiny as a coercive force of punishment, and they display particularly strong aversion to the interpretation of writing, with a corresponding urge to make readers maximally responsible for their interpretations, as well as shared aversion to the mocking laughter of crowds and to political tyranny of the majority.

Gogol and Wilde share other deep-seated conceptual similarities in their

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42 *CI* p. 45 - 46

43 "wisdom altered its method and spoke of espial and discovery." *CI*, p. 43

44 "он не вонзает в вас ястребиного взора наблюдателя", *SS* 3, p. 17

depiction of the relationship of artwork to artist. Recurrent features of this pattern include: the representation of artwork as site of threatening exposure for the character of its creator; the concept of mimesis as inherently horrific; art as catalyst for the brutal destruction of the artist; art and life conceived as mutually incompatible; the conflation of erotic and artistic impulses, particularly in Gogol's 'Nevsky Prospekt' and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; the presence of overreaching desire as the defining characteristic of those artists who are violently destroyed. Assuming that the contradictory pressures that accompany the creative process for their fictional artists reflect pressures felt in actuality by Wilde and Gogol, and that the extent of the violence directed at the artist figures in the texts, as well as the frequency and consistency with which these themes recur across their entire literary output, may indicate an exposure anxiety that was intensely felt and perceived as threat, the reader is left with a portrayal of a "stain" and/or "secret" whose effacement is socially mandated, yet whose expression is artistically compelled. A logical outcome of such contradictory psychological pressures, as well as of aversion to reader interpretation, would be the development of what this thesis terms an "aesthetic of effacement" through which the "stain" could be plausibly deniably expressed via the aggressive problematizing of reader interpretation. Consideration of the defining features of this aesthetic forms the next chapter.

## Chapter 6 - The Aesthetics of Effacement

One consequence of an aversion to mimesis and to reader interpretation would be a limitation of the genres within which authors could write, as many literary genres are intrinsically mimetic. This chapter utilizes genre theory to define the shared features of Gogol and Wilde's styles, and the extent to which they may be explained by a shared aversion to reader interpretation and striving toward plausible deniability of self-expression, here termed an "aesthetic of effacement". **Section 6.1** surveys the authors' highly parallel choices of genre, and considers whether their correspondence can be explained by a shared reliance on interpretative suspense. **Section 6.2** examines the use by both authors of antinomy, the generation of conflicting codes within the text, as a strategy for the intensification of interpretative suspense. **Section 6.3** examines both authors' use of apophasis, the foregrounding of absence or withheld information within the text, as a strategy for the intensification of interpretative suspense. **Section 6.4** examines both authors' use of deprioritization, reversing the conventional narrative expectations established by Aristotle's *Poetics*, which prioritize protagonist and plot as the focus of a text's meaning, to establish a wide field for plausibly deniable self-expression within the deprioritized space of dilated background, digression and simile, as well as by the negative positioning of identification figures. **Section 6.5** examines pastiche and symbolism as effacement strategies, before concluding **Part One** with an assessment as to whether the shared aesthetic choices of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde may be explained by their utility as closeting techniques, leading into **Part Two's** examination of closeted sexuality and ethnicity in the writings of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde.

## 6.1 Choice of Genre as Dependent on Interpretative Suspense

In his essay 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', Oscar Wilde explicitly cites social pressure as a factor constraining his choice of genre: "delightful work may be produced under burlesque and farcical conditions, and in work of this kind the artist in England is allowed very great freedom. It is when one comes to the higher forms of the drama that the result of popular control is seen."<sup>1</sup> Hostility to "popular control", Wilde's term for social pressure and tyranny of the majority, already analysed as a central preoccupation in his depiction of art and spectators, is here acknowledged as a constraint on the author's choice of genre. When such hostility to popular control is combined with both authors' observable aversion to reader interpretation, Gogol and Wilde might be expected to strive towards a poetics that maximises reader uncertainty of interpretation, or interpretative suspense. Burlesque and farce arguably represent genres that sustain the spectator's attention not by generating narrative suspense over predicted outcomes, but by generating sustained cognitive tension between the interpretative categories of plausibility and implausibility, which periodically ruptures in disbelieving laughter. In other words, interpretative suspense may be proposed as the defining mode of burlesque and farce, in contrast to the narrative suspense of other genres.

Reliance on interpretative suspense has profound implications for the poetics and aesthetics of a writer's work. Interpretative suspense is not simply a form of suspense distinct from narrative suspense, but one that is actively antithetical to it. To increase the reader's uncertainty over their interpretation of events portrayed is to reduce their ability to anticipate outcomes, the foundation of narrative suspense, while alienating emotional investment. Generating significant levels of interpretative

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1 Wilde, *De Profundis, The Ballad of Reading Gaol & Other Writings*, p. 263

suspense within a narrative therefore necessitates an entirely different poetics from the dominant mimetic form whose ideal features are prescribed in Aristotle's *Poetics*. A strong imperative to induce wholesale interpretative suspense could thus fundamentally shape or even dictate the trademark styles of Oscar Wilde and Nikolai Gogol.

The fictional output of Gogol and Wilde features parallel choices of genre: the fable and folklore of Gogol's *Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka* (1831/1832) and *Mirgorod* (1835) and Wilde's *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888) and *A House of Pomegranates* (1891); satirical theatrical farces such as Gogol's *The Inspector General* (1836) and *Marriage* (1842) and Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), *An Ideal Husband* (1895) and *A Woman of No Importance* (1893); short stories in the mode of Todorov's fantastic, set in contemporary society, such as Gogol's "Petersburg Tales" (1835/1836/1842) and Wilde's *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and Other Tales* (1891), Gothic horror such as Gogol's 'Vii' (1835), 'Terrible Vengeance' (1832) and 'Portrait' (1835) and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890/1891). Can this high coincidence in the authors' choices of genre be explained by the fact that each of these genres is conventionally dominated by interpretative suspense? What follows is a brief overview of genre theory, which aims to locate whether the genres of horror, the fantastic and fable can be said to be conventionally dominated by interpretative suspense, in the same way as burlesque and farce.

Noel Carroll's paradigm of analytic aesthetics for the horror genre argues that a major diagnostic feature, that distinguishes horror from narrative genres such as the thriller, is its reliance on the generation of "cognitive threat" through "categorical transgression", the interstitial conflation of irreconcilable categories in its monstrous beings as, for example, the conflation of the living and the dead in figures such as

vampires or zombies, or the interstitial conflation of the animate and inanimate within a haunted portrait.<sup>2</sup> Insofar as "cognitive threat" is generated by the reader's suspense between categories of interpretation, it might also be defined as a form of interpretative suspense. Gogol and Wilde's extensive use of the conventions of horror in 'Portrait' and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* has already been discussed, while Gogol's 'Terrible Vengeance' and 'Vii' stand as further classic examples of the horror genre in the author's output.

The literary theorist Tzvetan Todorov's 1970 concept of "the fantastic" as a genre, and its subsequent elaboration by other commentators,<sup>3</sup> posits a distinct literary genre predicated on the reader's sustained and unresolved hesitation between the natural and supernatural interpretative framework. Thus, Todorov's "fantastic" is a genre whose defining characteristic is a form of interpretative suspense, similar to the "cognitive threat" that defines horror. The genre's extensive use by Nikolai Gogol has been surveyed and categorized by Iurii Mann as "the veiled fantastic",<sup>4</sup> while Wilde's 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime' is a pure example of Todorov's fantastic genre, in the sense that it presents a continual and unresolved hesitation between the natural and supernatural interpretation of its plot. Neil Cornwell's *The Literary Fantastic: from Gothic to Postmodernism* expands the concept of "the fantastic" to incorporate magic realism and surrealism, genres to which Gogol's 'Nose' and Wilde's 'The Canterville Ghost' could be ascribed, as psychologically realistic treatments of supernatural themes.

In fable, likewise, interpretative suspense over the symbolic meaning of events takes priority over narrative suspense over predicted outcomes, with such symbolism offering another method for the obscuring of authorial intentions. The genres of fable

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2 See Carroll p. 43 for discussion of the cognitive threat of horror monsters as interstitial beings (*The Philosophy of Horror*)

3 Todorov, Tsvetan, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to A Literary Genre*. Later elaborations include those of Eric Rabkin, Christine Brooke-Rose and Rosemary Jackson.

4 "завуалированная фантастика» p. 73, Mann, *Poetika Gogolia*



and folklore are heavily utilized in Gogol's Ukrainian tales and Wilde's fairy tales.

After reviewing the full fictional output of the authors, Wilde's own statement of his confinement to the genre of burlesque or farce by his need to avoid “popular control” may be extended, to note both authors' shared confinement within the genres of farce, fable, Todorov's fantastic, Gothic horror, surrealism and magic realism, as products of the conventional dominance of interpretative suspense in all these genres. Far from an arbitrary aesthetic choice, a strong preference for the maximized generation of interpretative suspense represents a logical outcome of the exposure anxiety expressed within both authors' fictional depictions of the artistic process. Apart from confining their fiction to genres conventionally defined by interpretative suspense, both authors also make wholesale use of the literary devices of antinomy and apophasis within their writing, further intensifying interpretative suspense.

## **6.2 Narratorial and Thematic Antinomy as Productive of Interpretative Suspense**

Literary antinomy refers to the generation of conflicting codes within fiction. Although both authors make wholesale use of antinomy, a distinction may be drawn between Nikolai Gogol's preference for narratorial antinomy, the creation of conflicting codes within the narrating voice, and Oscar Wilde's preference for thematic antinomy, the creation of conflicting codes within the content, which creates a divergence in their aesthetics while achieving an identical result in the amplification of interpretative suspense.

Basic narratorial antinomy is created in a central sequence of 1842's 'Portrait', in which Chartkov repeatedly wakes from a dream, only to discover that his waking is yet another dream, destabilizing the reader's interpretative frame between the real and imaginary. When the waking narrative eventually resumes, the reader is left in

continued interpretative suspense as to whether it is simply another dream. The discovery of a package of money behind the moneylender's portrait then raises questions as to whether an earlier dream was actually reality, or some real intrusion of the moneylender's spirit into the dream world, inducing Todorovian hesitation between the natural and supernatural. A similar narratorial antimony is evident in Gogol's rewrite of 'Nose' for its 1836 publication in Pushkin's *Contemporary* journal. The story's surreal elements were originally contextualized by its framing as a dream,<sup>5</sup> but it was revised to eliminate this conventional rationalization and instead declare the implausible plausible, concluding with the statement "say what you will, but such events happen in the world... rarely, but they happen",<sup>6</sup> inducing severe interpretative suspense in its assertion of the plausibility of a man's detached nose taking on independent life as a civil servant. A more sophisticated use of narratorial antinomy between real and imagined is supplied in 'Diary of a Madman' by the narration of the lapdog Madgie. As the discovery and reading of the lapdog's letters are narrated by the titular madman, they could be interpreted as products of his own imagination and symptoms of his insanity. Yet, as Simon Karlinsky points out, "the observations of the little lapdog Madgie are in all cases more level-headed and more informed than those of the madman himself",<sup>7</sup> destabilizing the reader's interpretation of the insane protagonist. By feeding the reader a plausible representation of the sane perspective, but framing it as the narration of a lapdog, Gogol creates a narratorial antinomy between the categories of sanity and insanity. Either the reader must accept that the madman has imagined these letters, showing him capable of the reader's own "sane" interpretation of events, or the reader must validate themselves by accepting the

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5 SS 3, p. 667

6 "А все, однако же, как поразмыслишь, во всем этом, право, есть что-то. Кто что ни говори, а подобные происшествия бывают на свете, - редко, но бывают." - SS 3, p. 84

7 Karlinsky, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*, p. 120

lapdog's account as a confirmation of their own views, thus joining the madman in the insane assumption that lapdogs can write. Iurii Mann gives the narration of the lapdog Madgie as an example of Gogol's "unfantastic fantastic",<sup>8</sup> a term which is itself an antinomy. Of *The Inspector General's* third act, in which Khlestakov entertains the townspeople with escalating fantasies, Gogol commented that "speaking a lie, precisely in this he shows himself as he is"<sup>9</sup> which, apart from its conceptual parallel with Wilde's oft-quoted instruction to give a man "a mask and he will tell you the truth",<sup>10</sup> establishes the dilated fantasies of Khlestakov's narration as, for Gogol, a space that is simultaneously true and false, self-revealing and self-deluding, just as the lapdog's narration is simultaneously sane and insane, the dream sequences of 'Portrait' are both real and imaginary, and the narration of 'Nose' declares implausibility plausible.

The writings of Oscar Wilde are not characterised by narratorial antimony, preferring to mimic the authoritative register of imperial aristocratic certainty. Wilde's tales are narrated by a stabilized, omniscient narration or by identified characters with stable characterization. Comparing Wilde's use of an animal narrator with that of Gogol may illustrate both the similarity and difference in approach between the two. Within conventional fable, a realistic narrator may be used as a framing device to stabilize interpretation, explaining meaning or applying the fable to a realistic scenario as moral lesson. Wilde and Gogol, by contrast, show an opposite urge, both making use of the fantastical device of an animal narrator to undermine otherwise realist narratives, in 'The Devoted Friend' and 'Diary of a Madman' respectively. In 'The Devoted Friend', a superficially realist account of an exploitative human friendship is presented as a moral fable told by a linnet, reversing the usual hierarchy that frames animal exploits as symbolic material for the education of humans. The act of telling a story with a moral is

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8 "нефантастическая фантастика" Mann, *Poetika Gogolia*, p. 109

9 "Говоря ложь, выказывает именно в ней себя таким, как есть" - *SS 4*, p 401

10 'The Critic as Artist' in Wilde, *De Profundis, The Ballad of Reading Gaol & Other Writings*, p. 225

described by a listening duck as "a very dangerous thing to do".<sup>11</sup> The omniscient narrator, presumably Wilde, ends by agreeing with the duck, though the linnet's actual moral is never stated. This chain of narration adds a layer of interpretative challenge to destabilize the realist narrative, but it does not generate the sustained interpretative suspense that the insanely sane lapdog Madgie does. This contrast, between Gogol's compulsion to foreground the unreliability of chaotic narrators, and Wilde's compulsion to assert the authority of stable ones, creates a significant divergence in their aesthetics.

However, though it rejects narratorial antinomy, Wilde's fiction is deeply shaped by what may be termed "thematic antinomy", that is, by contradiction within the content of the narrative itself, rather than in its framing. This may occur on a macro-level, as in the running thematic antinomy already noted between aestheticist and moral philosophies of art throughout *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, or it may occur on a micro-level, as in the Wildean paradox, ideally a paradoxical truth synthesized from apparent contradiction, often within a single sentence. In *An Ideal Husband*, Lord Goring's "everybody one meets is a paradox nowadays. It is a great bore. It makes society so obvious"<sup>12</sup> is itself paradox, in stating that the paradoxical makes society paradoxically obvious, which creates further antinomy between Goring's asserted boredom with paradox and his simultaneous practice of paradox. Goring speaks in the authoritative register of self-confident aristocratic certainty in his categorical statement about "everybody one meets", yet the thematic antinomy within the actual content of his statement deconstructs his performed authority and thus, implicitly, the performance of aristocratic rhetorical authority itself.

A similarly authoritative register of categorical certainty is used by Gwendolyn in *The Importance of Being Earnest* to declare "the home seems to me to be the proper

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11 *CI*, p. 182

12 *CI*, p. 461

sphere for the man. And certainly once a man begins to neglect his domestic duties he becomes painfully effeminate, does he not? And I don't like that. It makes men so very attractive."<sup>13</sup> The first antinomy is established between Gwendolyn's assertion of man's proper place in the home and the hegemonic assumption of the home as woman's proper sphere, a contradiction compounded by the assertion that a man neglecting his domestic duties becomes painfully "effeminate", which is qualified by the emphatic "certainly" to maximize Gwendolyn's manifest confidence in her own opinion, presenting a total contradiction of the hegemonic gender discourse in the authoritative register of that discourse itself. With this foundational antinomy established, Gwendolyn's subsequent statement that she doesn't like "that" could be read either as a conventional dislike of male effeminacy, or as an unconventional dislike of the traditional male role, since the traditional male role has now been rebranded as effeminate. Her final categorical statement "it makes men so very attractive" not only establishes thematic antinomy with her earlier assertion of dislike, discrediting the authority of female approval itself, but further compounds the interpretative suspense as to whether Gwendolyn is being attracted by male effeminacy or by the traditional male role, both of which she simultaneously dislikes. As each further statement in the sequence compounds the antinomy of all previous statements, this quotation may be described as an example of "compounded thematic antinomy".

The utility of such an approach for the expression of effaced sexuality or gender identity is here manifest: Wilde cannot be claimed to be asserting any ideology of gender roles, as Gwendolyn simultaneously affirms and denies them all, with the overall effect being to defamiliarize the rhetoric by which gender ideology is conventionally enforced. Such a preference, for parodying the categorical statements

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13 *CI*, p. 518

and authoritative discourse of the imperial culture through its own rhetorical style, potentially explains why Wilde avoids narratorial antinomy. Where Gogolian narratorial antinomy overtly undermines the authority of its own narrator, within an aesthetic of Bakhtinian grotesque realism and carnivalization,<sup>14</sup> Wildean thematic antinomy exaggerates the overt authority of its narrator through parodic positivism, while internally undermining the actual content of its authoritative assertions. This divergence in approach creates a superficial divergence of style between the authors, even as the practical effect of each strategy is self-subversion and the sustained generation of interpretative suspense in their reader or spectator.

In addition to his primary use of narratorial antinomy, Nikolai Gogol also makes extensive use of thematic antinomy, which Iurii Mann surveys as a form of Bakhtinian ambivalence.<sup>15</sup> One of Mann's examples of ambivalence finds a particular parallel in Wilde: the preference of both authors for undermining or contradicting the happy endings of their folkloric fables. In Gogol's 'Sorochinsky Market', the conventionally happy ending of a wedding is undermined by focusing on a hypothetical excluded school-friend: "it's dull for the abandoned one! And it becomes heavy and sorrowful to the heart, and there is nothing to help it."<sup>16</sup> The wedding concluding *Hanz Küchelgarten* similarly ends with sorrowful reflection on abandoned school-friends. In Wilde's 'The Fisherman And His Soul', an apparently redemptive ending, in which the love and forgiveness of God is demonstrated by a field of flowers, is undermined by the concluding statement "yet never again in the corner of the Fuller's Field grew flowers of any kind, but the field remained barren even as before. Nor came the Sea-folk into

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14 Mann, *Poetika Gogolia*, pp. 11 - 13

15 "амбивалентность» Mann, *Poetika Gogolia*, p. 11

16 "Скучно оставленному! И тяжело и грустно становится сердцу, и нечем помочь ему", *SS I*, p.

the bay as they had been wont to do, for they went to another part of the sea",<sup>17</sup> creating a thematic antinomy between redemptive and pessimistic interpretation of the story. Wilde's 'The Star-Child' concludes with an apparently redemptive ending in which the long trials and sufferings of the Star-Child are rewarded by his coronation, undermined by the final statement: "yet ruled he not long, so great had been his suffering, and so bitter the fire of his testing, for after the space of three years he died. And he who came after him ruled evilly."<sup>18</sup> Such thematic antinomy suggests either a principled objection to moral guidance or a viewpoint alienated from the dominant social ideology embodied in conventional narrative outcomes.

Wilde's statement "I wrote the first act of *A Woman of No Importance* in answer to the critics who said that *Lady Windermere's Fan* lacked action. In the act in question there is absolutely no action at all. It is a perfect act"<sup>19</sup> is not merely facetious, but an accurate assessment of the irrelevance of conventional dramatic action to his art, where the audience's interpretative suspense is maintained primarily through the antinomy of Wildean paradox, to the detriment of narrative suspense. Vladimir Nabokov similarly describes the literary world of Gogol as one in which dramatic action is irrelevant, even impossible: "the world is and it excludes everything that might destroy it, so that any improvement, any struggle, any moral purpose or endeavour are as utterly impossible as changing the course of a star."<sup>20</sup> Gogol's sophisticated usage of interpretative suspense, like that of Wilde, allows conventional dramatic action to be minimized or even entirely dispensed with. Contextualized by genres in which interpretative suspense is conventional, and heightened by wholesale use of antinomy, interpretative suspense is additionally created by both authors through literary apophysis.

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17 *CI*, p. 309

18 *CI*, p. 323

19 Hyde, *Oscar Wilde: A Biography*, p. 159

20 Nabokov, *Nikolai Gogol*, p. 144

### 6.3 Artistic Apophasis as Productive of Interpretative Suspense

Aside from their shared reliance on antinomy, both authors also practice what Mikhail Epshtein defines as "artistic apophatism, which is characterized by the negativity of signs and the impossibility of description",<sup>21</sup> that is, foregrounded absence within the text. The use of artistic apophasis is particularly clear in Gogol's 'Nose', possibly his most ontologically radical work. Gogol deliberately foregrounds the gaps and voids in the story, including by closing the opening chapter with "but here the event is completely covered with mist, and nothing is known about what happened further",<sup>22</sup> a non-omniscient omniscient narration which apophatically foregrounds withheld information. Through indirect narration from the perspective of the narcissistic protagonist Kovalev, all other characters are reduced to physical characteristics assessed for social utility, before building to a central confrontation between the hero and his own nose. The narrative asserts that the antagonist is simultaneously a nose and a state councillor, without reconciling these incompatible concepts in any way that would allow the nose to be physically imagined. The nose thus becomes a central apophasis, a foregrounded negative space at the heart of the story. It is described as wearing the uniform of a state councillor, without addressing whether this is a tiny uniform or a giant nose, or a regular nose hovering mysteriously in the midst of an otherwise empty uniform. "Its brows somewhat contracted",<sup>23</sup> provoking the reader's speculation as to whether the nose possesses eyes, or only eyebrows, and at what point in its acquirement of human attributes it ceases to be identifiably a nose. The interpretative suspense that such doubts create is foregrounded throughout Gogol's

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21 Epshtein, Mikhail, "The Irony of Style: The Demonic Element in Gogol's Concept of Russia" in Spieker, Sven ed. *Gogol: Exploring Absence*, p. 55

22 "Но здесь происшествие совершенно закрывается туманом, и что далее произошло, решительно ничего не известно" SS 3, p. 56

23 "Брови его несколько нахмурились" SS 3, p. 61



description of the confrontation between man and nose in Kazan Cathedral, before the unimaginable nose turns its own gaze onto Kovalev and dismisses him socially by the buttons on his uniform, that is, by his own shallow criteria. The apophatic nose therefore serves to defamiliarize social rituals and to assert the irrelevance of the individual to their social role.

Just as Wilde's aesthetic of thematic antinomy has a specific utility in his deconstruction of gender ideology through Gwendolyn's parodic positivism, so Gogol's use of artistic apophasis and narratorial antimony has a specific utility in resisting heteronormative logic. After narrating the hero Akakii Akakievich's admiration for a painting of a woman and the faster beating of his heart, the narrator of 'The Overcoat' declares "maybe he didn't even think that – you know you can't crawl into a person's soul and know everything he is thinking".<sup>24</sup> Akakii's desires and sexuality are defended as an apophasis, a foregrounded absence, which allows the conveniently non-omniscient narrator to resist heteronormative assumptions without committing to any alternative explanation. The same tactic is used after description of Chichikov's apparent infatuation with the governor's daughter in the first volume of *Dead Souls*, to defend the character from heteronormative assumption: "it is hard to say for sure whether the feeling of love really did awaken in our hero, - it is even doubtful whether gentlemen of that sort, that is not exactly fat but then again not thin, were capable of love".<sup>25</sup> Once more, apophasis is used to foreground doubt over a heterosexuality that would otherwise be routinely assumed, without venturing alternative explanation, aided by the narratorial antinomy of Gogol's characteristically

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24 “встретил вещь вовсе не знакомую, но о которой, однако же, все-таки у каждого сохраняется какое-то чутье [...] А может быть, даже и этого не подумал – ведь нельзя же залезть в душу человека и узнать все, что он ни думает.” SS 3, p. 177

25 “Нельзя сказать наверно, точно ли пробудилось в нашем герое чувство любви, - даже сомнительно, чтобы господа такого рода, то есть не так чтобы толстые, однако ж и не то чтобы тонкие, способны были к любви” SS 5, p. 215

non-omniscient omniscient narration. Iurii Mann has described this phenomenon as a regular device of Gogol's which he terms "refusal of introspection",<sup>26</sup> but without noting its specific utility in the resistance of heteronormativity.

Apophysis also exists in the tales of Oscar Wilde, though in less extreme form than Gogol's 'Nose'. In 'The Canterville Ghost', the Garden of Death where the heroine learns "what Life is, and what Death signifies, and why Love is stronger than both"<sup>27</sup> is denied description, inducing interpretative suspense over its foregrounded absence as the emotional climax of the story. Similarly, the undersea realm where the Fisherman experiences mutual love in 'The Fisherman and His Soul' is an apophysis, denied representation. Wilde's foregrounded absence of spaces characterized by knowledge of love evokes the concept of apophatic theology, in which awe for a revered object is created or enhanced through emphasizing the impossibility of its description. Like Gogol's use of apophysis to resist heteronormativity, Wilde's foregrounded absence of descriptions of love, like his foregrounded refusal to define Dorian Gray's sins, demonstrates the specific utility of this literary device for sexually closeted writing. In Wilde's most performed play, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, the protagonist Ernest Worthing is himself a hypothetical hero, whose successful courtship of both of the play's heroines is repeatedly revealed to be farcically independent of the men impersonating him at any given time, inducing an apophatic foregrounding of the absent Ernest as hypercompetent lover. As a hypothetical protagonist imperfectly impersonated by onstage characters, Ernest parallels the absent inspector general of Gogol's *The Inspector General*. Apophysis in Gogol and Wilde, therefore, may not only be defined as a general tendency to induce interpretative suspense through negation or withheld description, but frequently also as a form of apophatic theology that

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26 "отказ от интроспекции", Mann, *Poetika Gogolia*, p. 322-324

27 *CI*, p. 255

foregrounds an indescribable or absent protagonist or core meaning, in a manner that actually amplifies its perceived significance through withheld representation.

#### 6.4 Deprioritization as Effacement Strategy

Aristotle's *Poetics* is the foundational work of narratology in the Western philosophical tradition, centering its theory of aesthetics on tragedy, which it defines as the highest form of drama.<sup>28</sup> More strictly adhered to during the 18<sup>th</sup> century Neoclassical movement, Aristotle's theories were also familiar to classically-educated members of the European gentry class in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which would include both Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde, allowing it to be used as a broad framework of conventional Western narrative expectations common to the two authors, against which both react in comparable manner. The characteristics of ideal drama prescribed in *Poetics* include the following major assumptions: firstly, that the primary meaning lies in events portrayed - "the actions performed and the story are the end of tragedy, and the end is the greatest of all things";<sup>29</sup> secondly, that the protagonist be the site of emotional identification - "pity being for a person undeserving of misfortune and fear for one like us";<sup>30</sup> thirdly, that the plot is the focus of the text's meaning, to which all digressions, generalizations and metaphors are supplemental or subordinated - "the parts of the actions performed ought to be organized in such a way that, when any part is displaced or removed, the whole becomes something different";<sup>31</sup> finally, that any significant information will be supplied - "the story, since it is an imitation of an action, ought to be of one action and it ought to be a whole".<sup>32</sup> The effect of conforming to these prescriptions is to structure reader or spectator response, aiding the prioritizing of

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28 Aristotle, *Poetics*, p. 21, (1448a)

29 Aristotle, *Poetics*, p. 27 (1450a)

30 Aristotle, *Poetics*, p. 36 (1453a)

31 Aristotle, *Poetics*, p. 31 (1451a)

32 Aristotle, *Poetics*, p. 31 (1451b)

attention while achieving greater uniformity of interpretation among readers or spectators.

The writing of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde may be claimed to be particularly marked in their reaction against all these conventions, and representative critical responses are used throughout this section to demonstrate the normative expectations thus violated. For, if Aristotle's model creates prioritized space within the narrative in plot and protagonist, where the reader is primed by convention to seek the primary meaning of the text, this same force of prioritizing also opens up deprioritized space in the form of marginal characters, background and rhetorical digression, where the reader is not primed to seek meaning and where an author may thus find wide deprioritized space for self-effacing self-expression.

If conventional narrative assumes that narrative suspense is primary, Gogol and Wilde prioritize interpretative suspense, by choice of genre and by wholesale use of antinomy and apophasis. If conventional narrative assumes emotional identification with the protagonist, Gogol and Wilde practise negative positioning: positioning characters identified with their own views or public image as satirical targets, as villains or as disposable characters eliminated mid-narrative. If conventional narrative assumes that the protagonist and plot are the focus of the text's meaning, to which all other information is subordinated or supplemental, Gogol and Wilde utilize deprioritization to open a dilated background of generalizations, hypothetical digressions, similes and metaphors which are not subordinated to the central plot. Where conventional narrative assumes that any significant information will be supplied, Gogol and Wilde use apophasis. By their apophatic protagonists and foregrounded absence of core messages, their poetics can even actively withhold the protagonist figure or plot climax which Aristotle's model trains readers to prioritize.

Antinomy and apophasis are both devices for the generation of interpretative suspense, creating a consciously perceived disruption in the reader's interpretative frame. A subtler device is deprioritization, a systematic refusal to prioritize traditional locations of meaning in a text, such as protagonist or plot, while expanding traditionally deprioritized areas such as background, generalization, rhetorical simile and digression, to allow for a self-effacing self-expression whose significance the reader is not primed by conventional narrative expectation to perceive. For example, the following farcically dilated sentence, used to set the scene within Gogol's 'Overcoat':

Even in those hours when the grey St. Petersburg sky had been quite extinguished, and all the civil service crowd had eaten or dined, each as he could, in accordance with the salary he received and his own fancy; when all was resting from the departmental scratching of pens, running to and fro from their own and other people's indispensable occupations, and from all the work that a restless man makes willingly for himself, rather than what is necessary; when officials hasten to dedicate to pleasure the time which is left to them, one bolder than the rest going to the theatre; another, into the street looking under all the bonnets; another wasting his evening in compliments to some pretty girl, the star of a small circle of civil servants; another -- and this is the most common case of all -- visiting his comrade on the fourth or third floor, in two small rooms with an ante-room or kitchen, and some pretensions to fashion, such as a lamp or some other trifle which has cost many a sacrifice, refusals of dinner invitations or pleasure trips; in a word, at the hour when all civil servants disperse among the little quarters of their friends, to play whist, as they sip their tea from glasses with a rusk worth a kopek, smoke long pipes, relate at times some bits of gossip from high society, which no Russian person can ever, under any circumstances, refrain from, and, when there is nothing else to talk of, repeat the eternal

anecdote about the commandant to whom they sent word that the tails of the horses on the Falconet Monument had been cut off, in a word, even when all strives to divert itself, Akaky Akakievitch indulged in no kind of diversion.<sup>33</sup>

The sentence opens by establishing time and place in "the hour when the grey St. Petersburg sky had been quite extinguished". Gogol then fulfils conventional narrative expectation by establishing the general rule of behavior for the society and class to which his protagonist belongs, before focusing on the protagonist himself and establishing the general rule of *his* behavior. With the scene thus set, in a steady movement from the general to the particular, the reader is prepared for the exceptional event that will disrupt the protagonist's general pattern and set the plot in motion. However, the anticipated progress from the general to the specific is repeatedly disrupted by apparently uncontrollable eruptions of specificity and individuality from a farcically dilated background of highly specific generalizations. The phrase "in a word" is introduced, to suggest the narrator's intention of summarizing, but serves only as a false start that leads to another eruption of detailed description, indicating that the narrator, if indeed intending to summarize, cannot be in full control of his own narration. The negation of authorial intent, achieved in 'Diary of a Madman' by an

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33 "Даже в те часы, когда совершенно потухает петербургское серое небо и весь чиновный народ наелся и отобедал, кто как мог, сообразно с получаемым жалованьем и собственной прихотью, - когда все уже отдохнуло после департаментского скрипенья перьями, бегодни, своих и чужих необходимых занятий и всего того, что задает себе добровольно, больше даже, чем нужно, неугомонный человек, - когда чиновники спешат предать наслаждению оставшееся время: кто побойчее, несется в театр; кто на улицу, определяя его на рассматриванье кое-каких шляпенков; кто на вечер - истратит его в комплиментах какой-нибудь смазливой девушке, звезде небольшого чиновного круга; кто, и это случается чаще всего, идет просто к своему брату в четвертом этаже, в две небольшие комнаты с передней или кухней и кое-какими модными претензиями, лампой или иной вещицей, стоившей многих пожертвований, отказов от обедов, гуляний, - словом, даже в то время, когда все чиновники рассеиваются по маленьким квартиркам своих приятелей поиграть в штурмовой вист, прихлебывая чай из стаканов с копечными сухарями, затягиваясь дымом из длинных чубуков, рассказывая во время сдачи какую-нибудь сплетню, занесшуюся из высшего общества, от которого никогда и ни в каком состоянии не может отказаться русский человек, или даже, когда не о чем говорить, пересказывая вечный анекдот о коменданте, которому пришли сказать, что подрублен хвост у лошади Фальконетова монумента, - словом, даже тогда, когда все стемится развлечься, - Акакий Акакиевич не предавался никакому развлечению." SS 3, p. 161-162

explicitly irrational narrator, is thus achieved in 'The Overcoat' by the apparent incompetence of its omniscient narrator, which undermines the reader's faith in the intentionality of his prose. As the description climaxes in the extreme specificity of a single anecdote about the Falconet monument, a narratorial antinomy develops between the general and specific, the hypothetical and actual. Gogol's allegedly typical civil servants are described with a detail that gives them individual life, equivalent to that of characters presented as really existing in the narrative, yet their status as potentially hypothetical generalizations allows them only uncertain existence. Meanwhile, the narrative's specific protagonist, Akakii Akakievich Bashmachkin, is apophatically defined by his absence of pastimes, part of the character's wholesale lack of imagination, ambition and distinguishing features.

Renate Lachmann claims more broadly that "negativity in Gogol's texts takes recourse to two major principles, hypertrophy and hypotrophy [...] whereas hypertrophy implies an abundance of images, wordplay and the deliberate production of deceptive signs, hypotrophy is characterised by the withholding of verbal expression."<sup>34</sup> The dilated backgrounds in Gogolian texts may be viewed as a hypertrophy, inducing interpretative suspense through their overproduction of specific generality, while the contracted protagonist may be categorized as hypotrophic, defined apophatically by lack, negation and withheld description. Gogol's technique of employing hypertrophic background and hypotrophic foreground amounts to a reversal of the Aristotelian priorities of storytelling. Rather than set a vividly exceptional hero against a flattened background, the Gogolian story sets a flattened hero against a vividly exceptional background, like a galaxy of stars set in motion by a central black hole.

Such deprioritization has a specific utility in the effaced expression of sexual

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<sup>34</sup> Lachmann, Renate, 'The Semantic Construction of the Void' in Spieker, Sven ed. *Gogol: Exploring Absence*, p.18

themes, much as antinomy and apophysis were demonstrated to do above. In the first volume of *Dead Souls*, a detailed schoolboy idyll is intensely visualized in the deprioritized space of a farcically dilated simile, when the newly roused and confused town of N. is compared to the confusion of a hypothetical schoolboy, roused from sleep by the insertion of a paper of tobacco into his nose by his comrades, who

...wakes, jumps up, stares around him like a fool with eyes bulged and cannot understand where he is, what has happened to him, and only then makes out the walls illuminated by the sun's slanting rays, the laughter of his comrades hiding in the corners, the dawning day looking in the window with the sound of thousands of birds' voices in the awakened forest and the shining stream vanishing here and there with sparkling flourishes among the slender reeds, all scattered with naked young lads calling [him] out for a swim, and only then finally feels that there is a tobacco paper in his nose.<sup>35</sup>

The initial subject of the town, roused to scandal and confusion by rumour, gives way to a highly specific simile in which the uncertain existence of the potentially hypothetical schoolboy does not prevent his experiencing an idealized pastoral idyll, characterised by the welcoming laughter of hypothetical peers and the call to swim with hypothetical naked companions, whose analogy to a disturbed town is not obvious. Any implied homoerotic potential of the naked schoolboys is thus diffused by their location in the deprioritized space of simile.

The critic Prosper Mérimée's claim that "the author's great carelessness in

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35 "он пробуждается, вскакивает, глядит, как дурак, выпучив глаза, во все стороны, и не может понять, где он, что с ним было, и потом уже различает озаренные косвенным лучом солнца стены, смех товарищей, скрывшихся по углам, и глядящее в окно наступившее утро, с проснувшимся лесом, звучащим тысячами птичьих голосов, и с осветившеюся речкою, там и там пропадающею блещущими загогулинами между тонких тростников, всю усыпанную нагими ребятами, зазывающими на купанье, и потом уже наконец чувствует, что в носу у него сидит гусар." *SS* 5, p. 242



construction destroys, as though wantonly, the illusion"<sup>36</sup> reads the comic incompetence of Gogol's narrator as a direct expression of the author's own "carelessness". His statement "as though wantonly" acknowledges that the systematic destabilization of interpretation in Gogol's prose seems purposeful and intentional, yet Mérimée refuses to conceive that such a subversion of mimetic "illusion" could be the goal of any writer, leading to his diagnosis of a "great carelessness in construction". The characteristic impression of spontaneous absence of intent and absence of narratorial control in Gogol's dilated prose was originally contextualized as "characterizing *skaz*", a style that mimics orality to convey the character of an identified narrator. In Gogol's first commercial success, the story collection *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*, the beekeeper Rudy Panko is offered as a rural Ukrainian narrator, whose inexperience and uneducated ignorance are comically characterized by a rambling, superficially incompetent *skaz* that reflects the folk tradition within which the work is situated. In Gogol's 'Petersburg tales', the same mimicry of oral spontaneity emerges as a principle in itself, liberated from ethnic caricature and engrained within omniscient narration as "ornamental *skaz*", a style that mimics features of orality for their aesthetic effect without contextualizing them by an identified narrator. The transition from "characterizing *skaz*" to impersonal "ornamental *skaz*" may be compared to Gogol's rewriting of 'Nose' to remove its contextualizing framing as a dream, as evidence that his effacement techniques were an end in themselves, independent of context.

The narrating style of Oscar Wilde, as typified by *Poems in Prose* or *A House of Pomegranates*, is hypertrophic, ornate and deprioritized. The utility of such a style in obscuring authorial intent may be judged by W. B. Yeats' claim that Wilde "thought he was writing beautifully when he had collected beautiful things and thrown them

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36 Mérimée, Prosper, 'Introduction' to Gogol, *The Mantle and Other Stories*, p. 8

together in a heap",<sup>37</sup> denying coherent logic or authorial intent behind Wilde's apparently random assemblage of poetic images. If Gogol's use of rambling orality and superficial narratorial incompetence may be read as a form of 'skaz', Wilde's ostentatiously ornate style may be read as an expression of his philosophy of aestheticism, on which he was a recognized authority and lectured publicly, with its emphasis on "art for art's sake". In aestheticism, as Wilde himself would claim in the preface of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, beautiful things should mean only beauty. The impression created by the two styles is widely different: Wilde's aestheticism conveys high culture and rhetorical mastery, while Gogol's *skaz* mimics comical ignorance and rhetorical incompetence. Despite these superficial differences, the function of *skaz* and aestheticism is essentially the same: to acclimatize the reader to a deprioritized or randomized style of narrative, whose abundant, hypertrophic imagery is not expected to necessarily possess significance or relevance. An example of the specific utility of dilated background to facilitate effaced sexual expression may be found in Wilde's 'The Fisherman and His Soul', whose priest curses both the Fauns of the woodland and the singers of the sea for tempting him with perilous joys, confining the homoerotic temptations of the Fauns to the deprioritized space of rhetorical allusion, while making them rhetorically equivalent to the story's directly represented heterosexual romance with a singer of the sea.

Related to the use of deprioritized spaces is the use of negative positioning, embodying the author's own perspective in negatively portrayed figures such as targets of satire or villains. If self-expression within the dilated background effaces authorial intent by exploiting the reader's expectation that the plot is primary, locating self-expression in marginalized or negative characters effaces intent by exploiting the

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37 Yeats, W. B., 'on Salomé', in Beckson ed., *Oscar Wilde, the Critical Heritage*, p. 260

reader's expectation that the protagonist is primary. Denis Fonvizin, the Russian satirist who was a major precedent for Gogol and featured in 'The Night Before Christmas', illustrates conventional expectations in his most successful play. In Fonvizin's *The Minor*, the author's position is represented onstage by a righteous protagonist named Pravdin (from the Russian *pravda*, or truth) who is never the object of mockery, and who serves to guide the audience's judgement of the disapproved satirical targets. After converting this conventional, righteous character into a permanently expected absence in *The Inspector General*, Nikolai Gogol would write of the reader of *Dead Souls* that "laughing at my heroes, he laughed at me", suggesting the author's conscious self-identification with his satirical targets.<sup>38</sup> Abram Tertz notes the correspondence between the views that Gogol expressed seriously in his philosophical treatise *Selected Passages From Correspondence with Friends* and those of Gogol's satirical targets in his earlier fiction:

He seriously approached problems that he had previously laughed off, and suddenly, in an altered key, in a new judicious style, spoke with the mouth of the postmaster, the mayor, Khlestakov, Manilov... (it would be difficult to finish the course of one's life more absurdly!)<sup>39</sup>

Oscar Wilde's tendency to portray dandies such as Prince Paul Maraloffski, Lord Henry Wotton, Lord Darlington or Lord Illingworth as antagonist figures, in spite of their close resemblance to his own public persona, could be read as another example of negative positioning, like the destruction and narrative marginalization of artist figures

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38 "смеясь над моими героями, он смеялся надо мной" *SS 6*, p. 105

39 "он всерьез подошел к проблемам от которых прежде отшутивался, и вдруг - в измененной тональности, в новом рассудительном стиле - заговорил устами почтмейстера, городничего, Хлестакова, Манилова... (Трудно было нелепее закончить свой жизненный путь!)" Tertz, *In the Shadow of Gogol*, p. 61

by both authors discussed in **Chapter Four**. The persistent use of dilated background, dilated simile or digression and negative positioning of identification figures by both authors thus amounts to a wholesale employment of deprioritization, whose capacity to facilitate plausibly deniable self-expression is identical in Gogol and Wilde, in spite of the superficial divergence of their approaches.

### **6.5 Pastiche, Symbolism And Censorship**

Both authors produced early works, Gogol's *Hanz Küchelgarten* and Wilde's first collection of poetry, that were accused of unoriginality (in Wilde's case, his first volume of poetry being condemned for plagiarism by the Oxford Union). Pastiche, a form of superficial plagiarism, may serve as a further strategy to obscure the legibility of authorial intent, by employing forms and themes whose social acceptability has been demonstrated by previous use, while potentially altering their symbolic significance to achieve personal self-expression. It is the argument of **Part Two** of this thesis, '**The Nightingale and the Nose**', that the epic poems of Wilde's first collection of poetry, condemned by W.B. Yeats as a random collection of beautiful images thrown together "in a heap", and by the Oxford Union as a collage of influences from other poets which amounted to plagiarism, are actually directly expressive of Wilde's psychological conflict as a closeted writer. If true, this would make *Poems* a successful example of the use of pastiche to achieve a high level of personal self-expression while effacing authorial intent from the perception of readers.

Like Wilde's *Poems*, Gogol's first work, *Hanz Küchelgarten*, was critically and commercially unsuccessful, with echoes of German Romanticism and Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* which amount to pastiche, yet is treated in this thesis as a work of self-expression and foundational touchstone for the author's symbolic vocabulary and

themes.

Finally, multivalent, interchangeable and idiosyncratic symbols may be used to facilitate plausible deniability, itself a form of interpretative suspense. The preference of both authors for symbolic, folkloric narratives, and their shared resistance to explanatory framing, facilitates a highly developed personal symbolism whose meaning can only be deduced by a close reading of the consistency of contexts and associations within which the symbols recur. Having already examined the haunted portrait as a multivalent symbol expressing both artistic and sexual meanings, **Part Two** of this thesis discusses the significance of further multivalent symbols used extensively throughout the authors' work, including Wilde's garden and nightingale, and Gogol's nose and clothing imagery.

In addition to using symbols with multiple potential meanings, the authors further complicate interpretation through deployment of interchangeable or idiosyncratic symbols. Wilde employs the strategy of interchangeable symbols extensively in his *Poems*. The central conflict of the cycle is variously envisioned as that between Hyacinth and Apollo, Marsyas and Apollo, Philomel and Tereus, Trojan and Roman, Charmides and Athena, Dryad and Artemis. By intercutting rapidly back and forth between variant mythological narratives, Wilde obscures the mental connection between these interchangeable symbols, creating a superficial impression of random association, condemned by W. B. Yeats as throwing beautiful things "together in a heap".<sup>40</sup> Closer analysis, as **Part Two** of this thesis aims to show, reveals an extremely coherent psychological narrative conveyed through interchangeable symbols. Gogol, by contrast, uses the strategy of idiosyncratic symbolism, where the symbolic significance of banal items such as coats or noses may be deduced only by close

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40 Yeats, W. B., 'on Salomé', in Beckson ed., *Oscar Wilde, the Critical Heritage*, p. 260

analysis of the contexts in which they recur, without reference to any external myth or narrative that could direct reader interpretation.

It is noticeable that the canonical prestige accorded to Ukrainian writers of farce such as Nikolai Gogol and Anton Chekhov, in the political censorship culture of Russia, contrasts with the marginalization of Oscar Wilde's literary achievement in the democratic culture of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Great Britain, where the author was repeatedly accused of insincerity.<sup>41</sup> Does the elevation of Nikolai Gogol in Russian criticism, as foundational "Father of Russian Realism", reflect how relatable his portrayal of the psychology of censorship was to the politically censored Russian population? In Vasily Rozanov's *About Gogol*, Rozanov attempts to demonstrate the superiority of Alexander Pushkin's writing over that of Gogol, first by the value judgement that Pushkin represents "an ideal of normal, healthy development",<sup>42</sup> then by arguing that Gogol's stylistics have been misinterpreted as a response to social censorship when they actually reflect psychological self-censorship: "to wrestle with oneself is so strange to us, so incomprehensible in ourselves [...] that it always seemed to us as if, like ourselves, he 'wrestled with melancholy reality'."<sup>43</sup> Rozanov's implication is that, if Gogol can be shown to suffer from a minority experience of psychological self-censorship rather than the majority experience of political censorship, the "unhealthiness" and consequent inferiority of his work will be thereby demonstrated. The implication is that the perceived aesthetic value of artists is directly connected to how relatable their experience of censorship appears to the dominant group.

The aesthetics of Oscar Wilde and Nikolai Gogol may be described as dominated by the imperative to maximize interpretative suspense, through their shared

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41 Fitzsimons, *Wilde's Women*, pp. 91-92

42 "делает его поэзію идеалом нормального, здорового розвитку" Rozanov, *O Gogole*, p. 8

43 "бороться с собою - это так чуждо нам, так непонятно в себя [...] нам все казалось, что, как и мы, он "боролся с печальной действительностью" Rozanov, *O Gogole*, p. 34

preference for genres where this form of suspense is conventional, and through extensive use of antinomy and apophasis, while further minimizing legible authorial intent by the techniques of plagiarism or pastiche, deprioritization, negative positioning and multivalent symbols. All of these techniques are plausible responses to the anxieties expressed thematically in the authors' fictional discussions of the artistic process: exposure through artwork and aversion to reader interpretation, as well as to the intensity of perceived threat which may be read in each author's choice of the genre of Faustian horror to express these anxieties.

Each of these techniques, antinomy, apophasis, pastiche, deprioritization, negative positioning and multivalent symbols, has a specific usage in the undermining of heteronormativity within the authors' sexual narratives, which may be considered as camouflaged by the technique's wholesale usage throughout their fiction. Once compelled toward the wholesale use of such aesthetics, the form of both authors' works are fundamentally altered and dictated thereby, accounting for the most prominent features of their trademark styles. Such wholesale aesthetics of effacement offer authors broad opportunity for the effaced expression of censored aspects of self. The censored perspective could be deniably expressed within a self-contradictory antinomy, or its silencing could be foregrounded through apophasis. It could be expressed within the deprioritized space of a dilated background, digression, generalization or rhetorical simile, conventionally reserved for information of secondary significance or even total irrelevance. It could be expressed with plausible deniability through a multivalent symbol, among other potential meanings, or placed in the mouth of a villain or satirical target, who would be assumed to be in opposition to the author's own perspective. Finally, the censored perspective could be expressed through pastiche, in which plagiarized elements are reassembled to express personal concerns, while authorial

intent is assumed to be absent through the fact of plagiarism. In their mature writings, Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde created distinctive literary styles and artistic contexts for themselves that allowed maximum scope for plausibly deniable self-expression.

**Part One** of this thesis has established potentially shared psychological motivations of Gogol and Wilde through analysis of their depiction of the artistic process, in particular assessing evidence of shared exposure anxiety, before defining the shared “aesthetic of effacement” that both developed in response to these pressures. **Part Two** diagnoses the closeted elements of the authors' identity, the sexual and the ethnic, and the patterns in which they are expressed in their fiction. Three techniques suggest themselves for decoding such dense aesthetics of effacement. The first is that which was already applied to both authors' discussions of art: to assess the significance of an element by close analysis of its frequency of recurrence, and by the consistency of context and association within which it recurs. The second is to apply an external model through which to anticipate the typical patterns in which the imagination symbolizes repression, such as Carl Jung's individuation cycle, which is used in the final five chapters of this thesis. The third method is to diagnose what it is that the authors are effacing, to better focus the search. In the brief biographical sketch of the introduction, it was mentioned that Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde may be defined as measurably sexually and ethnically closeted in their mature fiction. How far can the authors' own sexuality and ethnicity be deduced? This question occupies the next chapter.



## PART 2 - THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE NOSE

“Bachelors are not fashionable any more. They are a damaged lot. Too much is known about them.”

- Oscar Wilde, *An Ideal Husband*<sup>1</sup>

“Take some wife, it's the most fashionable material! Very high quality. Nowadays everyone sews themselves frock-coats out of it.” - Nikolai Gogol, *Ivan Shponka and his Auntie*<sup>2</sup>

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1 Act 3, *CI* p. 460

2 “Вы возьмите жены, это самая модная материя! Очень добротная! Из нее все теперь шьют себе сюртуки” Chapter 5, *SS I*, p. 364

## Chapter 7 - Diagnosis of Sexuality and Ethnicity

**Part Two** of this thesis compares and contrasts sexual and ethnic closeting in the writing of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde. This chapter reviews evidence of the authors' sexual and ethnic identification and its interpretation by critics, while examining the assimilation and censorship pressures of the dominant cultures in which Gogol and Wilde operated and to whom they addressed their fiction. **Chapters Eight to Twelve** survey parallels in the authors' conceptions of sexuality, ethnicity and identity, within the potentially explanatory framework of the Jungian individuation cycle as a description of the imagination's typical response to repression.

Defining the sexual identity of an individual author, particularly a supposedly effaced identity that is silenced or distorted in its expression by social stigma, quickly enters the realm of speculation and presumption. What can be defined with more accuracy, because of its public and articulated nature, is the normative sexual culture within which an author is working and to whom their published literary output is addressed. **Section 7.1** examines the 19<sup>th</sup>-century culture of compulsory heterosexuality and the position of the "confirmed bachelor" within it, as a marginal figure both tolerated and stigmatized. **Section 7.2** reviews evidence for the homosexual orientation of Gogol and Wilde. **Section 7.3** reviews Ancient Greece and Persia as cultural precedents of openly homoerotic societies available to 19th-century Europeans, and assesses the prominence of references to them in the authors' work. **Section 7.4** discusses the theme of incest and necrophilia in the writings of both authors, and its interpretation by critics. **Section 7.5** considers the difficulties of defining private sexuality and desires, as well as Oscar Wilde's own treatment of those difficulties in 'The Portrait of Mr. W. H.' (first published 1889).

. Since the authors identified themselves personally as Irish/Ukrainian, while allowing their settings, characters and narrators to be publicly read as English/Russian in their major works, their ethnicity may be claimed to be closeted in their fiction. **Section 7.6** seeks to define and compare the dominant culture of national identity within the 19<sup>th</sup>-century British and Russian Empires, and the nature of the assimilation pressures placed by the imperial cultures upon the Irish or Ukrainian. **Section 7.7** seeks to diagnose whether one or both of the writers may be defined as closeted nationalists, and assess the potential impact of closeted nationalism on their fiction. The psychological effects of closeting may explain the high overlap in the symbolism that Gogol and Wilde employ to express the sexual and the ethnic, which indicate that the authors themselves conceived of their relationships to the sexual and the ethnic in parallel terms. The conclusion of the chapter reviews evidence for regarding Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde as sexually and ethnically closeted, before embarking in the remaining chapters of the thesis on the detailed analysis of the expression of this closeting within their fiction.

### **Section 7.1 Compulsory Heterosexuality and the Confirmed Bachelor**

The normative sexual cultures of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Britain and Tsarist Russia, including Ireland and Ukraine, were defined by exclusively heterosexual orientation, by participation in public courtship rituals and by the social institution of marriage. This thesis argues that cultures of compulsory heterosexuality profoundly affect and shape the forms of literary expression and generic expectations within which all commercial authors, regardless of individual sexuality, must operate. The extent to which the representation of a heterosexual love plot was regarded as integral to the work of comic authors such as Gogol and Wilde may be deduced by Gogol's inclusion of a debate over

the “eternal” necessity of love plots in comedies, in his response to critics, *After the Comedy*.<sup>1</sup> All of Oscar Wilde's society comedies - *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *A Woman of No Importance*, *An Ideal Husband* and *The Importance of Being Earnest* – notably conclude with the conventional reconciliation of heterosexual lovers. If the authors themselves were potentially alienated from the heterosexual plots they were conventionally required to present, could such normative sexual signs nonetheless be harnessed to express a personal perspective?

To describe the normative sexuality of the 19th century as defined by compulsory heterosexuality and marriage does not, admittedly, take into account the socially tolerated institution of the "confirmed bachelor", the public asexual. In his own study proposing the homosexual orientation of Nikolai Gogol, Simon Karlinsky makes a broad review of preceding Russian and Soviet scholarship, concluding that the traditional scholarly view of the unmarried Gogol is as an asexual, or as repressing his heterosexuality due to his religious attraction to asceticism.<sup>2</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick traces the literary "confirmed bachelor" archetype of the sexually censorious Victorian culture to the influence of protagonists such as William Makepeace Thackeray's Pendennis, whose prototype she defines as being:

one possible path of response to the strangulation of homosexual panic [...] a preference of atomized male individualism to the nuclear family (and a corresponding demonization of women, especially mothers); a garrulous and visible refusal of anything that could be interpreted as genital sexuality, towards

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1 «если принимать завязку в том смысле, как ее обыкновенно принимают, то есть в смысле любовной интриги ... пора перестать опираться до сих пор на эту вечную завязку» (“if you take plot as it is usually meant, in the sense of love intrigue ... it is time to stop depending until now on that eternal plot”) *SS 4*, pp. 585-587

2 Karlinsky cites Semyon Vengerov's *The Citizen-Writer Gogol* as the peak of the trend towards assuming Gogol's ascetic renunciation of heterosexuality (Karlinsky, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*, p. 16)

objects male or female; a corresponding emphasis on the pleasures of the other senses; and a well-defended social facility that freights with a good deal of magnetism its proneness to parody and to unpredictable sadism<sup>3</sup>

The characteristic features of the "confirmed bachelor" literary archetype, as defined above, are prominent in the Wildean dandy, and features of this archetype may likewise be traced in Gogolian impostor characters such as Khlestakov or Chichikov, which predate Thackeray's influence. The "confirmed bachelor" is problematic when seeking to locate sexual effacement, since its potential as a mask for stigmatized sexual orientations is counterbalanced by its potential as a direct representation of asexuality. Gogol's attraction to a monastic life, and consequently to enforced celibacy, is a well-documented component of his biography.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the prominence of themes of sexual anxiety in much of Gogol's literary work and, in particular, the recurrent theme of externally imposed marriage within works such as *Marriage* and 'Ivan Shponka and his Auntie' suggest that, if the author was asexual, he experienced this sexual identity as being in fraught opposition to the norms and expectations of the dominant culture of compulsory heterosexuality. If the "confirmed bachelor" were utilized within the fiction of both Gogol and Wilde to express the concerns of a more heavily stigmatized sexuality, an exaggeration of society's persecution of the confirmed bachelor could be symptomatic of the experience of the censored sexual perspective for which the bachelor is public avatar. Anthony Bogaert's 2004 British study 'Asexuality: Prevalence and Associated Factors in a National Probability Sample' sets the rate of asexuality at 1.1% of the population, which marks its occurrence as significantly lower than

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3 Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet*, p. 192

4 For a discussion of sources see Voropaev, Vladimir Alekseevich, 'Nikolai Gogol': opyt dukhovnoi biografii' in *SS I*, pp. 23 - 27

prevailing estimates of homosexual orientation.<sup>5</sup> Widespread preference for the asexual interpretation of Gogol over the homosexual interpretation must, therefore, be regarded as ideologically motivated rather than founded on statistical probability.

## 7.2 Evidence of Homosexual Orientation

Oscar Wilde's 1895 trial and imprisonment for gross indecency led to the public documenting of his homosexual relations with the young men who testified against him, while equally demonstrating the censorship pressure and threat of persecution placed upon those relations by his society. In his confessional letter 'De Profundis', Wilde recounts correcting a friend who believed that all charges against him were untrue, and telling him that "my life had been full of perverse pleasures and strange passions".<sup>6</sup> Wilde's biographer, H. Montgomery Hyde, concluded his research with the categorical statement "that he was guilty of the crimes of which he was accused is now beyond dispute."<sup>7</sup> Oscar Wilde's homosexual or bisexual orientation is therefore taken as uncontroversial within this thesis. Extensive parallels with Oscar Wilde's representation of sexuality would thus indicate that Gogol's fiction could be contextualized as a plausible expression of homosexual consciousness, without being a conclusive confirmation of that consciousness.

The argument of Nikolai Gogol's homosexuality is advanced in its most sustained form by Simon Karlinsky's 1976 work, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*, which proposed that Gogol felt "overpowering emotional attraction to members of his own sex".<sup>8</sup> Although a reading of Gogol's literary output, correspondence and biography as a whole is used to support this contention, Karlinsky's main evidence is

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5 *The Journal of Sex Research* 41(3), pp. 279-287

6 Wilde, *De Profundis, The Ballad of Reading Gaol & Other Writings*, p. 101

7 Hyde, *Oscar Wilde: A Biography*, p. 322

8 Karlinsky, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*, p. vii

the fragment 'Nights at the Villa', unpublished during Gogol's lifetime, which he views as an autobiographical description of Gogol's time attending the bedside of the dying Iosif Vielgorsky. The text is so central to Karlinsky's argument that he includes a full translation. This thesis also treats 'Nights at the Villa' as the primary evidence of Nikolai Gogol's homosexual or bisexual orientation. What follows is my own analysis of the fragment and the degree to which it may be regarded as conclusive proof of homoerotic desire on the part of its author.

Evidence for regarding the relationship portrayed as homoerotic includes: the unnamed narrator's use of traditionally romantic epithets to describe the unnamed dying man - "my angel", "my little soul [darling]", "my sweet, tender blossom";<sup>9</sup> self-conscious concern over circulation of the document - "you, into whose hands fall, if they should fall, these inelegant, weak lines, pale reflections of my feelings, you will understand me. Otherwise they will not fall to you";<sup>10</sup> and minute chronicling of physical interaction between the men – "I kissed his shoulder. He offered his cheek. We kissed. He still squeezed my hand".<sup>11</sup> In addition, several of the dying man's recorded remarks could be regarded as teasingly referencing romantic possibilities. His reproach to the narrator for abandoning his bedside, "you betrayed me",<sup>12</sup> in Russian has the connotation "you were romantically unfaithful", while his remark upon being led to lie on the bed, "now I am a fallen man",<sup>13</sup> could refer to his imminent death or his seduction, a potential which Karlinsky's English translation, "now I'm a ruined man",<sup>14</sup> highlights. The narrator refers to his feelings for the dying man as returning long forgotten sensations of his youth, evoking a schoolboy idyll marked by "signs of tender

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9 "Ангел мой!" р. 660, "Душенька моя!" р. 662, "мой милый, нежный цвет" р. 662, *SS 7*

10 "Ты, кому попадутся, если только попадутся, в руки эти нестройные слабые строки, бледные выражения моих чувств, ты поймешь меня", *SS 7*, р. 661

11 "Я поцеловал его в плечо. Он мне подставил свою щеку. Мы поцеловались. Он все еще жал мою руку", *SS 7*, р. 661

12 "ты изменил мне", *SS 7*, р. 660

13 "теперь я пропавший человек", *SS 7*, р. 662

14 Karlinsky, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*, р. 195

attachment" between himself and peers "when it is sweet to gaze into each other's eyes and when [one is] totally ready to make sacrifices, often even totally needless",<sup>15</sup> while the intensity of feeling which the narrator manifests for the dying man, declaring himself ready to sacrifice his life and all his possessions for him, and spending a week without sleep from the sweetness of watching over him, is based on a relatively short acquaintance: "it is already two nights, since we addressed each other by *ty* [the familiar form]".<sup>16</sup> In the Russian language, first person verbs are gendered in the past tense, confirming beyond doubt that the narrator is himself male.

All of these indicators, though individually circumstantial, could collectively be taken to demonstrate romantic or sexual desire. They should be contextualized within wider tendencies in Gogol's private writing towards dramatic hyperbole, and do not reference any sexual activity that would conclusively demonstrate more than an unusually intense "romantic friendship". That Gogol's emotional investment in platonic, homosocial brotherhood could have been intensified by asexuality, to the point of being conceived in romantic terms, is not wholly implausible, but dissonant with the conventionally sexual associations of what Edward Carson attempted to legally define in Wilde's libel trial as "language that would perhaps probably be used in a love letter".<sup>17</sup> Finally, because the narrator and dying man are unnamed, it is possible that they are fictional characters who do not represent the personal desires of Nikolai Gogol. If this is the case, it is notable that the fiction of Nikolai Gogol largely evades the depiction of heterosexual passion, as discussed by the author himself in *After the Comedy*, rendering the romantic terminology of this homoerotic relationship highly atypical of his writing.

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15 "знаков нежной привязанности; когда сладко смотреть очами в очи и когда весь готов на пожертвования, часто вовсе не нужные", *SS* 7, p. 662

16 "уже две ночи, как мы говорили друг другу: ты", *SS* 7, p. 660

17 Holland, Merlin, *Irish Peacock & Scarlet Marquess; The Real Trial of Oscar Wilde*, p. 105, referring to Wilde's correspondence with Lord Alfred Douglas



The statement of the archpriest Matfei Konstantinovskii, quoted by archpriest Feodor Obratsov as the conclusion of a conversation about Gogol, that "a doctor is not blamed when he prescribes a patient strong medicines due to the seriousness of the illness"<sup>18</sup> would seem to indicate his perception that Gogol was afflicted with a serious moral or spiritual failing which demanded extreme ascetic purgation. The documented biographical material on Nikolai Gogol apparently lacks evidence of transgressions or heresies severe enough to warrant the archpriest's comment. Vladimir Voropaev cites commentators such as Pavel Matveev who argue that this quote demonstrates Father Konstantinovskii to have been an extremist religious fanatic, fundamentally opposed to Gogol's literary work, before convincingly countering this argument using testimony from the wider acquaintance of the priest as well as Konstantinovskii's own statements defining artistic talent as a "gift from God".<sup>19</sup> In view of the dogma of the Russian Orthodox church, a confession of homosexual desire or activity could, as suggested by Simon Karlinsky,<sup>20</sup> provide a plausible alternative explanation for Konstantinovskii's perception of Gogol as suffering a serious moral illness. The homosexual orientation of Nikolai Gogol is thus not regarded as conclusively proven within this thesis, but as substantially indicated and taken into consideration as potentially explanatory of his shared thematic patterns with Oscar Wilde. A further indication of homoerotic consciousness may be read in the prominence, in the writings of both authors, of cultures marked by their openly homoerotic literatures, Ancient Greece and Persia.

### **7.3 Ancient Greece and Persia as Homoerotic Cultural Precedents**

An argument as to whether the affection in 'Nights at the Villa' is platonic,

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18 'Врача не обвиняют, когда он по серьезности болезни предписывает больному сильные лекарства', quoted in Voropaev, 'Nikolai Gogol': *опыт dukhovnoi biografii* in *SS I*, p. 104

19 'дар Божий' quoted in Voropaev, with wider argument countering Matveev, *SS I*, p. 107

20 Karlinsky, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*, pp. 273-275

where "platonic" is taken to indicate an absence of homoeroticism, might itself be considered ironic, considering Wilde's courtroom justification of "the love that dare not speak its name" as "such as Plato made the very basis of his philosophy".<sup>21</sup> The institution of pederasty in classical Greece was a homoerotic cultural precedent available to educated Europeans in the 19th century. The 18<sup>th</sup>-century scholar Johann Joachim Winckelmann openly discussed evidence of homosexual practices, crossdressing and the worship of male beauty within his archaeological studies of the Ancient World,<sup>22</sup> and references to Winckelmann are notable in both Gogol and Wilde's fiction and discussed in **Chapter Eight**. The Grecian institution of pederasty differed from modern understandings of both homosexuality and paedophilia, being essentially defined by a homoerotic mentorship of an inexperienced initiate by an experienced adult, with the age of the initiate varying from boy to young adult. Pederasty was legitimized by divine precedent in Classical Grecian theology, where the Father of the Gods, Zeus, was described as loving a male cup-bearer named Ganymede, the sun god, Apollo, was ascribed a boy lover named Hyacinth, and the most heroic demigod, Herakles (Hercules), was ascribed a boy lover named Hylas, all referenced in the poetry of Oscar Wilde.

The culture of pederasty is further evoked by Wilde's pastiches of Socratic/Platonic dialogue, 'The Decay of Lying' and 'The Critic as Artist', by the mentoring relationship established between Lord Henry Wotton and Dorian Gray in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, by the choice of Charmides, the object of a Platonic dialogue on temperance, as the protagonist of Wilde's narrative poem about sexual transgression, as well as by the emphasis on age-differentiation in Wilde's courtroom definition of "the love that dare not speak its name" as "a great affection of an elder for a younger

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21 Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 463

22 Davis, *Queer Beauty: Sexuality and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Freud and Beyond*

man".<sup>23</sup> The culture of pederasty is also evoked by Nikolai Gogol's early pastiche of Platonic/Socratic dialogue, 'Woman', while Classical Athens and Persia are the idylls towards which Gogol's hero Hanz Küchelgarten strives, and the surviving drafts of the second volume of *Dead Souls* prominently feature a character of emphasized Grecian beauty named Plato, who struggles to find his vocation in society. In all these cases, the relationships portrayed by Gogol and Wilde are between adult men, marked by difference of age and social initiation, in a manner that facilitates the evocation of Grecian cultural precedent.

The second major example of a society with openly homoerotic literature, that was available to 19<sup>th</sup>-century Europeans, was Persia. The 'khamriyya' genre of Persian love poetry was conventionally dedicated to the sensual adoration of male cupbearers, by prestigious, canonical poets such as Omar Khayyam and Abu Nuwas. This tradition was adapted by the 13th-century mystic Mevlana Rumi into an aesthetic of spiritualized homoeroticism. Rumi's poetry conflates spiritual and sexual imagery, addressing a beloved that interchangeably represents God and Rumi's male mentor, Shams of Tabriz,<sup>24</sup> while denying the distinction between spiritual and physical love, a concept described as "the last, the perfect creed" in Oscar Wilde's poem, 'Humanitad'.<sup>25</sup> The tale of a nightingale which reddens the rose with its song or heart's blood is a Persian legend, evoked in a homoerotic lament for a dead lover by the medieval Sufi poet Hafiz: "the nightingale with drops of his heart's blood / Had nourished the red rose, then came a wind, / And catching at the boughs in envious mood, / A hundred thorns about his heart entwined".<sup>26</sup> Wilde's biographers do not confirm his familiarity with Rumi or Hafiz, but he would have been familiar with Edward Fitzgerald's 1859 poetic

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23 Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 463

24 Ergin, *The Forbidden Rumi*, p. 3

25 *CI*, p. 789

26 Hafiz (trans. G. Bell), in Bell, Gertrude, *A Woman in Arabia: The Writings of the Queen of the Desert*, p. 15

translation of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, which was a core text of the Pre-Raphaelite movement.<sup>27</sup> The sixth verse includes the line “the Nightingale cries to the Rose; That yellow Cheek of hers to incarnadine”, introducing the concept of the Nightingale singing a rose from yellow to blood red, though without the image of the pierced heart found in both Wilde's story and Hafiz's poem. Fitzgerald's translation of Khayyam is frank about the male gender of the “Angel shape bearing a vessel on his shoulder” and the poet's sensual desire to lose his “fingers in the tresses of / the Cypress-slender Minister of Wine”,<sup>28</sup> suggesting Wilde's familiarity with the homoeroticism of Khayyam's poetry. Wilde associates an Orientalized opium den with the sins of Dorian Gray in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick considers this an example of “gay-affirming and gay-occluding orientalism”,<sup>29</sup> based on the use of Islamic reference as plausibly deniable gay code in 19<sup>th</sup>-century and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Europe. Though Kosofsky Sedgwick refers only briefly to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century use of Orientalism as gay code in her analysis of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Joseph Boone's 2014 study *The Homoerotics of Orientalism* is an extended analysis of European and Middle Eastern literature, which argues that the Orient has been persistently associated with homoeroticism in European discourse for over 400 years.

The mental connection between the Islamic Orient and homoeroticism, as documented by Boone and casually referenced by Kosofsky Sedgwick, may explain the association of the Persian and the Classical Grecian within the writing of Nikolai Gogol. Gogol portrays Persia as the other idyll which his alienated dreamer, Hanz Kuchelgarten, longs for, alongside Ancient Athens. His artist of 'Nevsky Prospekt', Piskarev, visits a Persian opium den in order to drug himself into dreams of love,

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27 Coakley, *Oscar Wilde: The Importance of Being Irish*, p. 43

28 Fitzgerald trans., *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*,

[https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/o/omar\\_khayyam/o54r/](https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/o/omar_khayyam/o54r/) (Accessed 23/02/2019)

29 Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p. 175

purveyed by a Persian daydreamer who refers to himself in the feminine gender, as discussed in **Chapter Four**; the sexual transgressor of 'Terrible Vengeance' is suggested as Muslim;<sup>30</sup> while the corrupting tempter Petromikhali of the original 'Portrait' has the "vivid imprint of a Southern physiognomy",<sup>31</sup> which could suggest Islamic origin in a Russian geographical context. In the surviving drafts of the second volume of *Dead Souls*, the character Kostanzhoglo, described with "some kind of jaundiced imprint of a fiery southern pedigree ... not completely Russian",<sup>32</sup> is depicted married to the sister of the Grecian beauty Plato, who is described only by her resemblance to her brother. The two societies with openly homoerotic canons of literature, Ancient Greece and Persia, are therefore prominent in the work of both Gogol and Wilde, associated with temptation, though they function as multivalent symbols whose "gay-affirming and gay-occluding" homoeroticism is plausibly deniable within their other potential meanings.

#### 7.4 Incest and Necrophilia

A striking parallel in the interpretation of the sexualities of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde is that both have been claimed by critics to be fundamentally shaped by their attachment to a sibling who died in childhood. Simon Karlinsky claims that Gogol's closeness to his brother Ivan, who died when Gogol was 10, "seems a kind of *paradis enfantin*, which the writer strove to regain in his later life by his constant search for an equally ideal male companion",<sup>33</sup> a speculation which seems primarily based on the author's later use of brotherly vocabulary to characterize close male-male

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30 The Muslim implications of the character's refusal to drink alcohol or eat pork are discussed in Karlinsky, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*, p. 42

31 "яркий отпечаток южной физиогномии" – SS7, p.353

32 "каким-то желчным отпечатком пылкого южного происхождения... не совсем русский." SS 5, p. 562

33 Karlinsky, p. 10

relationships. With reference to Wilde's love for his sister Isola, Philip Cohen goes further and characterizes the relationship as "abnormal attachment", citing correspondence between the fantasy of sharing a grave, by which the 12-year-old Wilde expressed grief for his sister's death, and his later use of the same motif in dialogue between "sinning young lovers", as well as the introduction of the theme of falsely claimed incest in the scenario of 'The Cardinal of Avignon', which Cohen regards as "highly revelatory". Cohen's contention of incestuous attachment between Wilde and Isola appears partly motivated by a desire to demonstrate that "his abnormal attachment to Isola, and not homosexuality, could be the original, perhaps even dominant, motive force behind his writings".<sup>34</sup> Studies, such as that by Meredith Bombar and Lawrence Littig, which indicate high correlation between the degree of attachment among adults and infantilized speech patterns,<sup>35</sup> illustrate widespread usage of bonding vocabulary and mannerisms acquired in early childhood within later romantic relationships. Overlaps in the vocabulary which Gogol and Wilde utilize to describe childhood sibling affection and romantic feeling can be seen in this context, rather than minoritized as an anomalous feature of these individual authors, within a problematic critical search for the "origin point" of their perceived sexual abnormality. Arguments advanced for an incestuous "abnormal attachment" are notable for lacking evidence of any sexualized descriptions of siblings within the private writings of Gogol and Wilde, that could be comparable to the confessed homosexuality of 'De Profundis' or the homoerotic language of 'Nights at the Villa'.

A preference for incestuous readings of literature over homosexual readings, even in cases where the writer is believed to be homosexually oriented, is also shown in Richard Peace's review of Karlinsky. Although acknowledging that 'Nights at the Villa'

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34 Cohen, *The Moral Vision of Oscar Wilde*, p. 47

35 See Bombar, Meredith & Littig, Lawrence W. Jr., 'Babytalk as a communication of intimate attachment: An initial study in adult romances and friendships'

is "almost explicit" in its homoeroticism, Peace resists Karlinsky's attempt to apply homosexual consciousness as an explanation for patterns of sexual representation in Gogol's 'Vii', stating that "the more 'conventional' suggestion of incest to explain the theme of unnatural sexuality (which the story undoubtedly contains) fits the symbolic facts far more closely."<sup>36</sup> Peace, despite apparently accepting Karlinsky's evidence of Gogol's homosexuality, nevertheless resists a specific reading of that sexuality's impact on the writer's fiction, in favour of "conventional" Freudian interpretation, which presupposes a universal psychoanalytic model of male sexual development, shaped by incestuous primary attachment to the mother figure. The practical effect of interpreting sexual themes through universal developmental models of sexuality, rather than through the specific experience of a stigmatized sexual minority, is to deflect the reader from considering whether the prominence of themes of sexual transgression anxiety in a homosexual author's writing could be expressive of the emotional impact of a culture that actively persecutes homosexuality. To avoid the specific politics of homosexual interpretation of a text may, therefore, itself become an unintentionally political choice.

Vasily Rozanov, who claimed that Gogol displays necrophilic tendencies,<sup>37</sup> draws exclusively on the author's public writings to support this argument. While incest and necrophilia are themes in the published fiction of both Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde, the contention that an author personally motivated by such taboo sexuality would express it exclusively in public rather than private writing seems implausible. Rather, the expression of incestuous or necrophilic desire exclusively within public writing could suggest its use, like the authors' portrayals of interspecies sex between humans and mythological creatures, as a public avatar for the exploration of fatal

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36 Peace, Richard., 'The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol by Simon Karlinsky; Gogol's Dead Souls by James B. Woodward. Review', p. 581

37 From Rozanov's study of Dostoevsky's 'The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor', discussed in Karlinsky, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol* p. 17

sexual transgression, an effacement strategy which functions precisely because the authors are themselves disassociated from the transgressions portrayed. While the female corpse in Gogol's 'Vii', which prompted Rozanov's necrophilic reading, is described as astonishingly beautiful, this beauty in a corpse is described as "terrifying".<sup>38</sup> **Chapter Two** examined Gogol's use of horrific metonymy to associate mimesis with corpse imagery, as a strategy to endow mimesis itself with overtones of threat and aversion. Gogol's attraction to the Gothic trope of the sexualized female corpse could be read as an analogous horrific metonymy, expressive of aversion to sexualized females rather than necrophilic attraction to corpses. Alternatively, it could be read as an invocation of the wider generic use of dead woman as incarnation of threatening Other, as charted by Elisabeth Bronfen,<sup>39</sup> entirely unconnected with Gogol's personal sexuality. In the absence of private writings expressing incestuous or necrophilic sexual desires, this thesis treats these themes in the authors' published fiction as avatars of general sexual transgression, rather than as direct expressions of their authors' sexualities.

## 7.5 The Verification of Desire

Human sexuality remains a private and ultimately unknowable space; its key role in influencing the world view and experiences of an individual can only be deduced by its visible impact on their self-expression, a process complicated by the distortions, dissimulations and omissions inherent in the communication of desire. Even in the case of Oscar Wilde, whose sexuality has been submitted to intensive documentation and cross-examination, including the legal scrutiny of his literary output by Edward Carson as evidence of his desires, fundamental questions remain insoluble.

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38 "Она была страшна" SS 2, p. 595

39 Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic*



For example, it is impossible to define with certainty whether Wilde would, in a modern context, identify as homosexual or bisexual; yet, the question of whether his heterosexual relations were primarily motivated by sexual passion or by enforced social performance has major implications for the author's perception of heterosexuality, which must impact his fiction. It is equally uncertain to what extent Wilde valued the consent or pleasure of the male prostitutes he associated with,<sup>40</sup> though this question might be critical to evaluating the author's sexual ethics and their expression in his work. Finally, Wilde's own attitude to his sexuality, and the degree to which he accepted the judgement of society, is difficult to determine based on writings whose attitude varies widely according to circumstance and audience.

The theme of the virtual impossibility of proving private sexuality, and the temptation it presents to mental forgery, is explored by Wilde's own 'The Portrait of Mr. W. H.', ultimately without resolution. To remove the blinkers of heteronormative assumption is to acknowledge that Wilde's homosexual or bisexual Shakespeare, whose sexuality potentially fuelled his empathetic depictions of women and social outsiders, as well as his nuanced exploration of gender fluidity in complex cross-dressing plots, exists alongside the canonical heterosexual Shakespeare as an equally valid (or invalid) historical variant. Each is an imaginary construct that serves the reader's own emotional needs or bias, who then mentally forges the evidence for their preferred sexuality, just as physical proof of Shakespeare's male lover is forged in Wilde's story. His characters' intense need to believe in the reality of 'Mr. W. H.' is emphasized by their anguish and suicide, indicating the importance Wilde perceived in the psychological validation of establishing cultural precedent for homoeroticism, represented by W.H.'s putative relationship with Shakespeare. Effectively, 'The Portrait of Mr. W.H.' acknowledges the

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40 See Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, pp. 476 – 477 for legal conviction as frequenter of Alfred Taylor's "male brothel", p. 571 for Wilde's own account to Leonard Smithers of frequenting prostitutes in Nice after release.

psychological importance of role models for desire while suggesting that belief in them must always be tormentingly speculative.

Similarly, based on the absence of conclusive biographical evidence for sexual activity on the part of Nikolai Gogol, it must be said that Rozanov's necrophilic Gogol, Karlinsky's homosexual Gogol and the heterosexual ascetic Gogol of Soviet scholarship, all coexist as equally historically valid (or invalid) potential explanations of the patterns of sexual and romantic representation within the author's work. The situation is further complicated by the culture of compulsory heterosexuality, in its use of the heterosexual as the only permissible expression of the sexual. It is thus impossible to ascertain whether the aversion to compulsory heterosexuality expressed by Gogol in works such as *Marriage* represents an aversion to sexuality as a whole, or to heterosexuality specifically, or to compulsory heterosexuality only. References made in this thesis to Gogol's aversion to "compulsory heterosexuality" should not be taken as an assertion of the author's homosexuality, therefore, but as a refusal of the heteronormative conflation of "the heterosexual" with "the sexual", which obscures the potential for alternate sexualities. The assimilation pressures of a dominant culture of compulsory heterosexuality may also be compared to the imperial assimilation pressures of the British and Russian Empires, which form the subject of the next section.

## **7.6 Anglonormativity and Russonormativity in 19th-century Imperial Britain and Russia**

National identity is proposed within this thesis to be a socially policed and performative identity, much as heterosexual identity is within a culture of compulsory heterosexuality. A "national character", the existence of which is presupposed by Oscar

Wilde's definitions of "the English character" within his fiction or Nikolai Gogol's definitions of "Russian soul",<sup>41</sup> is an artificial unity, rhetorically constructed from a diverse spectrum of regional and individual variation, through a combination of observable cultural trend, confirmation bias and aspiration. The fragile coherence of national identity can be claimed to transition into imperialism when the nation's impulse to expand territory, while resisting its own hybridization, causes the dominant culture to incorporate other cultures while simultaneously excluding them from its self-image.

In the first chapter of his postcolonial study *Orientalism*, Edward Said quotes a 1908 essay by Lord Cromer, in which Cromer discusses imperialism in light of the "real or supposed advantage which may accrue to England as a nation, or - as is more frequently the case - to the special interests represented by some one or more influential classes of Englishmen. If the British nation as a whole persistently bears this principle in mind..."<sup>42</sup> Cromer clarifies that the imperial project tends to benefit "England as a nation", and more specifically "influential classes of Englishmen", while being administered by an imagined "British nation as a whole". The assertion that England and Britain both simultaneously constitute nations, by whom the same empire is interchangeably administered, raises a cognitive dissonance that can only be reconciled by an assumed synonymy of the English and the British. To maintain this rhetorical synonymy in practice, anglonormative stigma framed non-English British identities as provincial and unrepresentative of the "British nation as a whole", of which the English, particularly their "influential classes", were deemed by Cromer representative. Irish identity, then, like that of the Welsh and the Scots, is caught between its inclusive nationalist incorporation in a rhetorically evoked "British nation as a whole" and its

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41 'Русская душа', using the adjective '*russkii*', which can be regarded as inclusive of "Little Russian" Ukrainian identity.

42 Said, *Orientalism*, p. 37

defensive nationalist exclusion from the “English nation”, even as those two are treated as interchangeable terms.

At the time of Oscar Wilde's arrival in Oxford in 1874, the "Paddywhackery" tradition of anti-Irish caricature and performed "Stage Irish" inferiority was established, and *Punch* caricatures of apelike Irishmen were popular in England throughout the 1870s and 1880s, when backlash against the Irish Land Wars and Home Rule movement was at its height.<sup>43</sup> Michèle Mendelssohn has documented Wilde's own direct experience of this anti-Irish stigma during his 1882 American tour, where he was repeatedly publicly caricatured as a monkey.<sup>44</sup> When presenting literary fiction and theatrical performances to an imperial English audience, in what forms could the ethnicity of Irish authors be expressed without being stigmatized? Biographer Richard Ellmann contends that "Wilde determined to be beyond rather than behind the English. His lisp and native intonation disappeared."<sup>45</sup>

Wilde's effacement of audible markers of his Irishness led to his being recategorized as "English" by the dominant culture from the beginning of his literary career, with W. F. Morse officially promoting him on his 1882 American lecture tour as "the new English Poet".<sup>46</sup> By 1916, when Ernest A. Boyd attempted to define a patriotic canon of Anglo-Irish literature, it had become accepted even by this Irish commentator that "Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw belong as certainly to the history of English literature as Goldsmith and Sheridan".<sup>47</sup> Though Wilde has since been reclaimed into an Irish literary canon, Boyd's quote illustrates his initial exclusion from an Irish nationalist literary identity, which parallels Ukrainian nationalist discomfort with the

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43 M. Alison Kibler, 'The Stage Irishwoman', p. 8, and all of L.P. Curtis' *Apes and Angels: Irishman in Victorian Caricature* and Michael De Nie's *The Eternal Paddy: Irish Identity and the British Press 1798-1882* [JK 36]

44 See Mendelssohn, *Making Oscar Wilde*, pp. 90 - 109

45 Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 38

46 Ellmann, p. 152

47 Boyd, *Ireland's Literary Renaissance*, p. 7

incorporation of Nikolai Gogol that is discussed below. Since the Anglo-Irish writer Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School For Scandal* is a probable model for Wildean comedies of manners such as *Lady Windermere's Fan*, Boyd's anglonormativity potentially obscures a distinctive Anglo-Irish literary tradition, based on satire of the English rather than assertion of the Irish. Boyd's assessment that "the term Irish (or Anglo-Irish) can be most properly reserved for that literature which, although not written in Gaelic, is none the less informed by the spirit of the race" points to the critical role of language loss in limiting an Irish writer's self-expression to a self-conscious articulation of a putative "spirit of the race".<sup>48</sup> A writer in the Irish Gaelic language could choose any universal theme and be securely coded as Irish by the Gaelic medium itself, but an Irish writer in the English language must qualify their ethnicity, for a commentator such as Boyd, by limiting themselves to an agreed, representative expression of the "spirit of the race", whose self-conscious performance risked creating a stereotypical effect, such as that which Tamara Hundorova classes in Gogol's Ukrainian tales as "colonial kitsch".<sup>49</sup>

Wilde himself stated openly in the English press that "I am not English, I am Irish - which is quite another thing".<sup>50</sup> He also publicly expressed Irish nationalist support for politicians such as Charles Stewart Parnell. Therefore, the assumption of Wilde's Englishness cannot be attributed to his own ethnic crossing, but as a function of the cognitive dissonance of the dominant culture itself. The imperial anglonormative logic implicitly poses a flawed categorical syllogism: the British is English (as in Cromer's interchangeable use of the British and English as administrators of empire). The Irishman is British. Therefore, the Irishman is English (as in W. F. Morse's promotion of Wilde as "new English poet"). Operationally, such anglonormativity is

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48 Boyd, *Ireland's Literary Renaissance*, p. 7

49 "колоніальний кітч", Mikhed ed., *Hoholeznavchi studii (vypusk I (18))*, pp. 17 - 38

50 Hyde, *Oscar Wilde: A Biography*, p. 140

highly comparable to heteronormativity, whose implicit logic may be expressed by the flawed categorical syllogism: people are heterosexual. The homosexual is a person. Therefore, the homosexual is heterosexual.

Without actively deceiving, it is possible for an individual to escape stigma in both the ethnic and sexual cases by allowing anglonormative or heteronormative society to misread them. The theme of a protagonist passively accepting the imposition of a mistaken identity, for the enhancement of their social prestige, is notably prominent in the work of both authors, from Khlestakov's willingness to be read as an inspector general to Algernon Moncrieff's willingness to be read as Ernest Worthing. Joseph Valente contends of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that “the Irish people at large found themselves at once agents and objects, participant-victims as it were, of Britain's far-flung imperial mission – in short, a 'metrocolonial people.’”<sup>51</sup> This concept of the metrocolonial “participant-victim”, as an imperfectly assimilated object and a performatively stigmatized subject, applies to the closeted homosexual subject in a society of compulsory heterosexuality as much as to the Irish in the British Empire, potentially explaining the high overlap in symbolism between the ethnic and sexual narratives of Oscar Wilde.

In the 19th century, "Russian" (*russkii* / русский) was regarded as a simultaneously inclusive and exclusive term, comparable to the term "British" in anglonormative imperial discourse. Officially, it was equivalent to "Ruthenian", being understood to incorporate all ethnic groups descended from the historical state of Kievan Rus: the White Russian (Belorussian), Little Russian (Ukrainian) and Great Russian (Russian). In the russonormative imperial discourse, however, the word "Russian" was used synonymously with "Great Russian". Cognitive dissonance over

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51 Valente, *Dracula's Crypt*, p. 3

the inclusivity or exclusivity of the term "Russian" is prominent in Konstantin Aksakov's 1842 review of Gogol's *Dead Souls*:

of course, unity flowed out of the Great Russian element; to it is given the general character [...] it retained its legitimate supremacy, as the supremacy of the head in a living human body is legitimate; but all the body carries the name of the person, not the head; so also Russia is called Russia, and not Great Russia [...] Gogol is Russian, completely Russian, and this is visible most of all in his epic, where the subject of Rus, all of Rus occupies him, and all of her appears to him colossally as one gigantic whole. So then, what is important is this phenomenon of the Little Russian element as already Russian, a living element of the common Russian life, under the legitimate pre-eminence of the Great Russian.<sup>52</sup>

Aksakov's attempt to reconcile the simultaneous inclusivity and exclusivity of his concept of the Russian, by comparing the (Great) Russian to the head of a body, is a revealing metaphor. The head of a body can claim the identity of the whole body only because it alone is able to speak on behalf of the body. Aksakov recognizes Gogol as "completely Russian" and as Little Russian (Ukrainian) simultaneously, while asserting that the "general character" of the Russian, which Gogol represents as a "completely Russian" Little Russian, is nevertheless "given to" the Great Russian. Aksakov's concept of the "completely Russian", like Cromer's concept of the "British nation as a

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52 "Разумеется, единство вытекло из великорусского элемента; им дан общий характер (...) он сохранил свое законное господство, как законно господство головы в живом человеческом теле; но все тело носит название человека, не головы; так и Россия зовется Россией, а не Великоруссией (...) Гоголь — русский, вполне русский, и это наиболее видно в его поэме, где содержание Руси, всей Руси занимает его, и вся она, как одно исполинское целое, колоссально является ему. Итак, важно это явление малороссийского элемента уже русским, живым элементом общерусской жизни, при законном преимуществе великорусского.", Аксаков, Konstantin, 'Несколько слов о поэме Гоголя Похождение Чичикова, или Мертвые Души', cited in Grabowicz, *Do istorii Ukraïns'koï literatury (Toward a History of Ukrainian Literature)*, p. 117 (quote above is my own English translation of Aksakov's Russian)

whole", can only be maintained by an assumed synonymy with the dominant ethnic group that forces Gogol's ethnic crossing.

It may therefore be claimed that the imperial cultures of the British and Russian Empires were highly comparable in their treatment of the Irish and the Ukrainian, not only in the character of their stigma as comical, ignorant and impulsive provincials, but in the operational similarity of the assimilation pressures under which the Irish and Ukrainian were placed, constructing both the Irish and Ukrainians as metrocolonial "participant victims" of imperial anglonormativity or russonormativity. Russonormative logic implicitly poses a flawed categorical syllogism: the Ruthenian is Russian. The Ukrainian is Ruthenian. Therefore, the Ukrainian is Russian. The resulting cognitive dissonance prompts a russonormativity functionally identical to the anglonormativity of imperial British culture, and akin to heteronormativity.

Vasily Gippius claims that "a Ukrainian like Gnedich or Kapnist who found himself in Moscow or St. Petersburg easily shed his native language and, for the most part, his feeling of nationality as well".<sup>53</sup> The suggestion that Vasily Kapnist, who was associated with an attempt to enlist Prussian military aid for armed Ukrainian insurgency against Russia, had "shed his feeling of nationality", merely by "easily" shedding stigmatized and performative linguistic markers, is highly dubious. Gogol's documented creative debt to Russo-Ukrainian authors such as Vasily Kapnist and Vasily Narezhny, like Wilde's debt to Sheridan and Maturin, might rather suggest a distinctive Russo-Ukrainian canon with its own themes and poetics. The coercive pressure on the bilingual Nikolai Gogol to efface his own Ukrainian linguistic markers is illustrated, not only by Aksakov's 19<sup>th</sup>-century demand that Gogol function as some form of Ukrainian limb or organ of a Russian body that he must speak on behalf of without

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53 Gippius, Vasily, *Gogol*, p. 17



threatening the legitimate supremacy of its head, but equally by the 20<sup>th</sup>-century Russian critic Vladimir Nabokov's assessment: "we must thank fate (and the author's thirst for universal fame) for his not having turned to the Ukrainian dialect as a medium of expression, because then he would have been lost",<sup>54</sup> a use of provincializing stigma to validate and reward effacement of performative linguistic divergence.

As with Ernest Boyd's exclusion of Wilde from his proposed Anglo-Irish canon, so the Ukrainian nationalist critic Evhen Malaniuk initially echoed Gippius' russonormative logic by defining "Hoholism" (Gogolism) as loss of national instinct, and claiming that Gogol, the "canonized 'Russian' writer [...] gave us unsurpassed material for the study of the decomposition of the national psyche and its transition to Little Russian rot".<sup>55</sup> Despite the assumed loss of national instinct that is alleged of Russo-Ukrainian authors by both Gippius and Malaniuk, Nikolai Gogol would produce a foundational literary celebration of the Ukrainian national myth in *Taras Bulba*.

In the expanded 1842 version, Gogol's use of the word "Russian" (русский) to describe the Zaporozhian Cossacks, a people unambiguously ethnically and politically external to the Russian Empire, demonstrates the author's own understanding of the term as signifying the Ruthenian, in the expansive sense of that word as a descriptor of all ethnicities descended from Kievan Rus. Edyta Bojanowska also points to the fantasy sequence that concludes Gogol's 'Diary of a Madman', in which the narrator flies home to "Russian huts" described as between the sea and Italy i.e. in the location of Ukraine. Bojanowska contends that "reserving *ruskoe* ['Russian'] for the empire's southern periphery reveals the importance Gogol placed on Ukraine's strong ethnic identity and on its role as the cradle of Slavdom".<sup>56</sup> This view is supported by Gogol's nonfiction

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54 Nabokov, *Nikolai Gogol*, p. 32

55 Malaniuk, Evhen, 'Little Russianism' in Lindheim and Luckyj ed. and trans., *Towards An Intellectual History of Ukraine, An Anthology of Ukrainian Thought from 1710 to 1995*, p. 327

56 Bojanowska, *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism*, p. 185

description of the Ukraine as "the real fatherland of the Slavs [...] of pure Slavic tribes, which in Great Russia already began to mix with Finnish peoples, but were here preserved in their previous integrity".<sup>57</sup> Far from capitulating to Aksakov's concept of the legitimate supremacy of the Great Russian within the Russian body, Gogol's concept of the Great Russian as having weaker "integrity" by their intermixing with Finnish peoples implies the "legitimate supremacy" of the Ukrainian essence within his concept of Russian soul. Shown most clearly by the explicit rewriting of his Ukrainian nationalist work *Taras Bulba* to describe its Ukrainian Cossacks as "Russian", Gogol's abandonment of Ukrainian themes in 1836 was accompanied not only by an increase in his prestige among Russian readers such as Vissarion Belinsky and Konstantin Aksakov, but by the author's own reimagining of the Russian as an expression of the Ukrainian. For this reason, Gogol's use of the term "Russian" is translated within this thesis as "Ruthenian", unless it is judged by its context to be unambiguously referring to the "Great Russian". It should nevertheless be remembered that, by choosing this term to designate the Ruthenian, Gogol was allowing both himself and his characters to be read as quintessentially Russian by his target readership. That is, he was "passing" ethnically, which Russian critics from Konstantin Aksakov to Vladimir Nabokov have explicitly linked with his increased literary prestige.

### 7.7 Diagnosis of Closeted Nationalism

The 1849 trial of Charles Gavan Duffy for publishing revolutionary Irish nationalist writings, included as evidence of high treason the revolutionary nationalist 'Jacta Alea Est' by Oscar Wilde's mother, Jane "Speranza" Wilde.<sup>58</sup> Like the 1847 arrest

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57 "в этой земле, настоящей отчизне славян [...] чистых славянских племен, которые в Великой России начинали уже смешиваться с народами финскими, но здесь сохраняли в прежней цельности" quoted in Tomenko, *Ukrains'kyi romantyk Mykola Hohol*, p. 80 - 81

58 Coakley, *Oscar Wilde: The Importance of Being Irish*, pp. 10 - 11

of Gogol's admirer Taras Shevchenko for revolutionary Ukrainian nationalist writing, Duffy's trial demonstrates that full expression of Irish or Ukrainian revolutionary nationalism was not only socially stigmatized as provincial, but actively legally hazardous in the 19th century. The question of whether either Nikolai Gogol or Oscar Wilde or both may be defined as closeted nationalists, mentally resistant to the imperial culture in which they were participating, is critical to the assessment of their ethnic consciousness and its expression within their work. As a product of ethnic consciousness, rather than simple ethnicity, nationalism is challenging to diagnose, particularly in a culture where it is legally censored. Just as Oscar Wilde's documented sexual activity with men and women cannot resolve the question of whether his erotic consciousness was primarily homosexual or bisexual, so his documented birth and upbringing in Ireland cannot resolve the question of whether his ethnic consciousness was nationalist. This thesis bases its claim of the nationalist consciousnesses of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde on their observable shared expression of four core concepts. Firstly, the belief that the homeland is essentially distinct from the imperial power. Secondly, the belief that the homeland is superior to or opposed to the imperial power. Thirdly, by expressed sympathy with armed rebels against the imperial power. Fourthly, by a negative view of countrymen who assimilate to the imperial culture. In demonstrating that both Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde expressed all these views, while erasing references to their homeland from their most successful published fiction and accepting their incorporation into the imperial culture unchallenged, this thesis claims that they may be defined as closeted nationalists, in their literary fiction at least.

Oscar Wilde was the son of the Irish revolutionary poet Lady Jane "Speranza" Wilde and the Irish folklorist and cultural nationalist Sir William Wilde, growing up in

contact with Irish peasant culture through his childhood at Moytura, as well as with leading figures of Ireland's literary revival. His ongoing interest in Irish culture and the Celtic Revival may be judged by his decision to join the Irish Literary Society in London in the 1890s, at the height of his fame.<sup>59</sup> Oscar Wilde expressed support for the armed rebel William Smith O'Brien on his American lecture tours, where he declared "the Saxon took our lands from us and left them desolate - we took their language and added new beauties to it".<sup>60</sup> Aside from showcasing Wilde's identification with an Irish "we", in defensive nationalist opposition to a "Saxon" conceived as an oppressive force that has "desolated" Ireland, this statement reflects Wilde's mental investment in the concept of Irish rhetorical superiority over the English, later claiming to W. B. Yeats that the Irish were "the greatest talkers since the Greeks",<sup>61</sup> and explicitly affirming the rhetorical superiority of the Irish in Mrs. Cheveley's statement in *An Ideal Husband*: "if one could only teach the English how to talk and the Irish how to listen, society here would be quite civilized".<sup>62</sup>

A logical outcome of Wilde's stated conviction that "every man of ambition has to fight his century with its own weapons"<sup>63</sup> would be assertion of rhetorical superiority through parodic assumption of the dominant culture's discourse, whether that of English aristocracy or of compulsory heterosexuality. The suggestion that Wilde's adoption of anglo-normative imperial rhetoric was actually a method of fighting the imperial power is made by W. B. Yeats, describing Wilde's work as "an extravagant Celtic crusade against Anglo-Saxon stupidity" with "the total result being the Englishman utterly unconscious of his real self, Mr. Wilde keenly observant of it and playing on the self-

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59 Coakley, *Oscar Wilde: The Importance of Being Irish*, p. 69

60 Quoted in Hyde, *Oscar Wilde: A Biography*, p. 69

61 Yeats, 'On The Happy Prince and Other Tales' in BECKSON ed., *Oscar Wilde, the Critical Heritage*, p. 397

62 *CI*, p. 468

63 Quoted in Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p.173

unconsciousness with irresistible humour, and finally, of course, the Englishman annoyed with himself for being amused at his own expense."<sup>64</sup> Yeats' statement suggests that Wilde's satirical performance of Englishness could, in itself, be regarded as valid Irish nationalist poetics. On the same poetry lecture in which he expressed sympathy for William Smith O'Brien, in San Francisco on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1882, Wilde criticized Oliver Goldsmith for his lack of national feeling,<sup>65</sup> expressing a negative opinion of the ethnic crossing of Irish writers who effaced their own culture from their writing, which appears highly anomalous in an Irish author whose published fiction contains no overt representation of Irish themes or characters. As such, Wilde's private statements and lectures to Irish-American audiences contain expression of all four concepts: of the distinct and superior nature of the Irish, its opposition to the English, his sympathy with the armed rebel Smith O'Brien and his negative evaluation of the assimilation of Goldsmith to the imperial culture.

If Wilde's ethnic crossing was produced by the anglonormative culture's cognitive dissonance, he fully exploited it to authorize his satire of the English. Wilde allows Lord Henry Wotton to adopt the authoritative register of aristocratic English self-identification in order to categorically declare that "courage has gone out of our race"<sup>66</sup> and "the beer, the Bible and the seven deadly virtues have made our England what she is".<sup>67</sup> Wilde's character identifies as English to authorize his criticism of the English, a device which Davis Coakley has attributed to Wilde's familiarity with Aristophanes.<sup>68</sup> Rather than being forced by assimilationist pressures into a defensive nationalist provincialism, Wilde exploits imperial cognitive dissonance to undermine England's self-image, from the vantage point of assumed belonging granted to him by

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64 Yeats, in Beckson ed., *Oscar Wilde, the Critical Heritage*, p. 111

65 Coakley, *Oscar Wilde: The Importance of Being Irish*, p. 11

66 *CI*, p. 15

67 *CI*, p. 132

68 Coakley, *Oscar Wilde: The Importance of Being Irish*, p. 202

the otherwise oppressive force of anglonormativity.

Mykola Tomenko concludes his survey of critical opinion on Nikolai Gogol: "the absolute majority of specialists are convinced that Mykola Hohol [Nikolai Gogol] was firstly a great Ukrainian Romantic, and then a Russian realist and satirist".<sup>69</sup> As this assessment highlights, Gogol's effacement of overt expressions of Ukrainian identity in the mid-1830s was not a simple thematic shift, but accompanied a fundamental generic and conceptual shift from Romantic folkloric depiction of Ukraine to bleakly realist and parodic depiction of Russia. Like Wilde, Gogol was the son of an active cultural nationalist, Vasyl Panasovych Hohol-Yanovsky, who was among the first dramatists to write in the Ukrainian language, worked on a dictionary of Ukrainian and celebrated his Cossack ancestry. As Wilde expressed overt Irish nationalism in his support for the armed rebel William Smith O'Brien, so Nikolai Gogol would describe the Cossack Hetman Ivan Mazepa's armed uprising against the Russian tsar Peter the Great from a sympathetic Ukrainian nationalist perspective, in a fragment preserved from his projected *History of Little Russia* entitled 'The Reasoning of Mazepa', which describes Ukrainians as "a people so divergent from Russians, breathing freedom and daring Cossackhood, wanting to live their life [...] To oppose the threatening force of despotism with the force of united will".<sup>70</sup>

Not only does this extract unambiguously state Gogol's defensive nationalist view of the ethnic divergence of the Russian and Ukrainian, while implying the ethnic superiority of the Ukrainian, but its reference to Russia's "threatening force of despotism" mirrors Wilde's reference to the Saxon's "desolation" of Irish lands, as

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69 "абсолютна більшість фахівців переконана, що Микола Гоголь передовсім великий український романтик, а вже потім російський реаліст і сатирик." - Тomenko, *Ukrains'kyi romantyk Mykola Hohol*, p. 17

70 "народу, так отличному от русских, дышавшему вольностью и лихим козачеством, хотевшему пожить своею жизнью... противопоставит грозной силе деспотизма силу единогодушия" SS 7, p. 194

alienated nationalist perspectives hostile to the dominant imperial power. Gogol's own negative perception of the phenomenon of ethnic crossing is suggested in 'Old World Landowners', whose omniscient narrator condemns as "contemptible and pitiful creatures" those "low Little Russians"<sup>71</sup> who aspire to establish themselves as Great Russian aristocrats and adopt Russified names. Nikolai Gogol therefore clearly expressed concept of the distinct and superior character of Ukrainians, his sympathy for the armed rebel Mazepa and his expressed contempt for countrymen assimilating to the imperial power, the same nationalist concepts which Wilde expressed in the case of the Irish. The view that Gogol's Ukrainian nationalist consciousness is intrinsic to his critical and parodic perspective on Russia, comparable to Yeats' claim of Wilde's "extravagant Celtic crusade against Anglo-Saxon stupidity", is suggested by the Ukrainian commentator Volodymyr Yaniv: "with Gogol, criticism crossed over into mockery, which was truly a form of Trojan Horse for Russians, who Gogol ingeniously ridiculed and thereby shook their overconfidence".<sup>72</sup> This interpretation may be applied to Gogol's Petersburg tales, in which the imperial capital is satirized through characters identified as Russian/Ruthenian rather than Ukrainian.

To read *The Inspector General* and *Dead Souls* as satires of Russia, however, is complicated by the Ukrainian city of Nizhyn, in which Gogol was educated, serving as the probable model for these ethnically unmarked Russian provinces. In his survey of Gogol's relationship with Nizhyn, Grigorii Samoilenko comments of *Dead Souls*' "city of N." that "the journey of the epic's hero through the provincial town allows the reproduction of several places from the central part of Nizhyn",<sup>73</sup> while he alleges that

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71 "тем низким малороссиянам ... презренные и жалкие творения" SS 2, p. 382

72 "у Гоголя критика перейшла у насміх, що був справді своєрідним троянським конем для росіян, яких Гоголь геніально висміяв і тим спричинився до захитання їх самовпевненості." Yaniv, Volodymyr, quoted in Tomenko, *Ukrains'kyi romantyk Mykola Hohol'* p. 14

73 "путешествие героя поэмы по губернскому городу дает возможность воспроизвести некоторые места центральной части Нежина" Samoilenko, *Nikolai Gogol' i Nezhin*, p 13

"working on *The Inspector General*, Gogol intended to connect the fate of his heroes with Nizhyn. But then, in the process of polishing the scenes of the play and the monologues of the performers, the author removed even the smallest indications of a concrete location. Gogol strove for the typification of the scenes, although many Nizhyn merchants and civil servants could recognize themselves in *The Inspector General*".<sup>74</sup> Aside from his extensive archival research, Samoilenko's contention is also plausible in view of Gogol's practice of setting his fiction in locations with which he was personally familiar, and his lack of direct experience of residence in any Russian provincial city outside Ukraine, highlighted by Vladimir Zviniatskovsky.<sup>75</sup> By deliberately erasing identifiable Ukrainian specificity from his provincial city, Gogol could empower the Ukrainian to represent the Russian, an impulse also legible in *Taras Bulba*'s rebranding of Ukrainian Cossacks as Russian/Ruthenian, reversing the dominant culture's assumption of the capacity of the Russian to represent the Ukrainian.

The defensive nationalism of a colonized nation, endeavouring to assert its own identity in opposition to the imperial power and thereby excluding spaces of ambiguity and hybridity, may be a force as oppressive as the imperial power's own assimilation pressures. By effacing the Ukrainian in *The Inspector General* and *Dead Souls*, Nikolai Gogol not only allows his satire to be interpreted by Russian readers as universally human and relevant to themselves, but enables a satirical image of Ukraine that is distorted neither by the mandatory ethnic caricature of imperialism, nor by the artificially idealized imagery of defensive nationalism. As Wilde would famously

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74 "Работая над "Ревизором", Гоголь намеревался связать судьбу своих героев с Нежином. Но затем в процессе шлифовки сцен пьесы, монологов действующих лиц писатель убрал даже малейшие признаки конкретного места действия. Гоголь стремился к типизации явлений, хотя многие нежинские купцы и чиновники могли себя узнать в "Ревизоре"." Samoilenko, *Nikolai Gogol i Nezhin*, p. 222

75 "Гоголь с детства неплохо знал Украину — на Россию, кроме Петербурга и Москвы, видел лишь в окно почтовой кареты» Zviniatskovsky, *Pobezhdaiushchii Strakh Smekhom*, pp. 205 - 206



recommend giving a man "a mask and he will tell you the truth",<sup>76</sup> so the ethnic closeting of the authors potentially enables authentic self-expression as much as it constrains it, not only by evading the stigma of the imperial power, but equally avoiding the pressure to perform unambivalent patriotism for the homeland, even as the homeland's own culture of compulsory heterosexuality might alienate or exile its sexually stigmatized patriots. Though the imperial culture may be viewed as an oppressive force by nationalists, it is also an inherently pluralist one, by the fact of its assimilating multiple cultures, while the culture of a defensive nationalism dedicated to the policing of a homogeneous "spirit of the race" approaches the tyranny of populist conformism for which Gogol and Wilde express a shared aversion, discussed in **Chapter Five.**

As the Abbey riots against the social satires of John Millington Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* and Sean O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars* demonstrate in an Irish context, one consequence of colonial stigma is the development of a defensive nationalism intolerant of satirical criticism. Oscar Wilde avoided the question of any potential satirical alienation from Irish culture, by withholding all direct representation of the Irish from his literary fiction. Gogol's early, explicitly Ukrainian, works have been noted by his Ukrainian biographer Panteleimon Kulish for their "perpetual affectation or caricature."<sup>77</sup> Though set in locations of Gogol's childhood such as Dikanka and Mirgorod, the Ukrainian tales are characterized by their extensive use of pastiche, of love motifs from the Ukrainian folk songs which Gogol collected, of stock characters of Ukrainian puppet theatre,<sup>78</sup> and of mythological creatures of

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76 'The Critic as Artist' in Wilde, *De Profundis, The Ballad of Reading Gaol & Other Writings*, p. 225

77 "В українських повістях Гоголя постійна афектація или карикатура." - Kulish, Panteleimon, quoted in Tomenko, *Ukrains'kyi romantyk Mykola Hohol'*, p. 12

78 "the comic devil, the spiteful wench, the gypsy rogue, the peasant oaf and the bombastic deacon, all these are characters of Ukrainian puppet theatre" ("кумедний чорт, зла баба, пройдисвіт-циган, мужик-простак і пишномовний дяк - все це персонажі українського лялькового театру")

Ukrainian folklore, creating the stylized exoticism characterized by Hundorova as "colonial kitsch". The effect was an abstraction and alienation that catered to the Russian readership's appetite for exaggerated Ukrainian caricature while reducing the work's satirical actuality. In 'The Night Before Christmas', a Cossack's self-conscious performance of ethnic caricature is explicitly explained as catering to the expectations of imperial Russia:

the blacksmith was surprised, hearing that this Zaporozhian, who so well knew literate language, spoke, as though deliberately, with the empress in the rudest dialect, ordinarily considered peasant speech. "Cunning folk!" he thought to himself, "most likely he's doing that with good reason."<sup>79</sup>

The greater the success of Oscar Wilde in asserting rhetorical domination over the English, the greater their psychological incentive to assimilate him, fuelling anglonormativity that demands the Irishman either accept his imposed Englishness or assert his stigmatized provincialism. Wilde, however, expressed a foreign cultural consciousness in opposition to the English, not through asserted Irishness but through his assumed identities as artist and as Francophile. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Lord Henry's wife claims of pianists that "even those that are born in England become foreigners after a time, don't they? It is so clever of them, and such a compliment to art".<sup>80</sup> By coding foreignness as an attribute inherent to the artist, "even those that are born in England", this foreignness is not localized in stigmatized Irishness. The suggestion that becoming a foreigner is "clever" and a "compliment to art" implies that

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Honchar, Oles', cited in Tomenko, *Ukrains'kyi Romantyk Mykola Hohol*, p. 13

79 "кузнец удивился, слыша, что этот запорожец, зная так хорошо грамотный язык, говорит с царицею, как будто нарочно, самым грубым, обыкновенно называемым мужицким наречием. "Хитрый народ!" - подумал он сам себе, - верно, недаром он это делает". *SS I*, p. 275

80 *CI*, p. 33

it is inherently superior to Englishness. Wotton's wife introduces the concept of artist as naturally superior foreigner, an evaluation which would be implicitly applicable to Wilde himself as publicly recognized artist, rendering the fraught question of his ethnic belonging to Englishness moot by locating an asserted foreignness rather within the attribute of artist itself.

Defining himself to Edmond de Goncourt in a published letter with the claim "French by sympathy, I am Irish by race, and the English have condemned me to speak the language of Shakespeare",<sup>81</sup> Wilde not only reaffirms his Irishness but endows himself with an identity unambiguously external to the British, in his claim to be "French by sympathy". His ambivalence towards the English language simultaneously exalts it as "the language of Shakespeare" and recognizes it as a coerced imposition to which the Irish were "condemned" by colonization, with language loss exposing Irish psychology to the twin pressures of anglonormativity and defensive nationalism. Like his assertion of an "artist" identity made superior by its allegedly inherent foreignness, Wilde's Francophile identity offers him another displaced position from which to assert superiority over the English. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, where it is declared of France that "Anglomanie is very fashionable over there now, I hear. It seems silly of the French, doesn't it?"<sup>82</sup> admiration for English culture is defined as "silly" to imply that the French, with whom Wilde identifies himself "by sympathy", are inherently superior. Though probably motivated by real sympathy with French culture, Wilde's Francophile identity had discursive utility in enabling an Irish nationalist assertion of self as foreign to, superior to and opposed to the English, without becoming stigmatized by the provincial nationalism of Irish self-identification. The "foreign" identity of the "artist" and the "Francophile" may thus serve as vehicles for the displaced expression of an

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81 *CI*, p. 133

82 *CI*, p. 101

effaced Irish nationalist consciousness. Wilde's dandy Lord Illingworth is described as "tainted with foreign ideas",<sup>83</sup> while *An Ideal Husband's* female dandy Mrs. Chevelly has the ethnic ambiguity of an Englishwoman who has voluntarily adopted foreign self-identification as "abroad we are more civilized",<sup>84</sup> establishing a voluntary foreign identity as a marker of the dandy.

In his analysis of ethnic binaries within the writings of Nikolai Gogol in *Selected Studies - Skovoroda. Gogol. Shevchenko*, the Ukrainian researcher Yurii Barabash points to Gogol's letters to O. Danilevsky in which he mentally equates Ukraine to Italy. In public writings like 'Nevsky Prospekt' and 'Rome', however, Gogol contrasted Italy and Russia without mention of Ukraine. In Barabash's words: "a new binary opposition is born: now the homeland, the 'homeland of the soul' is Italy, Russia is a distant foreign land, a bad dream. Ukraine simply drops out of this opposition".<sup>85</sup> Like Wilde's extended period of residence in France, Gogol lived in Italy for lengthy periods of time and probably experienced genuine cultural allegiance. But allegiance to Italy as a "homeland of the soul", like Wilde's allegiance to France "by sympathy", has discursive utility from a perspective of closeted Ukrainian nationalism, in providing an unambiguously external self-identification from which to assert superiority over the Russian. In 'Nevsky Prospekt', the inferiority of the Petersburg climate and its effect on the artist is asserted in direct opposition to Italy: "a Petersburg artist! An artist in the land of snows, an artist in the land of Finns, where everything is wet, slippery, flat, pale, grey, foggy. These artists are not at all like Italian artists, proud, passionate, like Italy and her sky".<sup>86</sup> In Gogol's 'Rome', an abbot declares to the hero that "in the North

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83 *CI*, p. 378

84 *CI*, p. 436

85 "народжується нова бінарна опозиція: тепер батьківщина, "батьківщина душі" - це Італія, Росія - далека чужина, поганий сон. Україна із цієї опозиції просто випадає" Barabash, *Vybrani Studii - Skovoroda. Hohol'. Shevchenko* p. 424

86 "Художник петербургский! художник в земле снегов, художник в стране финнов, где все

there is a barbaric land of Muscovy, where there are such fierce frosts, from which a man's brain can burst".<sup>87</sup> The story depicts a young Italian noble drawn to the cosmopolitan sophistication of France, before becoming disillusioned and learning to value his native land. Gogol describes the inadequacies of France in terms of paleness and artificiality: "the whole nation was something pale, deficient, a facile vaudeville of its own making",<sup>88</sup> recalling his description of the deceptive artificiality of "slippery, flat, pale" St. Petersburg in 'Nevsky Prospekt'. The opposition of France and Italy is repeatedly described as a binary opposition between the characters of the North and the South: Italy "exists entirely in order to awaken the world, so that that South would appear to the Northern dweller as though in a dream, so that the dream of it would draw him out of the midst of a chilled life."<sup>89</sup> In surviving extracts from his projected history of Ukraine, Gogol uses the Ukrainian nationalist binary of North Russia and South Russia, in place of the imperial binary of Great Russia and Little Russia, to imply parity of esteem between the Russian and Ukrainian.<sup>90</sup> His use of the unambiguously foreign Italy and France to enable a displaced assertion of the superiority of "South" over "North", may thus have Ukrainian nationalist connotations, with Vladimir Zviniatskovsky regarding 'Rome' as closeted autobiography.<sup>91</sup>

Such expressions of nationalist consciousness, through displaced ethnic allegiance, may be compared to the usage of incest and necrophilia within the sexual narratives of Gogol and Wilde, as enabling exploration of a censored perspective

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мокро, гладко, ровно, бледно, серо, туманно. Эти художники вовсе не похожи на художников итальянских, гордых, горячих, как Италия и ее небо" SS 3, p. 16

87 "на севере есть варварская земля Московия, где бывают такие жестокие морозы, от которых может лопнуть мозг человеческий" SS 3, p. 242

88 "вся нация была что-то бледное, несовершенное, легкий водевиль, ею же порожденный." SS 3, p. 252

89 "все существует для того, чтобы будить мир, чтоб жителю севера, как сквозь сон, представлялся иногда этот юг, чтоб мечта о нем вырвала его из среды хладной жизни" SS 3, p. 268

90 "южная Россия" used repeatedly in 'Взгляд на составление Малороссии', SS 7, pp. 198-207

91 Zviniatskovsky, *Pobezhdaiushchii Strakh Smekhom*, p. 208

through its displacement. Gogol's 1839 fragment 'Nights at the Villa' not only represents his most open expression of homoeroticism, but also associates this passion rhetorically with a rejection of the 'Tsar of the North': "with what joy, with what anger I could have trampled underfoot and squashed everything that is bestowed by the mighty sceptre of the Tsar of the North, if I only knew that this would buy a smile that indicated the slightest relief on his face".<sup>92</sup> Description of the 'Tsar of the North', using a Ukrainianized term for 'north',<sup>93</sup> indicates an openly expressed Ukrainian nationalist alienation from Great Russian tsardom, associated with the author's open expression of homoeroticism within private writing, four years after the publication of *Mirgorod* represented his final reference to Ukraine in published writing. This may be cited as further evidence of both the author's ongoing closeted nationalist consciousness and his mental association of that private nationalism with homoeroticism.

To summarize: the published fiction of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde expresses a diverse range of sexuality, including incest, necrophilia and interspecies sex, but the autobiographical writings of the authors, particularly 'De Profundis' and 'Nights at the Villa', indicate homoerotic attraction to men, or intense romanticization of homosocial bonds, unparalleled by references to any other sexuality in private writings. As the sexual expression of homoerotic attraction was both illegal and heavily stigmatized in the cultures of both authors, such a motivation would plausibly account for their development of a literary aesthetic of sexual closeting. Expressions of ethnic allegiance by both authors are also diverse, including nationalist identification with the homeland (Ireland/Ukraine), identification with the imperial power (England/Russia) and identification with an external adopted homeland (France/Italy). In private correspondence and nonfiction, however, both authors display an ethnic consciousness

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92 Karlinsky, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*, p. 194-5

93 "полночного царя» SS 7 p. 661 – 'полночный' is cognate with the standard Ukrainian word for North, 'північний' while the standard Russian term is 'северный'

that may be approximately defined as Irish or Ukrainian nationalist, diagnosed on the basis of their clearly articulated concept of both the homeland's ethnic divergence and its ethnic superiority, as well as their expressed sympathy for nationalist rebels against the imperial power and negative assessment of assimilation to the imperial culture. An assumption of nationalist consciousness would plausibly account for the development of a literary aesthetic of ethnic closeting on the part of both authors. Operational similarities between the cultural forces of anglonormativity, russonormativity and heteronormativity would account for the use by both authors of a shared symbolic vocabulary to express both the ethnic and the sexual. The object of the remainder of **Part Two** is the detailed examination of patterns of sexuality and ethnicity within the literary output of both authors, structured by Carl Jung's individuation process as a model of how the imagination symbolizes psychological repression.

## Chapter 8 - '*The Garden of Eros*': Lost Paradise

The individuation process referred to in this thesis does not presuppose the existence of the expansive, preprogrammed collective unconscious hypothesized by the psychoanalyst Carl Jung, only of the inborn capacity of the human imagination to compartmentalize its identity, as a strategy of social adaptation. From such compartmentalization, labelled “dissociation” by Jung,<sup>1</sup> arises conflict between the socially endorsed identity, defined by Jung as “persona”,<sup>2</sup> and the repressed identity, conceived by Jung as an archetypal “shadow”,<sup>3</sup> causing regressive longing for a lost wholeness of identity, symbolized in an archetypal image of “lost paradise”,<sup>4</sup> and the striving towards visionary reintegration of self, labelled by Jung as “individuation”.<sup>5</sup> This thesis contends that the dynamics of archetypal psychology, whose transcultural and transhistorical nature was estimated by Jung through comparative analysis of unconscious dreams, products of art therapy and global mythology, may be traced to this fundamental experience of repression in human psychology, with the symbolic forms by which the repressed contents of the mind are characteristically processed.

Jung's individuation process structures the next five chapters of this thesis: this chapter examines the concept of “lost paradise” within the fiction of Gogol and Wilde, **Chapter Nine** examines the concept of “dissociation” in the fiction of both authors, **Chapter Ten** examines the psychological crisis identified by Jung as “realization of shadow”, **Chapter Eleven** examines Gogol and Wilde's images of “individuation” and **Chapter Twelve** concludes with portrayals of “regressive restoration of persona” by

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1 Jung, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, p. 175  
2 Jung, *The Symbolic Life*, p. 579  
3 Jung, *The Structure And Dynamics Of The Psyche*, p. 219  
4 Jung, *Man and His Symbols*, p. 85  
5 Jung, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, p. 225



both authors. Carl Jung also posited the existence of a wide range of additional archetypes, which might alternatively be explained in terms of this central psychological dynamic: for example, by reading the “devil” as personification of “shadow”, the “trickster” as personification of alienated “persona”, or the triad of the “maiden”, the “mother” and the “crone” as “ego”, “ego mentor” and “shadow mentor”, while the “child” personifies the infantile security of “lost paradise”. Such speculation falls outside the remit of this thesis, however, in which only the core archetypal concepts of the individuation process are invoked, and studied for their specific application to issues of sexuality and ethnicity by both authors.

The symbolic association between vision, as an external field of awareness, and consciousness, as an internal field of awareness, may be sufficiently intuitive to account for many transcultural and transhistorical phenomena without presuming deeper cognitive preprogramming. The “persona”, as the aspect of Self visible to others, or the “ego” as the aspect of Self visible to oneself, may thereby be associated with day, where the “shadow” or repressed aspect is associated with night, a symbolism whose treatment by Oscar Wilde is explored in **Chapter Nine**. Enlightenment, as an expansion of consciousness, may be conveyed by halo or solar attributes of literal radiance, imagery whose use by both Gogol and Wilde is discussed in **Chapter Eleven**. Flight or the climbing of a tree, by giving expansion of the field of vision, become symbolic of expansion of consciousness within archetypal psychology, potentially explanatory of the recurrent Gogolian theme of flight in works such as 'The Night Before Christmas', 'Vii', 'Diary of a Madman' and the visionary passages of *Dead Souls*.

Therefore, by supposing only the mind's ability to repress aspects of self, and tendency to process the resulting psychological dynamics symbolically while associating consciousness with vision, it is possible to account for large swathes of the

transcultural and transhistorical psychological dynamics described by Carl Jung, and for all the shared thematic patterns of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde. Archetypal psychology may be compared to the physical process of crystallization, in that a relatively small number of natural laws predictably gives rise to structures of great intricacy and complexity.

This may explain why in 1881, prior to the publication of the theories of Carl Gustav Jung, Oscar Wilde produced a volume of poetry whose diverse mythological allusions resolve themselves into psychological dynamics which can be accounted for by Jung's model of the individuation cycle, as observed by Patricia Behrendt.<sup>6</sup> This thesis contends that the basic symbolism and psychological dynamics, observable in Wilde's five epic poems in his 1881 collection, resonate throughout his later work. They also correspond to psychological dynamics observable within the symbolism of Nikolai Gogol. For this reason, each of the final five chapters of this thesis begins with an analysis of a poem in Wilde's collection, and the Jungian psychological concept which this thesis contends may be applied to it, before examining the concept's wider resonance in the work of both Gogol and Wilde. This chapter is dedicated to exploring the authors' concept of "Lost Paradise". In Jungian psychology, 'Lost Paradise' refers to an "archetypal dream of a Golden Age (or Paradise)" to which the individual has a regressive longing to return,<sup>7</sup> which symbolizes, for Jung, a nostalgia for infantile security, the totality of self and "preconscious wholeness" experienced by the individual prior to dissociation of personality and psychological conflict.<sup>8</sup> The hallmarks by which Lost Paradise is diagnosed within the fiction of Gogol and Wilde are its temporal or spatial remoteness and its association with the psychological state of infantile security, marked by absence of internal psychological conflict, as well as with

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6 Behrendt, *Oscar Wilde; Eros and Aesthetics*, p. 55

7 Jung, *Man and His Symbols*, p. 85

8 Jung, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, p. 225

regressive longing to return.

Oscar Wilde's first epic poem of his 1881 cycle, 'The Garden of Eros', takes the archetypal Lost Paradise of the Garden of Eden and reimagines it as an incarnation of homoerotic Arcady, a symbol which resonates throughout the author's later fiction. **Section 8.1** analyses Wilde's conception of 'The Garden of Eros' as an archetypal image of Lost Paradise and evocation of homoerotic cultural precedent. **Section 8.2** assesses the wider use of homoerotic icons in the writing of Wilde, and examines whether the presence of the same figures in the fiction of Nikolai Gogol indicates their identical function as evocations of homoerotic cultural precedent. **Section 8.3** examines the theme of regressive longing for Grecian Lost Paradise in the writing of Wilde and Gogol. **Section 8.4** reviews both nationalist association of homeland with Grecian Lost Paradise. **Section 8.5** examines the theme of the heterosexual as a stigmatized and persecuted sexual transgressor within the Lost Paradise or Utopia of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde. **Section 8.6** examines both authors' construction of the ideal feminine as incarnation of Lost Paradise, and its usage within their romantic narratives. The conclusion of the chapter reviews the hallmarks of Lost Paradise in the fiction of both Gogol and Wilde, and assesses its significance within their writing.

### **8.1 Wilde's 'The Garden of Eros' As Archetypal Lost Paradise**

The classic image of archetypal Lost Paradise is the Garden of Eden, a topographic symbol of the state of innocence, or infantile security, from which Adam and Eve are expelled upon developing psychological conflict. In the opening poem of Wilde's cycle, 'The Garden of Eros', his title evokes the Garden of Eden but replaces the name of Eden with the name of the Classical Grecian male love god Eros,<sup>9</sup> providing

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<sup>9</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language - 3<sup>rd</sup> edition*, (henceforth abbreviated to AHDEL) p. 624

the first indication that Wilde's Lost Paradise of infantile security will be characterized by its association with homoerotic desire.

'The Garden of Eros' depicts the imaginary transformation of the English countryside through the evocation of Arcady, the classical domain of the god Pan and his fauns, as well as pastoral idyll of Renaissance art.<sup>10</sup> Characterising the poem's meadow setting as "a place / Which should be [...] danced on by the lads of Arcady!"<sup>11</sup> defines Wilde's idyll as primarily a homosocial space of "lads", disregarding the nymphs who also conventionally reside in Arcady. Wilde's shorter poem 'Pan' in the same collection is a direct address to the "goat-foot God of Arcady!" lamenting the god's passing and juxtaposing "chill and cold" modernity with the Lost Paradise: "this modern world is grey and old, / And what remains to us of thee?"<sup>12</sup> 'The Garden of Eros' exalts a Classical Grecian Golden Age, characterised by the "spirit of Beauty" and "secret of eternal bliss", which it contrasts with a corrupted modernity in which "the earth / Hath born again a noisy progeny / Of ignorant Titans, whose ungodly birth / Hurls them against the august hierarchy / Which sat upon Olympus".<sup>13</sup> Within this theme of reaction against an unacceptable and blasphemous modernity and regressive longing to return to Arcady, the nocturnal garden's designation as a space of "Eros" suggests the reclamation of sacred sexuality as the nostalgic narrator's primary goal.

The poet addresses a companion, referred to as "you", "thou" and "my soul's idolatry",<sup>14</sup> in a nocturnal garden filled with floral allusions to pagan gods and their homoerotic lovers. The poet instructs his companion as to which flowers to select and reject for their adornment, before shifting into an invocation of the "spirit of Beauty"

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10 *AHDEL*, p. 94

11 *CI* p. 708

12 *CI* p. 805

13 *CI* p. 713

14 *CI*, p. 708, 709, 709

who is implored to "tarry yet awhile".<sup>15</sup> Through praise of a number of contemporary artists and philosophers, the poet endeavours to demonstrate to Beauty that "they are not dead, thine ancient votaries",<sup>16</sup> finally positioning himself and his companion as "young Endymions", male lovers of the moon,<sup>17</sup> to whom "time's palsied fingers count in vain his rosary of suns!"<sup>18</sup> before concluding the poem with the imminent rising of the sun, which leads the poet and companion to depart. The concept of the Garden of Eros as a sexual idyll tied to the night, and silenced or destroyed by the day, is given floral expression in the yellow iris, "that snowy primrose of the night, / Which 'gins to flush with crimson shame, and die beneath the light".<sup>19</sup>

In Victorian England, floriography, or "the language of flowers", was a system of cryptological communication, allowing choice of flower to signal an encoded romantic subtext.<sup>20</sup> The 1818 publication of Charlotte de la Tour's dictionary *Le langage de fleurs*, which standardized the floral meanings, initiated the fashion, with de la Tour's preface explicitly proposing the use of floriography as a strategy to allow deniable expression to female sexuality: "a semi-avowal enchants far more than a total certainty... the art of inspiring love is among women the art of defending oneself".<sup>21</sup> As an established mode of communication whose purpose was the plausibly deniable expression of sexual desire, floriography had potential application for all censored sexualities. Oscar Wilde's 'the Garden of Eros' develops a distinctively homoerotic floriography drawn from Classical Grecian legends associated with plants. Flowers which the poet's companion is instructed to reject include the anemone, associated with

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15 *CI*, p. 712

16 *CI*, p. 710

17 *AHDEL*, p. 609

18 *CI*, p. 714

19 *CI*, p. 714

20 Adamich Laufer & Jamison, *Tussie-Mussies: The Victorian Art of Expressing Yourself in the Language of Flowers*

21 "un demi-aveu enchante bien plus qu'une certitude entière[...] l'art de se faire aimer est chez les femmes l'art de se défendre" De La Tour, *Le langage des fleurs*, p. iv

femininity by Wilde's description that it "weeps at daybreak like a silly girl / Before her love",<sup>22</sup> and columbine, "the flowers which mourning Herakles / Strewed on the tomb of Hylas",<sup>23</sup> associated with betrayed homosexual love by its connection to the abandonment of Herakles (Hercules) by Hylas.<sup>24</sup> Flowers which the companion is urged to pluck include objects of female desire: "red convolvulus / So dear to maidens", "budding marjoram which but to kiss / would sweeten Cyntherea's lips",<sup>25</sup> flowers associated with Hyacinth, male lover of Apollo:<sup>26</sup> "hyacinths the feet / of Huntress Diana would be loth to mar"<sup>27</sup> and Narcissus, male lover of himself:<sup>28</sup> "that one narciss [...] pluck it too, it is not half so sweet / as thou thyself".<sup>29</sup> Wilde's praise of a modern acolyte of Beauty claims that "half-withered reeds that waved in Arcady / Touched by his lips break forth again to fresher harmony",<sup>30</sup> while the poet himself aspires to "cut a reed by yonder Spring / And make the wood-gods jealous".<sup>31</sup> In Greek mythology, Calamus (Kalamos) was transformed into a mourning reed after drowning with his male lover Carpus (Karpos),<sup>32</sup> inspiring Walt Whitman's "Calamus" poems in *Leaves of Grass*, of which Wilde was an admirer.<sup>33</sup> This homoerotically freighted garden is proposed as the location where it is possible for the two companions to find "the hidden secret of eternal bliss / Known to the Grecian".<sup>34</sup> The homoerotic floriography and Grecian references, which surround the directly represented address of the poet to his "young Endymion", establishes Wilde's 'Garden of Eros' as primarily a space of

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22 *CI*, p. 708

23 *CI*, p. 708

24 CANKIK & SCHNEIDER ed., *Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike* vol. 5, p. 782

25 *CI*, p. 708

26 *AHDEL*, p. 884

27 *CI*, p. 709

28 *AHDEL*, p. 1201

29 *CI*, p. 709

30 *CI* p. 712

31 *CI* p. 709

32 CANKIK & SCHNEIDER ed., *Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike* vol. 6, p. 147

33 MENDELSSOHN, *Making Oscar Wilde*, p. 127

34 *CI*, p. 708

homoerotic desire and male beauty. The garden, as a space of nature defended from the encroaching city, may be associated with the protection of the homoerotic as an imperilled natural impulse, whose uninhibited expression was possible in the lost Golden Age of Ancient Greece.

Effectively, then, Wilde's *Garden of Eros* constructs a Lost Paradise characterized by a number of features: the reimagination of the Garden of Eden's archetypal innocence or infantile security as attributes of the Arcadian garden of a male love god; the affirmation of homoeroticism as an expression of nature; the affirmation of major cultural precedent for homoeroticism, including its divine endorsement through Grecian theology; the association of the private space of the garden with night and its asserted incompatibility with day; the voicing of regressive longing for return to Ancient Greece as Lost Paradise, and the establishment of a homoerotic floriography, particularly centered on the narcissus, hyacinth and reed, through which desire may be plausibly deniably encoded.

It remains to determine how far the characteristics of Wilde's *Garden of Eros*, as established in this poem, resonate in his wider writing, as well as to locate corresponding archetypal images of Lost Paradise within the writing of Nikolai Gogol and assess the extent to which they serve a similar psychological function of establishing cultural precedent for homoeroticism and associating homoeroticism with infantile security.

## **8.2 Wider Evocation of Icons of Homoeroticism**

'The Garden of Eros' introduces a vocabulary of Grecian icons and floriography that recurs throughout Wilde's later fiction. A garden is the setting for Basil Hallward's revelation to Henry Wotton of his desire for Dorian in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, as

well as the location for the secret of love in 'The Canterville Ghost'. Dorian's conversion to Hedonism occurs in a garden and is accompanied by the image of a bee "creeping into the stained trumpet of a Tyrian convolvulus",<sup>35</sup> recalling the convolvulus that Wilde's "young Endymion" in the Garden of Eros was instructed to pluck. Wilde's poetic strategy of encoding desire as floriography becomes comic in the *The Importance of Being Earnest*, where Dr. Chasuble's heterosexual desires are disowned as metaphor "drawn from bees", as "classical allusion" and as a form of speaking "horticulturally",<sup>36</sup> drawing humour from the blatancy of the sexual suggestion in such imagery when applied to a heterosexuality that the spectator is prepared to acknowledge. The homoerotic lovers of the gods, Ganymede, Hylas and Hyacinth, the homoerotic self-lover Narcissus, the icon of male beauty Adonis, and the lover of the moon Endymion, all referenced in 'The Garden of Eros', recur repeatedly throughout the fiction of Oscar Wilde.<sup>37</sup> The empowerment of moon as synecdoche for the Garden of Eros, through the poet identifying himself and his companion as Endymions, mythological lovers of the moon, adds potential resonance to Wilde's choice of the moon as symbolic alter-ego of Salomé, herself rhetorically associated with homoeroticism by her characterisation as "daughter of Sodom".<sup>38</sup>

The poem's evocation of cultural precedent for homoeroticism is also characteristic of Wilde's wider writing. Basil Hallward's feeling of "friendship so

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35 *CI*, p. 19

36 Act 2. See *CI* p. 507 & p. 510

37 Within literary output (fiction/drama/poetry): **Narcissus** (excluding flower references): *The Picture of Dorian Gray* p. 5, p. 73, p. 78, *The Young King* p. 262 'The Burden of Itys' p. 730, 'Charmides' p. 745 **Adonis**: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* p. 5, p. 78, *The Young King* p. 261, *La Sainte Courtisane* p. 687, 'The Burden of Itys' p. 732, 'Charmides' p. 755, 'Humanitad' p. 783, 'The Sphinx' p. 828 **Hylas**: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* p. 99, 'Charmides' p. 745, 'Santa Decca' p. 707, 'Canzonet' p. 800, 'Ravenna' p. 822, **Endymion**: *The Young King* p. 261, 'The Burden of Itys' p. 734, 'Endymion' p. 737 - 738, 'Charmides' p. 754, 'Amor Intellectualis' p. 762, 'Panthea' p. 770, 'On the Sale by Auction of Keats' Love Letters' p. 808, **Hyacinth**: (excluding flower references) 'The Burden of Itys' p. 732, 'Charmides' p. 748, 'Canzonet' p. 800, **Ganymede**: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* p. 99, 'Panthea' p. 770 (all page numbers - *CI*)

38 *CI*, p. 544 (trans. Alfred Douglas for all *Salomé* quotations)



coloured by romance"<sup>39</sup> toward Dorian Gray is rendered suggestively homoerotic not only through Grecian precedent, in his painting Dorian in the guise of Adonis and Narcissus, but by invoking the precedent of historical figures: "such love as Michelangelo had known, and Montaigne, and Winckelmann, and Shakespeare himself".<sup>40</sup> Consideration of Shakespeare's romantic sonnets to 'the Fair youth',<sup>41</sup> Montaigne's romantic friendship with Etienne de la Boétie,<sup>42</sup> Johann Winckelmann's romantic correspondence with Friedrich von Berg and his idealization of homoerotic Greek art,<sup>43</sup> and Michelangelo's homoerotic sonnets to Cecchino dei Bracci and Tommaso dei Cavalieri,<sup>44</sup> may allow the reader to infer, from Wilde's allusion to these figures, that the nature of Hallward's feelings for Dorian is homoerotic, but only if the reader acknowledges major cultural precedent for such desire.

The canon of historical and mythological icons that Wilde employs as homoerotic cultural precedent plays a less prominent role within the writings of Nikolai Gogol, but is not absent. One symptom of Chartkov's loss of soul within 'Portrait' is his inability to perceive the "gracefulness" of Michelangelo,<sup>45</sup> while *Hanz Küchelgarten* places "forgotten Winckelmann"<sup>46</sup> and Plato alongside the more fashionable authors which Louisa discovers in Hanz's collection. Modelled on a sequence in Alexander Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, in which the heroine Tatiana discovers Onegin's Byronic nature through study of his book collection, Gogol's addition of Plato and Winckelmann markedly increases the homoerotic associations in the reading matter through which

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39 *CI*, p. 80

40 *CI*, p. 81

41 See De Grazia, Margreta 'The Scandal of Shakespeare's Sonnets', in Schiffer ed. *Shakespeare's Sonnets: Critical Essays*, pp. 89 - 112

42 See 'Montaigne's Itchy Ears: Friendship, Marriage, (Homo)sexuality, and Scepticism' in Ferguson, *Queer (re)readings in the French Renaissance* pp. 191 - 243

43 Davis, *Queer Beauty: Sexuality and Aesthetics from Winckelmann to Freud and Beyond*, p. 190

44 Michelangelo, (trans. John Frederick Nims), *The Complete Poems of Michelangelo*, pp. 37 – 39 (Cavalieri), p. 177 (Bracci)

45 “Микель-Анжел хвастун, потому что хотел только похвастать знанием анатомии, что грациозности в нем нет никакой”, *SS* 3, p. 119

46 “позабытый Винкельман”, *SS* 7, p. 37

Louisa diagnoses Hanz's passions. Wilde's listing of Michelangelo, Shakespeare, Winckelmann and Montaigne as figures who share knowledge of the type of love which Basil Hallward experiences, makes their function as homoerotic cultural precedent clear within his writing. Gogol's inclusion of these figures as reference points is more ambiguous, because it is not linked to any directly depicted homoerotic relationship within his text. The second volume of *Dead Souls* introduces the character of Platon Mikhalych Platonov (lit: "Plato son of Mikhail of Platos"), a figure of extraordinary physical beauty described as "Achilles and Paris combined", unable to find his vocation in the modern world,<sup>47</sup> where the emphatic assertion of Plato's beauty, in the absence of any feminine love object, may be regarded as increasing the character's homoerotic potential, though without introducing the confirmation of a male love object.

'Nevsky Prospekt' offers the image of a "sleepy Ganymede" at the doors of the confectioner's, tossing "stale *pierogs* and leftovers" to beggars, having "flown like a fly yesterday with chocolate".<sup>48</sup> The positioning of Ganymede, an icon of homoerotic temptation, as a purveyor of the pastry *pirog*, recalls the surname of one of the story's protagonists, Pirogov, whose uncontrolled heterosexual appetite is directly represented, establishing potential mental equivalence between the diverse appetites of homoerotic temptation, heterosexual temptation and gluttony for pastry and chocolate. A confectioner's shop, the abode of 'Nevsky Prospekt's Ganymede, also figures in Gogol's play *Marriage*, as the location from which the protagonist Podkolesin must be reluctantly dragged in order to be forced into marriage.<sup>49</sup> Taken collectively, these incidences represent a significant presence of conventionally homoerotic coding in the fiction of Gogol, though not equivalent to Oscar Wilde's almost overt evocation of

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47 "Платон Михалыч Платонов был Ахиллес и Парид вместе", *SS 5*, p. 384

48 "Нищие собираются у дверей кондитерских, где сонный ганимед, летавши вчера, как муха, с шоколадом [...] швыряет им черствые пироги и объедки", *SS 3*, p. 8

49 "Подколесин сидит в кондитерской, пойти поскорей за ним", *SS 4*, p. 454

homoerotic cultural precedent. Where Wilde's conscious employment of homoerotic precedent in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* may be regarded as achieving minimal plausible deniability while intentionally legible in intent, the sparser references to the same figures within the fiction of Gogol, if they have homoerotic significance, rather suggest an impulse toward private legibility to the author than intentional legibility to the reader.

### **8.3 Regressive Longing For Grecian Lost Paradise**

The theme of conflict between corrupted modernity and idealized Arcady, with the poet's regressive longing to restore the Grecian Lost Paradise, which is fundamental to 'The Garden of Eros', has echoes in Wilde's later fiction. In 'The Fisherman and His Soul', a priest represents the arbiter of modern morality, opposed to the

pagan things God suffers to wander through this world. Accursed be the Fauns of the woodland, and accursed be the singers of the sea! [...] They whisper into my ears the tale of their perilous joys. They tempt me with temptations and when I would pray they make mouths at me [...] they are the beasts of the field that know not good from evil<sup>50</sup>

In a story where the only "pagan thing" portrayed is the female mermaid as heterosexual love object, this rhetorical identification of the "singers of the sea" with the "Fauns of the woodland" links the temptation of the mermaids associatively with Arcady, whose Edenic nature is confirmed by the fact that its participants "know not good from evil". The attribute of infantile security is likewise suggested by the

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50 *CI* p. 288

"unconscious, ideal and remote"<sup>51</sup> charm of Dorian Gray when painted in the form of Adonis or Narcissus, which is contrasted with the threatening power of his representation in the guise of modernity. The hero of Wilde's 'The Young King' is compared to a "brown woodland Faun" while innocent of the suffering of the world,<sup>52</sup> and his opulent royal surroundings are adorned with images of Adonis, Endymion and Narcissus,<sup>53</sup> Grecian mythological icons evoked in 'The Garden of Eros'. In Grecian myth, Narcissus is characterized by total self-absorption and Endymion by eternal sleep, suggesting their unconscious insulation from corrupting external influence. Repeated association with innocence and Edenic unconsciousness presents the psychological state of infantile security as a core attribute of Wilde's conception of the Arcadian state, conforming to the Jungian model of 'Lost Paradise' as a symbolic manifestation of preconscious wholeness of identity, while unambiguously associating that state with homoeroticism.

In Nikolai Gogol's first published work, *Hanz Küchelgarten, An Idyll in Scenes*, the hero's regressive longing for Lost Paradise is expressed by extended depiction of two imagined idylls, Ancient Greece and Persia, both cultures with canonical homoerotic literatures. The protagonist, Hanz, is depicted "disturbed by an incomprehensible thought", images of "luxurious countries" and the thirst of his heart to "cling to its dream, an unclear dream", which causes him to experience increasing suffocation within his village and alienates his affections from the heroine Louisa, entering a state in which he "sees secretly the shadow of something / reaches out his hands to it / embraces it in abandonment".<sup>54</sup> The emphatically vague terms in which the

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51 *CI* p. 78

52 *CI* p. 259

53 *CI* p. 261(Adonis & Endymion) & p. 262 (Narcissus)

54 "Волнуем думой непонятной" p. 16, "роскошные края" p. 31, "сердце жаждало прильнуть / К своей мечте, мечте неясной" p. 23, "видит тайно чью-то тень / И к ней он руки простирает, / Ее в забвеньи обнимает" p. 19 (SS 7)

"unclear" and "incomprehensible" object of desire is described, in sexualized language of embrace and abandonment, give way to direct representation of Hanz's dreams in Scene III's extended idyll of Classical Greece, marked by the sexually suggestive desire of Hanz's soul to unite with Athens "in the heat of wondrous tremblings",<sup>55</sup> followed by Scene IV's pastiche of sensual Persian luxury.<sup>56</sup> Hanz's desire to unite with centres of Sufism such as Kandahar is expressed as sexualized desire for a Peri, a Persian feminine mythological being. Peri is unresponsive to the poet - "she doesn't see, she doesn't heed, filled with dreaming"<sup>57</sup> - while he speculates about her kiss.

When referring to Hanz's Grecian ideal, Gogol evokes Arcadian imagery within a regressive longing for Lost Paradise:

Again sorrow, again irritation; / If only a Faun would come from the valleys, / If  
only a beautiful Dryad would / Appear to me in the gloom of a garden. / Oh how  
wondrously your world you / Populated with Dream, ye Greeks! / How you  
filled it with fascination! / But ours is poor and orphaned<sup>58</sup>

In Scene XIII, Hanz is disillusioned by confronting the "pitiful actuality" of the crumbling ruins of modern Athens, as proof that Arcady is lost.<sup>59</sup> In the final images of the poem, Hanz's sacrifice of his dreams upon marrying Louisa is compared with "parting with the family / of his comrades, with whom his soul / shared pity, labour, peace, / - and he thinks and groans, / and with inexpressible sorrow / sheds an

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55 "в жару чудесных трепетаний / Душой приковываюсь я!" SS 7, p. 20

56 For discussion of the use of imagery from Russian translations of Anglo-Irish writer Thomas Moore's 1817 *Lalla Rookh: an Oriental Romance* in Scene IV of *Hanz Kuchelgarten*, see the notes of SS 7, pp. 688 - 689

57 "не видит, не внемлет, мечтаний полна" SS 7, p. 22

58 "Опять тоска, опять досада; / Хотя бы Фавн пришел с долин, / Хотя б прекрасная Дриада / Мне показалась в мраке сада. / О, как чудесно вы свой мир / Мечтою, греки, населили! / Как вы его обворожили! / А наш – и беден он, и сир" SS 7, p. 21

59 "before him you closed the door, / Sons of pitiful actuality, / The door into the quiet world of dreams" ("перед ним захлопнули вы дверь, / Сыны существенности жалкой, / Дверь в тихий мир мечтаний" ) SS 7, p. 43

involuntary tear".<sup>60</sup> By characterizing his narrative's conventionally happy conclusion, the wedding of heterosexual lovers, as "inexpressible sorrow" and loss of a "peace" which may represent infantile security, Gogol associates heterosexual union with the tragic renunciation of a Paradise represented interchangeably by Arcadian Greece, Persia and school companionship, and conceived as an Edenic state of innocence.

Though the object of Hanz's desires is abstracted as dematerialized shadow, unresponsive mythological being, city or dream, with yearnings repeatedly described as indefinable, inarticulable or incomprehensible, this regressive longing is nevertheless depicted as an impulse to embrace, kiss and unite in heated tremblings, highly suggestive of sexuality. The second volume of *Dead Souls* depicts the protagonist, Chichikov, perusing colonel Koshkarev's library, pulling out "some kind of enormous book with immodest mythological pictures [...] That was to his taste. Those kind of pictures appeal to middle-aged bachelors."<sup>61</sup> Here, Gogol portrays the figure of the confirmed bachelor as a sexual being, refuting his assumed asexuality. As in *Hanz Küchelgarten*, this brief aside in *Dead Souls* confirms the sexualized attraction of its protagonist to a mythological Lost Paradise, without confirming the gender of its object.

Nikolai Gogol makes his most sustained argument for the revival of classical Grecian values in the chapter 'On the Odyssey translated by Zhukovsky' in *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends*, in which he proposes Zhukovsky's translation of Homer's *Odyssey* as a conduit for the spiritual renewal of Ruthenian society, regarding it as "decidedly the most perfect literary work of all time",<sup>62</sup>

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60 "Расставаяся с семьей / Своих товарищей, душой / Делил с кем шалость, труд, покой, - / И размышляет он, и стонет, / И с невыразною тоской / Слезу невольную уронит" SS 7, p. 54

61 "какую-то огромную книгу с нескромными мифологическими картинками ... это было по его вкусу. Такого рода картинки нравятся холостякам средних <лет>" SS 5, p. 405, (angle-brackets indicate corrections to Gogol's original manuscript by SS 5)

62 "решительно совершеннейшее произведение всех веков", SS 6, p. 33

characterised Edenically by "peace and an almost infant-like simplicity",<sup>63</sup> which emphasizes the infantile security of its characters' absence of psychological conflict, in spite of the external hazards braved by Odysseus and his men. His need to revive Grecian Paradise is founded on Gogol's perception that "in literature, as in everything, there is a cooling",<sup>64</sup> lamenting the lack of a "people sufficiently gifted with the purity of virginal taste needed to feel Homer".<sup>65</sup> In lamenting loss of virginal innocence within corrupted modernity, Gogol expresses regressive longing for a Grecian Eden rather than aspiring to utopian progress. To Gogol, the *Odyssey* is a "live and complete book of law-giving for the ancient", indicated by the "virginal modesty of youths" and the "gentleness and good-humoured rancourlessness of old men",<sup>66</sup> a description which, in the absence of any corresponding female ideals, suggests Lost Paradise conceived as a homosocial space.

Whereas Grecian values are called upon to cure modernity of its cooling and loss of virginal taste, the second volume of *Dead Souls* portrays this same chill modernity as itself ruinous to the Grecian. The characterization of Plato Mikhalych Platonov, stunning Grecian beauty, is defined by his "spiritual hibernation [...] from a lack of lively impressions and sensations"<sup>67</sup> which drives him to accompany the rootless Chichikov on his travels as a cure for his depression. While Chichikov claims that he is unable to "understand how one can feel dull with looks like yours",<sup>68</sup> the inadequacy of modernity to satisfy a Grecian beauty is summed up by Plato's repeated, laconic lament "because it is dull".<sup>69</sup> The same lament concludes the narratives of

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63 "спокойствием и простотой почти младенческой", *SS 6*, p. 35

64 "в литературе, как и во всем – охлаждение" *SS 6*, p. 35

65 "недостаток, наконец, и самого народа, в такой степени одаренного чистотой девственного вкуса, какая потребна для того, чтобы почувствовать Гомера", *SS 6*, p. 33

66 "девственная стыдливость юношей [...] благодать и благодушие старцев [...] оставить древнему человеку живую и полную книгу законодательства" *SS 6*, p. 38

67 "душевная спячка [...] от недостатка живых впечатлений и ощущений" *SS 5*, p. 441

68 "не могу понять, как при такой наружности, как ваша, скучать" *SS 5*, p. 384

69 "оттого, что скучно" *SS 5*, p. 384

'Sorochinsky Market'<sup>70</sup> and 'A Tale of How Ivan Ivanovich Quarrelled with Ivan Nikiforovich',<sup>71</sup> associated with the tragic dissolution of male comradeship.

Considering *Hanz Küchelgarten*, 'On the Odyssey Translated by Zhukovsky' and the surviving drafts of the second volume of *Dead Souls* collectively, Gogol's clear and consistent conception emerges of Ancient Greece as a Lost Paradise, characterized by infantile security and regressive longing to return, highly comparable to the presentation of Arcady within the fiction of Wilde, though marked by less overt homoeroticism in the case of Gogol.

#### **8.4 Nationalist Association of Homeland with Grecian Lost Paradise**

References to the Irish are sparse in the writings of Oscar Wilde, but notably associated with the Grecian, particularly through claim of their shared rhetorical mastery and artistry. His reported remark to W. B. Yeats: "we Irish [...] are too poetical to be poets, we are a nation of brilliant failures, but we are the greatest talkers since the Greeks"<sup>72</sup> invokes Grecian cultural precedent to dignify Irish traditions of rhetorical mastery, demeaned as "blarney" by the 'Paddywhackery' tradition of Irish caricature. The concept of the Irish as "brilliant failures" recalls their status as a conquered people, an attribute which they shared with the Greeks, reduced by Roman conquest to a nation of enslaved philosophers. Wilde's pastiche of Socratic dialogue, *The Critic As Artist*, concludes a lengthy consideration of Grecian artistic ethics by asserting that, in modern times, "the creative instinct is strong in the Celt, and it is the Celt who leads in art",<sup>73</sup> positioning the Celt as heir to Grecian artistic legacy and conduit for the revival of Grecian values. Wilde's reported statement "I got my love of the Greek ideal and my

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70 "скучно оставленному!" *SS I*, p. 152

71 "Скучно на этом свете, господа!" *SS 2*, p. 669

72 Quoted in Yeats, 'on The Happy Prince and Other Tales' in Beckson ed., *Oscar Wilde, the Critical Heritage*, p. 397

73 Wilde, *De Profundis, The Ballad of Reading Gaol & Other Writings*, p. 232



intimate knowledge of the language at Trinity from Mahaffy and Tyrrell; they were Trinity to me” associates Dublin with initiation into the Greek ideal and gives primary importance to John Pentland Mahaffy, the celebrated Irish conversationalist and Grecophile who brought Wilde to Greece for the first time in 1877.<sup>74</sup> Where 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ireland, with its culture of compulsory heterosexuality, was incapable of representing the sexual aspect of Wilde's homoerotic Arcady, Wilde's mental endowment of the Classical Grecian with Irish virtues potentially enabled the Grecian to symbolize a union of the homoerotic and the patriotic principles.

19<sup>th</sup>-century Ukraine was also a culture of compulsory heterosexuality. A patriotic impulse to reimagine his homeland through Grecian Lost Paradise is notable in Gogol's correspondence to a Ukrainian friend about Kiev: "indeed it will transform into a Ruthenian Athens, our blessed city!"<sup>75</sup> Rather than empowering Greece to represent the virtues of the homeland as Wilde does, Gogol's epic *Taras Bulba* endows the Ukrainian homeland with Grecian virtues in its Homeric representation of martial Cossack comradeship.<sup>76</sup> George Grabowicz notes the contrast between Gogol's alienated depiction of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ukraine and his romanticization of Ukraine's Cossack past: "when it is about the world contemporary to Hohol, and not about the Cossack past, its freedom and power, there appears ever more deadness".<sup>77</sup> Grabowicz highlights the Ukrainian nationalist implications of this preference for the past, reflecting Ukraine's past independence as superior to its assimilation into Russia in Gogol's era. The sexual aspect might equally be noted: Gogol defines his Cossacks by the intensity of their love for male comrades and by their absence of desire for women.

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74 Coakley, *Oscar Wilde: The Importance of Being Irish*, p. 144

75 Letter to Mikhail Maksimovich, 7th January 1834, cited in Tomenko, *Ukrains'kyi romantyk Mykola Hohol*, p. 103

76 Proffer, Carl, 'Gogol's *Taras Bulba* and the *Iliad*'

77 "Коли идеться про сучасний Гоголю світ, а не про козацьку минувщину, її волю і силу, проявляється шораз більша мертвечина" Grabowicz, *Do istorii Ukraïns'koi literatury*, p. 166

Women's exclusion from the fortress of the Sech itself, which is historically documented,<sup>78</sup> is used by Gogol as the basis for suggesting wholesale rejection of the female. Consistently, the importance of wife and mother is substituted by sabre and pipe. The Cossack Danilo Burulbash, of 'Terrible Vengeance', claims "our wife is a pipe and a sharp sabre!"<sup>79</sup> Taras Bulba declares "this sabre – this is your mother!"<sup>80</sup> during an extended portrayal of the exclusion of wife and mother from Cossack life, in which Bulba states categorically that "a Cossack has no business busying himself with women".<sup>81</sup> Bulba will later be captured while retrieving his pipe, indicating its emotional importance to him. It is generalized of all Cossack wives that "her severe seducer abandoned her for a sabre, for comrades, for carousing [...] she saw caresses bestowed out of mercy only [...] they take her sweet sons from her, take them so that she will never see them".<sup>82</sup> The phrase "caresses bestowed out of mercy only" imagines the rejection of women by Cossacks not as an enforced sacrifice of military life, but as a universal absence of heterosexual desire. The esaul's call to arms in the opening chapter declares "enough with [...] creeping up to wives and ruining your warrior's strength",<sup>83</sup> implying approach of wives as a furtive, shameful activity incompatible with martial strength. Explicit rejection of the female likewise characterises the climactic torture and martyrdom of Bulba's patriotic son Ostap:

he did not want to hear the sobbing and grief of a weak mother or the mad howls

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78 Denisov, *Izobrazhenie kozachestva v rannem tvorchestve N. V. Gogolia*, p. 56

79 'наша жена – люлька да острая сабля!' *SS I*, p. 288. Within the Ukrainian tales, Gogol generally utilises *liul'ka* in its primary Ukrainian language meaning of tobacco pipe, rather than its primary Russian language meaning of cradle, an exception being the description of the murder of the baby in its cradle (*liul'ka*) in 'Vii' (*SS 2*, p. 591)

80 "видите вот эту саблю – вот ваша мать!" *SS 2*, p. 412

81 "Казак не на то, чтобы возиться с бабами" *SS 2*, p. 411 (1842 edition) and *SS 7*, p. 235 (1835 version)

82 "суровый прельститель ее покидал ее для сабли, для товарищей, для бражничества. [...] она видела из милости только оказываемые ласки [...] ее милых сыновей берут от нее, берут для того, чтобы не увидеть их никогда" *SS 7*, p. 241, virtually identical wording in 1842 edition - *SS 2*, p. 419

83 "Полно вам [...] подбираться к жинкам и губить силу рыцарскую!" *SS 2*, p. 416

of a wife [...] he wanted now to see a resolute Man who would refresh and comfort him with a rational word at his end<sup>84</sup>

Gogol's use of the Old-Church Slavonic '*muzh*' for "Man" has poetic and religious overtones in Russian, as well as being the standard Russian word for "husband". Exclusion of the female is accompanied by an idealization and intensification of male bonding, described in 'Terrible Vengeance': "Cossack hearts, when will they encounter each other anywhere but that they'll burst out of the chest to meet each other!"<sup>85</sup> Bulba's central speech in the 1842 version exalts the values of brotherhood and comradeship, rendering them synonymous with religion and Ruthenian patriotism: "there is no bond more holy than comradeship [...] such as on Ruthenian land, there has not been such comrades [...] to love as the Ruthenian soul loves, to love not with the mind or something else, but with everything God gave".<sup>86</sup> This holiness of comradeship receives the ultimate divine endorsement in Christ's first words to the soul of the slain Kukubenko: "you did not betray the comradeship".<sup>87</sup> Gogol's description of the Sech as a "tight circle of school comrades"<sup>88</sup> evokes the psychological state of infantile security that is archetypally characteristic of Lost Paradise. In the deprioritized space of simile, homoerotic associations are raised as Cossacks strive to die "an honest Cossack death, all in one bed like a bridegroom with a bride!"<sup>89</sup> while Bulba's martial spirit is inspired by his aesthetic appreciation of male

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84 "он не хотел бы слышать рыданий и сокрушения слабой матери или безумных воплей супруги ... хотел бы он теперь увидеть твердого мужа, который бы разумным словом освежил его и утешил при кончине" SS 2, p. 550

85 "козацкие сердца, когда встретятся где, как не выбьются из груди друг другу навстречу!" SS 1, p. 290, (*Terrible Vengeance*)

86 "Нет уз святее товарищества! ... таких, как в Русской земле, не было таких товарищей ... так любить, как русская душа, любить не то чтобы умом или чем другим, а всем, чем дал Бог" SS 2, p. 514

87 "Ты не изменил товариществу" SS 2, p. 523

88 "Это был тесный круг школьных товарищей" SS 2, p. 436

89 "честной казацкой смертью, всех на одной постели как жених с невестою!" p. 554, SS 2

bodily beauty: "at the sight of their freshness, strapping and powerful bodily beauty, his martial spirit flared up".<sup>90</sup>

Though the Cossacks are portrayed facing many external dangers, they nevertheless display an unquestioning security of identity and absence of internal psychological conflict that recalls the "peace and infant-like simplicity" that Gogol extolled in Homer's *Odyssey*. The greatest demonstration that infantile security is essential to Gogol's concept of the Cossack Sech is Taras Bulba's total absence of psychological conflict over the murder of his own son. Bulba's unhesitating murder of "contemptible dog" Andrii, who has already surrendered "humbly",<sup>91</sup> is presented as an unquestioned and logical outcome of his earlier stated belief in the superiority of Cossack comradeship over parental affection.<sup>92</sup> No remorse is depicted over the act. The recurrent comparison of Cossacks to schoolboys reappears as Andrii's transgression is characterized as "like a schoolboy, incautiously picking on his comrade".<sup>93</sup> The only two characters to exhibit psychological conflict in *Taras Bulba* are Andrii, torn between his Cossack comradeship and his Polish wench-loving, and Iankel the Jew, torn between his allegedly inborn Jewish avarice and his better nature. Each is excluded from the Sech, recalling the archetypal expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise upon their development of psychological conflict, to associate the Sech itself with a Lost Paradise of infantile security. In 'The Lost Letter', one of Gogol's 19th-century Ukrainian narrator characters demonstrates his intensity of regressive longing for Cossack Lost Paradise by fantasizing that he has "crawled into great-grandfather's

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90 "при виде их свежести, рослости, могучей телесной красоты вспыхнул воинский дух его" SS 2, p. 417

91 "покорно [...] пропал бесславно, как подлая собака!" SS 2, p. 526

92 "even a beast loves its child! but only a person can become related to another by soul and not by blood" ("любит и зверь свое дитя! но породниться родством по душе, а не по крови может один только человек.") SS 2, p. 514

93 "как школьник неосторожно задравший своего товарища" SS 2, p. 525

soul".<sup>94</sup>

The effects of visualizing the Cossack Sech in terms of archetypal Lost Paradise, through its psychological attribute of infantile security and its inspiring regressive longing to return, are various: firstly, in visualizing an alternative society characterized by the rejection of heterosexual bonds and the hyperbolic valorization of masculine comradeship, Gogol undermines the universality of compulsory heterosexuality as social norm, associating rejection of the feminine with infantile security as a natural state; secondly, the Cossack Lost Paradise unites Gogol's romanticized ideal of schoolboy comradeship with his patriotic principle, with the inseparability of comradeship and patriotism affirmed by Taras Bulba's climactic speech; lastly, in visualizing a society which stigmatizes heterosexual love, Gogol empowers the heterosexual to represent the experience of stigmatized sexuality. This theme is examined in more detail in the next section.

### **8.5 Persecution of the Heterosexual**

The vocal and exaggerated misogyny of the Cossacks may have functional utility for Gogol, as a motivation for their universal rejection of women that would be acceptable to his heteronormative readership. In addition, it establishes "wench-lovers" (*baboliubi*) as a stigmatized sexual minority in Cossack culture, enabling open expression of the experience and psychology of sexual stigma through the heterosexual sign. In *Taras Bulba*, defection to the Poles represents heterosexual betrayal of comradeship and national betrayal simultaneously, even as holy comradeship is synonymous with the Ruthenian soul. The abandonment of the Sech is a necessary precondition for Andrii's transgressive pursuit of Polish heterosexuality, with both

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94 "будто залез в прадедовскую душу" *SS 1*, p. 209, ('Пропавшая грамота' – 'The Lost Letter')

schoolboy and Cossack idylls restraining his ability to respond to the beautiful Pole's affection: "he felt that it was not for him, educated in a seminary and in nomadic martial life, to answer such speeches, and he became discontented with his Cossack nature".<sup>95</sup> Bulba's reaction, on learning of Andrii's defection to the Poles, is to swear an oath of violent retribution "against the Polish woman who enchanted his son",<sup>96</sup> leading to a protracted fantasy of her brutal murder with the assurance that Bulba would certainly carry it out:

he would not look at her beauty, he would pull her out by her thick, luxuriant plait, would drag her behind him over the whole field, among all the Cossacks. Her wondrous breasts and shoulders, whose shine equalled the unmelting snows of mountain summits, would be beaten against the ground, bloodied and covered in dust. He would smash into pieces her magnificent, beautiful body.<sup>97</sup>

Aside from the detailed violence of this fantasized destruction of female temptation, with its emphasis on Bulba's imperviousness to the woman's beauty and his methodical disfiguring of that beauty, the statement "among all the Cossacks" presents the act as communally endorsed. As "wench-lovers" figure in the esaul's rallying speech alongside other civilian occupations which render Cossacks lazy, fat and unfit for military life, the fantasized smashing of the woman could be seen as a logical extension of the directly represented smashing of instruments of their trade by those summoned

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95 "не ему, воспитанному в бурсе и в бранной кочевой жизни, отвечать на такие речи, и вознегодовал на свою казацкую натуру" *SS 2*, p. 478

96 "против полячки, причаровавшей его сына" *SS 2*, p. 501

97 "не поглядел бы на ее красоту, вытащил бы ее за густую, пышную косу, поволок бы ее за собою по всему полю, между всех казаков. Избились бы о землю, окровавшись и покрывшись пылью, ее чудные груди и плечи, блеском равные нетающим снегам, что покрывают горные вершины. Разнес бы по частям он ее пышное, прекрасное тело" *SS 2*, p. 501

by the call to arms.<sup>98</sup> Imagining the persecution of the heterosexual not only provides the author with a socially acceptable sign through which to express the psychology of sexual stigma, as Gogol does through detailed narration of the perspective of Andrii as heterosexual transgressor, but equally empowers the author's mental resistance to compulsory heterosexuality by defamiliarizing its logic through reversal. The psychological importance of portrayal of stigmatized and persecuted heterosexuality may be further deduced by Oscar Wilde's closely parallel use of the same theme within his own Arcadian Lost Paradise and Nihilist Utopia.

In Wilde's Arcady, it is the virgin hunter goddess Diana who acts as the enforcer of celibacy on the female society of nymphs and dryads, murdering a transgressive dryad for her heterosexual love for Charmides, as pitilessly as Taras Bulba murders Andrii: "if my mistress find me lying here / She will not ruth or gentle pity show / But [...] with austere / Relentless fingers string the cornel bow".<sup>99</sup> The extended lyrical description of the dryad's passion and dread, like Gogol's extensive narration of Andrii's perspective, suggest that Wilde's object is not the sadistic punishment of the heterosexual, but expression of the psychological perspective of transgressive love through the permitted heterosexual sign.

Compulsory rejection of heterosexual love also characterises the political utopia of nihilists within *Vera, or the Nihilists*, whose nihilist oath "to strangle whatever nature is in me; neither to love nor to be loved; neither to pity nor to be pitied; neither to marry nor be given in marriage"<sup>100</sup> represents a rewrite of Sergei Nechaev's 'Catechism of a Revolutionary' which prioritizes the rejection of heterosexual bonds over more conventional nihilist aims such as political sedition and social anarchy. Within the alternative social order established by the oath, Vera's heterosexual love for Alexis

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98 Taras Bulba (1842 edition), Chapter 1, SS 2 p. 416.

99 *CI* p. 754, ('Charmides')

100 *CI* p. 572

becomes a transgression for which she is shamed and rejected by the nihilist society at the climax of the third act, forced to publicly renounce her love and, finally, to undertake the murder of her beloved before killing herself in his place. As with Gogol's Andrii and Wilde's dryad, the focus of empathy is on Vera as sexual transgressor.

If the primary purpose of the Lost Paradise is as a positive evocation of a lost state of nature, through its attributes of infantile security and regressive longing for return, associated in the writings of both authors with Ancient Greece, as well as with homoeroticism for Wilde and intensely valorized masculine comradeship for Gogol, the impulse to express the experience of sexual stigma and social rejection is nevertheless legible in the treatment of heterosexuality as a persecuted sexuality within both authors' narratives of Lost Paradise or Utopia. If the persecuted heterosexual is read not as a direct representation of the desired treatment of the heterosexual, but as a displaced expression of the concerns of stigmatized sexualities, this points to the ways in which the image of the heterosexual may be distorted by its enforced usage in cultures of compulsory heterosexuality. An analogous issue is the enforced usage of women as signs within sexual and romantic narratives under compulsory heterosexuality, regardless of the romantic orientation of the writer, which may also significantly distort the female image. An examination of each author's construction of the ideal feminine as incarnation of Grecian Lost Paradise, and its usage within their romantic narratives, occupies the next section.

### **8.6 The Feminine Ideal as Incarnation of Lost Paradise**

Oscar Wilde's redemptive female love objects, Sibyl Vane and Sybil Merton of 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime', are notably associated with his homoerotic floriography established in the Garden of Eros: Sibyl Vane is described shaking "like a white



narcissus"<sup>101</sup> while Sybil Merton is gifted with "a beautiful basket of narcissi",<sup>102</sup> both, like the mermaid of 'The Fisherman and his Soul', possess a "reed-like throat",<sup>103</sup> while Sybil Merton is additionally characterised by "Greek grace",<sup>104</sup> recalling the idealized Lady Chiltern of *An Ideal Husband*, "a woman of grave Greek beauty".<sup>105</sup> Woman as desirable love object may be read as coded by floriography as incarnations of Grecian Lost Paradise.

Wilde's conversion of the male subject of his 1877 poem 'Wasted Days' into the female 'Madonna Mia' of his 1881 volume *Poems* offers an opportunity to study the precise conceptual shifts inherent in reimagining the ideal love object as female rather than male, as Patricia Behrendt discusses.<sup>106</sup> The main alteration between the "fair slim boy" and the "lily girl" lies in the change of emphasis from an inexperienced boy with "cheeks whereon no kiss hath left its stain" to an emotionally unavailable lily girl's "cheeks whereon no love hath left its stain [...] even to kiss her feet I am not bold / Being o'ershadowed by the wings of awe".<sup>107</sup> The physical innocence of the erotically dreaming boy is thus replaced by total absence of "love" or its blushing expression within an emphatically untouchable female ideal. While the title 'Madonna Mia' invokes an image of the Virgin Mary, which renders Wilde's emphasis on chastity, divine purity and physical unavailability conventional, he uses similar tropes to describe conventionally sexualized icons such as Helen of Troy. Wilde's poem to Lillie Langtry, 'The New Helen', addresses the "new Helen" as "Lily of love, pure and inviolate! / Tower of ivory!"<sup>108</sup> Emphasis on "inviolate" female emotional and physical

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101 *CI*, p. 54

102 *CI*, p. 208

103 Vane: *CI* p. 37, Merton: *CI* p. 207, see also 'the thin reed of the throat' (*CI* p. 307) of the mermaid of 'The Fisherman and His Soul'.

104 *CI*, p. 207

105 *CI*, p. 420

106 see Behrendt, *Oscar Wilde: Eros and Aesthetics*, p. 25

107 *CI*, p. 722

108 *CI*, p. 705

unavailability as a precondition for love, which has no parallel in Wilde's representations of desirable men, finds humorous expression in *Lady Windermere's Fan* with Cecil Graham's reply to Dumby's question as to how long he could love a woman who didn't love him: "A woman who didn't love me? Oh, all my life!"<sup>109</sup> Exaggerated idolization of female chastity, like the exaggerated misogyny of Gogol's Cossacks, might serve as socially acceptable motivation for sexual avoidance of the female.

In Wilde's epic poem 'The Sphinx', first published 1894, the female sphinx sits "inviolable and immobile" in her encounters with the poet as unreciprocal female,<sup>110</sup> while serving as a conduit to erotic fantasies of Egyptian Lost Paradise, allowing the poet to imaginatively identify with her "hot and hungry stare" as she watches "the ivory body of that rare young slave with his pomegranate mouth", Antinous.<sup>111</sup> The Sphinx's femininity provides a technical heterosexuality to the "hot and hungry" lust expressed for the Emperor Hadrian's homoerotic lover, even as her lust is the imaginary projection of the male poet, Wilde, by whom the Sphinx is also imagined as the lover of Adonis and various Egyptian gods, with overtones of decadent sexual transgression created by their interspecies encounters with a mythological being.

In 'The Burden of Itys', the poet expresses the desire to unite sexually with the artistic ideal of Michelangelo, embodied in the superficially feminine statue of the Florentine Dawn,<sup>112</sup> while Sybil Vane, as "a reed through which Shakespeare's music sounded richer and more full of joy",<sup>113</sup> is conduit for sexualized encounter with the artistic idea of Shakespeare. In the final love scene between Vera and Alexis, in *Vera, or the Nihilists*, Alexis is inspired by their heterosexual love to visualise an incorporeal

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109 *CI*, p. 358

110 *CI*, p. 826

111 *CI*, p. 829

112 "that I could charm / The Dawn at Florence from its dumb despair, / Mix with those mighty limbs and make that giant breast my lair!", *CI* p. 733, emphasizing the female statue's masculine attributes (it was created from a male model by the homosexual artist).

113 *CI* p. 71

homoerotic encounter with the spirit of Death, declaring that "I could kiss his pallid mouth, and such sweet poison from it".<sup>114</sup> In 'The New Helen', Wilde idealizes Lily Langtry by her ability to incarnate a male spirit of Love.<sup>115</sup> As woman was rendered desirable by her coding with attributes of Grecian Lost Paradise, so too she is rendered desirable by inviolability and as conduit for imagined erotic encounter with homoerotic male artists.

Gogol's platonic dialogue 'Woman', set within an idealized classical Greece, opens with the emphatic rejection and denigration of the feminine by Plato's young pupil, Telecles: "Olympian Zeus [...] you extracted all poison [...] squeezed it into one drop [...] and poisoned with it your wondrous creation: you created woman!"<sup>116</sup> before Plato redeems the female rhetorically, and reconciles the pupil with his female lover Alkinoia, by explaining his conception of the divine and ideal feminine. Gogol's construction of the ideal feminine is achieved through her progressive dematerialisation, abstraction as a redemptive spiritual principle and artistic ideal and, finally, the construction of the male as woman's "embodiment in reality" and as the perfected physical expression of the female. This complex series of rhetorical steps builds to the conclusion "she is man", by exploiting the feminine gender of the Russian word for painting:

What is woman? - the language of the gods! We marvel at the gentle, luminous brow of Man; but it is not the likeness of the gods we contemplate in him: we see in him woman, we marvel at woman in him, and only in her do we marvel at the gods. She is poetry! She is thought and we are only her embodiment in reality [...] When the painting is still in the head of the artist and fleshlessly rounds itself

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114 *CI*, p. 604. In some other editions 'such' has been rendered as 'suck'; the essential transaction of a kiss with a masculinized Death remains unaltered by the change.

115 "the incarnate spirit of spiritual love / Who in thy body holds his joyous seat" "*CI*, p. 705

116 'Зевс Олимпианец [...] ты извлек весь яд [...] сжал его в одну каплю [...] и отравил его чудесное творение свое: ты создал женщину!' *SS* 7, p. 72

out and takes shape – she is woman. When she passes into material substance and clothes herself in tangible form – she is man.<sup>117</sup>

This concept of woman as abstract artistic ideal, whose corporeal embodiment is undesirable unless male, is represented most prominently in Gogol's writing by the prostitute of 'Nevsky Prospekt,' where the asexuality of Piskarev's passion is repeatedly underlined: "he was not heated with the flame of earthly passion, no, he was in that moment pure and chaste, like a virgin youth";<sup>118</sup> "his thoughts were completely pure, like the thoughts of a child".<sup>119</sup> His absence of physical desire is reflected in horror upon discovering the woman's sexual availability as prostitute: "rather than rejoicing in such a circumstance, at which anyone else would doubtless have rejoiced in his place, he took to his heels like a wild goat".<sup>120</sup>

In 'Woman', the love object Alkinoia is idolized by her likening to "delicate, luminous ether in which the inhabitants of heaven bathe",<sup>121</sup> but likewise rendered untouchable by Plato's reproach: "poor youth! You would burn that gentle being with your scorching breath, you would disturb that pure radiance with the storm of passions",<sup>122</sup> which poses sexual desire as actively harmful to the ideal female, much as heterosexual desire is harmful to the martial strength of Cossacks. The feminine ideal facilitates a dematerialized encounter between the soul of a "youth heatedly

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117 "Что женщина? Язык богов! Мы дивимся кроткому светлому челу мужа; но не подобие богов созерцает в нем: мы видим в нем женщину, мы дивимся в нем женщину, и в нем только уже дивимся богам. Она поэзия! Она мысль, а мы только воплощение ее в действительности. Пока картина еще в голове художника и бесплотно округляется и создается – она женщина, когда она переходит в вещество и облачается в осязаемость – она мужчина" SS 7, p. 75

118 "он не был разогрет пламенем земной страсти, нет, он был в эту минуту чист и непорочен, как девственный юноша", SS 3, p. 19

119 "мысли его были совершенно чисты, как мысли ребенка", SS 3, p. 32

120 "вместо того, чтобы обрадоваться такому случаю, какому без сомнения, обрадовался бы на его месте всякий другой, он бросился со всех ног, как дикая коза" SS 3, p. 22

121 "тонкий, светлый эфир, в котором купаются небожители", SS 7, p. 76

122 "Бедный юноша! Ты бы сжег своим раскаленным дыханием это кроткое существо, ты бы возмутил бурю страстей это чистое сияние", SS 7, p. 74

understanding of art"<sup>123</sup> and the soul of the male artist, through their shared contemplation of the artist's (feminine) "unlimited, endless, fleshless idea" as embodied in his painting,<sup>124</sup> an encounter whereby the youth's "soul will fleshlessly embrace with the divine soul of the artist! How they will flow together in an inexpressible spiritual kiss!"<sup>125</sup> The initial pederastic dyad of Plato and his pupil becomes a framing device for a dematerialized pederastic encounter between a hypothetical artist and admiring hypothetical youth, as mediated through the artist's grammatically female "idea" and "painting". The feminine is thus rendered ideal, in Gogol's text, through her ability to facilitate romanticized union of male souls within Classical Grecian pederasty. Gogol's technical preservation of formal heterosexuality through grammatical gender in the published 'Woman' contrasts with his unpublished '1834', where a generic ode to the feminine muse is transformed by Gogol's use of the masculine *genii* (genius), to envision his muse as a "beautiful brother" called upon to "kiss and bless me", whose homoerotic implications are considered in detail by Karlinsky.<sup>126</sup>

As Wilde's homoerotic 'The Garden of Eros' establishes a floriography later used to code female love objects as desirable, so too the Platonic argument of Gogol's 'Woman', which rationalizes attraction to the female by reimagining woman as artwork, incarnating the "inexpressible spiritual kiss" of male artist and male admirer, may be seen reflected in Gogol's later persistent association of desirable female love objects with artworks: Piskarev of 'Nevsky Prospekt' wishes for the transformation of his prostitute into artwork; the beautiful Pole of *Taras Bulba* is described as "an artwork to

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123 “жарко понимающего искусство юноши”, SS 7, p. 75

124 “безграничная, бесконечная, бесплотная идея художника”, SS 7, p. 75

125 “бесплотно обнимется душа его с божественною душою художника! Как сольются они в невыразимом духовном поцелуе!”, SS 7, p. 76

126 “прекрасный брат мой [...] О, поцелуй и благослови меня!” SS 7, p. 191, for discussion see Karlinsky, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*, pp. 3 – 6. Hanz *Kuchelgarten* also notably uses 'genii' repeatedly in place of the conventional, feminine 'muza'.

which the artist had given the last stroke of the brush" and "a beautiful statue";<sup>127</sup> the blonde governor's daughter of *Dead Souls* has a face "such as an artist would take as a model for the Madonna";<sup>128</sup> the idealised Ulinka, of the second volume of *Dead Souls*, is easier to "consider some kind of fantastical vision than a woman", with a profile that would "have been hard to seek out anywhere, unless only on antique cameos";<sup>129</sup> of the idealized Annunziata of 'Rome', it is claimed that "everything in her recalled antiquated times, when marble was animated and sculptural chisels shone".<sup>130</sup> In *Taras Bulba*, the portrayal of Andrii's awakening desire to abstracted "woman" in his schooldays - "listening to philosophical disputes he saw her every moment, fresh, dark-eyed, tender"<sup>131</sup> - is legible to Gogol's readership as a conventional account of a lustful schoolboy daydreaming inattentively during class, but may be personally legible to Gogol as an example of philosophical dispute actively constructing heterosexual desire, as is directly portrayed in 'Woman'. Wilde's representation of Dorian's attraction to Sibyl Vane in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, as the creation of his rhetorical relationship with Wotton: "it was through certain words of his [...] that Dorian Gray's soul had turned to this white girl",<sup>132</sup> offers a comparable image of heterosexual desire as the rhetorical creation of male mentor, while Sibyl herself represents an artistic ideal who loses all attraction upon her romantic reciprocation.

The construction of the feminine ideal as love object by Gogol is likewise marked by a consistent aversion to reciprocity, encouraging the use of Endymian and

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127 "это было произведение, которому художник дал последний удар кисти" p. 477, 'как прекрасная статуя" SS 2, p. 484

128 "какое художник взял бы в образец для Мадонны" SS 5, p. 212

129 "скорей можно было почесть каким-то фантастическим видением, чем женщиной [...] подобного профиля очертанья лица трудно было где-нибудь отыскать, разве только на античных камнях" SS 5, p. 344

130 "все напоминает в ней античные времена, когда оживлялся мрамор и блистали скульптурные резцы" SS 3, p. 238

131 "слушая философские диспуты, видел ее поминутно, свежую, черноокою, нежную" SS 2, p. 425

132 *CI*, p. 41

Narcissan imagery of sleep and self-absorption, and ultimately acting as a plausible motivating force for the progressive reduction of the feminine love object into inanimate object or philosophical abstraction. In the love plots of Gogol's Ukrainian Tales, the female ideal is portrayed using the conventional imagery of Ukrainian folk songs, of which Gogol was an avid collector,<sup>133</sup> while her inaccessibility is preserved: the heroine Ganna of 'A May Night' is substituted by her father, enthusiastically embraced by indiscriminating male youths, before the lovers' final romantic reunion is avoided through Ganna's undisturbed sleep, mirroring the undisturbed sleep of Louisa that avoids the emotional parting of lovers in *Hanz Küchelgarten*, while the central love scene of 'The Night Before Christmas' is rendered unreciprocal by the narcissistic self-absorption of the heroine Oksana. Gogol's impulse towards the abstraction of female love objects plausibly motivates his increasing tendency to leave them unnamed in later works, from Pole to prostitute to assorted "blondes", with the anonymity of Chertokutskii's wife in 'Koliaska' ('The Carriage') contrasting with the amply named horse Agrafena Ivanovna, and the narrator pointedly refusing to name the "blonde girl" proposed as wife in 'Ivan Fedorovich Shponka and his Auntie', even after dialogue has revealed her name to be Maria Grigorievna. The fundamental conception of the ideal or attractive feminine as unreciprocal or inviolate, as symbolic incarnation of Lost Paradise and as abstracted conduit for imaginary homoerotic union, is consistent between the fiction of Oscar Wilde and that of Nikolai Gogol.

To summarise: the literary work of both Gogol and Wilde is strongly structured by a perceived contrast between a negative modernity, characterised by coldness and disillusion, and a Lost Paradise of infantile security, identified with classical Greece, the Orient and an individual's youth; by the impulse to imagine alternate social orders

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133 Tomenko, *Ukraïns'kyi romantyk Mykola Hohol'*, pp. 45-50

characterised by the rejection of heterosexual bonds; by a concept of the ideal female which foregrounds the female's physical and emotional unavailability, and her ability to symbolically incarnate Lost Paradise or facilitate imaginary homoerotic union. In *Poems*, Wilde's first published work, a nocturnal Arcadian garden is conceptualized in detail as a Garden of Eros, with a detailed homoerotic floriography and symbolic vocabulary which resonates throughout Wilde's later fiction. In Gogol's first published fiction 'Woman' and *Hanz Küchelgarten*, the author expresses regressive longing for a Lost Paradise associated with Classical Greece, Persia and school comradeship, while philosophically demonstrating the desirable female to be symbolic of male homoerotic union. All these concepts of Lost Paradise resonate throughout Gogol's later fiction, in his construction of female love objects as artworks and evocations of Classical Antiquity, and in his Homeric construction of the Cossack Sech as Lost Paradise in *Taras Bulba*.

Persistent association of these idylls with psychological attributes of infantile security and regressive longing implies their function, enabling Wilde and Gogol to reconstruct a concept of the Self in a lost natural state, associated for both authors with homoeroticism, as a vantage point from which to mentally resist the culture of compulsory heterosexuality. By associating their idylls with the Irish or Ukrainian, including by imagining their native cultures as incarnations of the values of Classical Greece, both authors express a patriotic urge to unite their concept of sexual homeland with their own nations.



## Chapter 9 -'The Burden of Itys': Dissociation

In Jungian psychology, “dissociation” refers to a split in the psyche, the repression of an aspect of Self and its exclusion from the conscious self-image, or ego, “an originally conscious content that became subliminal because it was repressed on account of its incompatible nature”.<sup>1</sup> In Wilde's second epic poem of his 1881 collection, 'The Burden of Itys', he returns to the Arcadian imagery of the Garden of Eros, but now introduces an antagonist force and fills the poem with mythological motifs of violent silencing and sacrifice, whose wider resonance within the writing of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde is explored by this chapter. **Section 9.1** makes a detailed analysis of the symbolism of 'The Burden of Itys' as archetypal images of dissociation. **Section 9.2** examines the wider use by both authors of a consistent personal symbolism associated with silenced or imposed sexuality. **Section 9.3** examines the theme, common to both authors, of heterosexual union required by bystander sacrifice. **Section 9.4** examines both authors' treatments of the theme of compelled marriage and externally dictated desire. The chapter's conclusion assesses the extent to which all these patterns may be said to express a coherent psychological narrative of dissociation, while comparing and contrasting its conception by Gogol and Wilde.

### 9.1 'The Burden of Itys' As Archetypal Dissociation Narrative

In his second epic poem of the 1881 collection, 'The Burden of Itys', Wilde returns to the theme of a nocturnal garden of Arcady which he established in 'The Garden of Eros', but introduces conflict with the antagonistic, silencing forces of Rome

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<sup>1</sup> Jung, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, p. 175

and Sun. A central line of the poem: "memory / That foster-brother of remorse and pain / Drops poison in mine ear, - / O to be free, / To burn one's old ships!"<sup>2</sup> refers to the burning of ships by Turnus in Book IX of Virgil's *Aeneid*,<sup>3</sup> which symbolises the impossibility of return to the homeland of Troy, while the Trojans' assimilation into Roman society is achieved through an externally imposed heterosexuality, by Aeneas' divinely ordained marriage to a Roman bride, with Jupiter, father of the Gods, proclaiming "the ancient folk of Italy shall retain the speech of their forefathers and their way of life... The Trojans shall only blend, absorbed, in the Italian breed".<sup>4</sup> Virgil's Trojans are depicted as natural allies of the Arcadians in Book VIII, adding to their significance within Wilde's wider symbolism of the conflict of Arcady and Rome.<sup>5</sup> In 'The Burden of Itys', when Wilde describes himself as not free to burn his old ships, which would mark his irreversible commitment to assimilation into Roman society and dissociation from his homeland, because of the "poison" of memory, he implies previous experiences incompatible with the values of Rome.

In his 'Commonplace Book', Wilde characterizes those Roman values as compulsory heterosexuality and civic obligation: "the Roman was educated for the family and the state: to be a *pater familias* and a *civis*: the refinement of Greek culture comes through the romantic medium of impassioned friendship".<sup>6</sup> In his aspect as *civis*, the Roman represents submission to the collective will of the city and its *polis*, innately opposed to Arcadian self-realization, whose pastoral superiority to the dictates of the Roman church is affirmed in the opening line of 'The Burden of Itys': "this English Thames is holier far than Rome".<sup>7</sup> In his aspect as *pater familias*, the Roman represents

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2 *CI*, p. 733

3 Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. W. F. Jackson Knight, p. 227

4 Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. W. F. Jackson Knight, p. 335

5 Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. W. F. Jackson Knight, p. 206

6 Ellmann, p. 29, quoting Wilde's *Commonplace Book*

7 *CI*, p. 727. The poem is followed in the 1881 volume by 'Impression du Matin', whose opening line

institutionalized compulsory heterosexuality and its conquest of Grecian homoerotic "impassioned friendship".

Wilde's mental equation of Roman values with English imperialism is illustrated by the Roman imagery of his ode 'AVE IMPERATRIX', which ambivalently praises an England who "with bare and bloody feet / Climbs the steep road of wide empire".<sup>8</sup> Salomé's statement "how I loathe the Romans! They are rough and common, and they give themselves the airs of noble lords"<sup>9</sup> imagines Romans as philistine conquerors. In her aspect as *IMPERATRIX* therefore, Rome represents the imperial conquest and enslavement of Grecian artist philosophers by militarized and bureaucratic Roman philistines, closely resembling Wilde's nationalist concept of the relationship between Ireland and England as discussed in **Chapter Seven**, adding a potential ethnic dimension to the symbolism of the poet's reluctant and imperfect assimilation into Rome.

Richard Ellmann considers Rome and Greece to function in Wilde's writing as "topographical symbols for his inclination on the one hand towards 'earnestness and purity' and on the other towards self-realization and beauty".<sup>10</sup> This reading, however, imagines Wilde's free choice between two equal cultures, whereas the historical role of Romans as conquerors and enslavers of the Greeks suggests Wilde's metaphorical Romans as an oppressive force compelling his dissociation from Arcady. The poem's central image of the sacrifice of burning ships, final dissociation from Troy to assimilate into Roman society by divinely ordained marriage to a Roman bride, therefore potentially functions as a resonant multivalent symbol, simultaneously representing the renunciation of individualism to become *civis* and the renunciation of

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"The Thames nocturne of blue and gold / Changed to a Harmony in grey' (*CI*, p. 736) further supports the perception of *Poems* as a purposefully ordered and conceptually unified cycle.

8 *CI*, p. 697

9 *CI*, p. 540

10 Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 75

homoerotic “impassioned friendship” to become *pater familias*, as well as the imperial conquest or assimilation of a subjugated nation. In Virgil's text, the burned ships are transformed by divine dispensation into sea nymphs,<sup>11</sup> giving potential resonance to Wilde's choice of the mermaid as love object in 'The Fisherman and His Soul', and to the poet's quest to retrieve a mermaid in 'Vita Nuova', as symbolizing the ego's quest to retrieve the dissociated aspect of self.<sup>12</sup>

The title of the poem refers to Itys, the innocent child of the Thracian king Tereus, murdered by his mother Procne and fed to his father Tereus in vengeance for Tereus' rape of Procne's sister, Philomel.<sup>13</sup> The rape victim Philomel's tongue was cut out by Tereus to silence her, before she was incarnated as a nightingale to whom Wilde addresses 'The Burden of Itys', a poem replete with mythology of blood sacrifice and violently enforced silencing. Wilde reassures "mourning Philomel" that "here is no cruel Lord with murderous blade",<sup>14</sup> associating the cutting of the rape victim's tongue with an act of murder. Philomel's “burden” of Itys, her silenced consciousness of the sacrificed boy who was cannibalized by the *pater familias*, may suggest the prepubescent boy as an archetype of infantile security, sacrificed by dissociation and mourned by the bereaved ego, the nightingale. In his analysis of the symbolism of Christ's suspension between good and bad thief during the crucifixion, Carl Jung devised the concept of the “crucified ego” as a state arising from the greater differentiation of ego from persona: “the progressive development and differentiation of consciousness leads to an ever more menacing awareness of the conflict and involves nothing less than a crucifixion of the ego, its agonizing suspension between

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11 Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. W. F. Jackson Knight, p. 228

12 *CI*, p. 790. An earlier draft positioned redemption in the form of a vision of Christ walking on water, see Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 76

13 Cancik & Schneider ed., *Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike* vol. 10, p. 387

14 *CI*, p. 735. The "murderous blade" must refer to the cutting of Philomel's tongue rather than the murder of Itys, as this was committed by Procne rather than her 'Lord'.

irreconcilable opposites".<sup>15</sup> Philomel may be suggested as symbolic of Jung's concept of crucified ego, in her agonized suspension between the persona of the dominant society, King Tereus, by whom she is oppressed, and the Lost Paradise of the boy Itys, whose sacrifice was compelled, with the rape of the bird and the cutting of its tongue giving violent expression to the state of psychological suffering and disempowerment which Jung describes.

As nocturnal bird, Philomel is presented as a "sober-suited advocate / That pleadest for the moon against the day!"<sup>16</sup> marking her as ally of Endymion's beloved moon. Her bravery in singing despite her trauma is contrasted with "we / Who by dead voiceless silence strive to heal / Our too untented wounds, and do but keep / Pain barricaded in our hearts."<sup>17</sup> The reeds, mythological incarnations of the mourning homoerotic lover Calamus, are imagined in 'The Burden of Itys' as themselves silenced: "many an unsung elegy / sleeps in the reeds that fringe our winding Thames".<sup>18</sup>

Wilde's description of the nightingale as "wingèd Marsyas" of whom "Apollo loveth not to hear such troubled songs of pain!",<sup>19</sup> evokes the myth of the sun god Apollo, who violently flayed the Satyr Marsyas to jealously silence his song, adding another mythological motif of brutal silencing.<sup>20</sup> The death of Apollo's own boy lover Hyacinth is also referenced, who will "stain with his purple blood the waxen bell / That overweighs the jacinth", referring to the hyacinth (jacinth) flower. Wilde's own 'Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young' states: "Apollo has passed away, but Hyacinth, whom men say he slew, lives on",<sup>21</sup> suggesting Apollo as the slayer of his lover Hyacinth, further comparable to the "cruel Lord" Tereus and *Salomé's* Herod as

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15 Jung, *Aion*, p. 44

16 *CI*, p. 731

17 *CI*, p. 733

18 *CI*, p. 730

19 *CI*, p. 730

20 Cancik & Schneider ed., *Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike* vol. 7, pp. 955-956

21 Small, *Oscar Wilde Revalued*, p. 143

the destroyers of objects of their own lust. The murder of Adonis by a boar is commemorated by the poet's urge to lead the "Cyprian" Aphrodite to the "grove where Adon lies".<sup>22</sup> The fourth sacrifice, "deserted Christ [...] Whose smitten lips my lips so oft have kissed, / And now in mute and marble misery / Sits in his lone dishonoured House and weeps, perchance for me?"<sup>23</sup> conflates the archetypal martyrdom of Christ with the renunciation of the poet's abandoned lover.

Though the mythological references appear diverse and complex, superficially resembling random association in Wilde's rapid transitions between myths, the equivalences which Wilde establishes between interchangeable mythological symbols resolve themselves into a single binary conflict. As the moon was made synecdoche of Arcady by the "young Endymions" in 'The Garden of Eros', so the nocturnal nightingale is declared to be its advocate against the day, thereby interchangeable with Marsyas as opponent of the sun god Apollo. As Apollo flayed and silenced the song of Marsyas, so he becomes interchangeable with the *pater familias* King Tereus, who raped and silenced the nightingale. The divine command that the Trojans should renounce their language and customs in order to assimilate to Rome, through the sacrifice of the burned ships, may be regarded as another myth of compelled silencing. The blood sacrifices of Hyacinth, Adonis and the smitten-lipped Christ are united by the poet's appeal to the nightingale to "cry out aloud on Itys!",<sup>24</sup> associating a litany of sacrificed male lovers with the sacrificed infantile security of a cannibalized child, until the poet finally bids the bird be silent due to the excessive pain of the memories it conjures, and to yield to the rising day, associated with the force of tyranny by its connection to the murderous Sun God, Apollo.

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22 CI, 732 – 733 (Adonis myth source: Cancik & Schneider ed., *Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike* vol. 1, p. 119-120)

23 CI, p. 734

24 CI, p. 733

Read as an archetypal narrative of dissociation, 'The Burden of Itys' portrays the forced renunciation of the Arcadian garden that was established as a Lost Paradise of infantile security in 'The Garden of Eros'. The homoerotic icons of Adonis and Hyacinth, positively evoked in 'The Garden of Eros', are depicted by Wilde as violently slain, a loss of infantile security which is associated with the cannibalization of a sacrificed child. The Arcadian reeds are depicted as silenced, while further mythological figures emblematic of violent silencing, Philomel and Marsyas, are introduced, connecting censorship with intense suffering and crucifixion of the ego. An antagonist force that opposes the nocturnal Arcadian garden, interchangeably represented by the sun god Apollo, the *pater familias* King Tereus and Rome, is introduced, establishing psychological conflict as the consequence of dissociation. Analysing the motifs of the binary opposition of night and day, and the appearances of the nightingale, within Wilde's later fiction reveals that 'The Burden of Itys' establishes a symbolism which resonates throughout his writing. The use of an evolving, consistent personal symbolism associated with the silencing of sexuality may likewise be observed in the writing of Nikolai Gogol.

## 9.2 Wider Resonance of Symbolism of Silenced Sexuality

The image of day as a force of silencing or shame, established in 'The Burden of Itys' by the sun god Apollo's violent silencing of Marsyas and the nightingale's opposition to the dawning day, recurs in Wilde's later fiction. In 1898's 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol', prisoners live in fear of "the Justice of the Sun",<sup>25</sup> equating the executions conducted during daylight hours with the cruelties of Apollo. The lines "we had no word to say; / For we did not meet in the holy night, / But in the shameful day"<sup>26</sup>

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25 *CI*, p. 847

26 *CI*, p. 844

draws a direct connection between silencing and daylight, implying the superiority and sincerity of “holy night” as a space of disclosure. The narratives of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime' both alternate daylight scenes of insincere social performance with night scenes of conscience and disclosure, with Lord Arthur Savile “amazed at the discord between the shallow optimism of the day and the real facts of existence.”<sup>27</sup> Wilde's concept of the enforced insincerity of silencing daylight and the private conscience of the nocturnal self thus remains consistent between his poetic metaphors and his realist writing.

The nightingale, tongueless advocate of Endymion's moon, recurs throughout the fiction of Wilde, consistently associated with Arcady, with transgressive love, with idyllic gardens and with violent sacrifice. The nightingale is self-sacrificing protagonist of 'The Nightingale and the Rose', whose voice is unintelligible to listeners. She sings in the Garden of Death of 'The Canterville Ghost', which is proposed as the location of secret of life, death and love, as well as in the garden of Ashter of 'The Fisherman and his Soul' and in the orchard of 'The Young King', confirming her consistent association with gardens.<sup>28</sup> In the final love scene of *Vera, or The Nihilists*, the transgressive love of Vera for Alexis and her self-sacrifice is accompanied by the singing of a nightingale, whose unlikeliness in the Russian setting is commented upon, underlining the bird's symbolic value to Wilde.<sup>29</sup> The nightingale is rhetorically compared to the voice of Sibyl Vane in Romeo and Juliet's balcony scene, which Wilde refers to as a "garden scene", underlining the importance of his mental association of nightingale and garden while possibly coding Vane as symbolic advocate of Arcady, in *The Picture of Dorian*

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27 *CI*, p. 205

28 'The Nightingale and the Rose' pp. 163 - 167, 'The Canterville Ghost' p. 248, p. 253, 'The Fisherman and his Soul', p. 300, 'The Young King' p. 262 (all page numbers: *CI*)

29 ' *Vera*, *CI*, p. 605



Gray.<sup>30</sup> The nightingale is rhetorically compared to the tortured dwarf of *The Birthday of the Infanta*, which repeats the motif of the misunderstood sacrifice, and to the abused wife of 1883's *The Duchess of Padua*, which may code the female love object again as symbolic advocate of Arcady. Elsewhere in Wilde's volume of poetry, 'In the Forest' offers the Nightingale as ally in the pursuit of an Arcadian Faun: "O Nightingale, catch me his strain! / Else moonstruck with music and madness / I track him in vain!"<sup>31</sup> In 'Silentium Amoris', the poet's inability to express love is compared to a nightingale unable to sing to the moon before the sun replaces it, and to a reed broken by the wind.<sup>32</sup> The consistency of context suggests a coherent, personally legible symbolic system, in which the nightingale is empowered as "sober-suited advocate" for a private self, symbolized as nocturnal Arcadian Garden, whose brutal silencing is commemorated by the bird as violently silenced victim of rape. At the same time, Wilde's development of a consistent personal symbolism around the nightingale would have been effaced for his readership by the bird's ubiquity as a multivalent symbol in Victorian literature, as extensively documented by Jeni Williams.<sup>33</sup>

The impulse which Wilde shows, to develop a personally legible symbolism which allows the encoded expression of the silenced aspect of self throughout his fiction, may be traced in the writing of Nikolai Gogol through a comparable consistency of context and association in his use of clothing metaphor throughout his fiction. Though the clothing symbolism of Nikolai Gogol does not invoke mythological allusion, and is therefore more challenging to decode, its early usage is notably associated with the silencing or substitution of sexual themes. What follows is a lengthy list of clothing references, to establish both the consistency of the associations within

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30 *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, CI p. 37

31 CI, p. 801

32 'Silentium Amoris', CI, p. 776

33 Williams, *Interpreting Nightingales: Gender, Class and Histories*

which the clothing is invoked, as a demonstration of its function as a personally legible symbol to the author, and the sheer frequency of references throughout the author's fiction, which indicate the symbol's emotional importance to Gogol, as the recurrence of Wilde's nightingale does to Wilde. In 'The Night Before Christmas', the Cossack Chub's attempt to confront the hidden sexual transgressions of the village, embodied by the perpetrators of adultery, promiscuity and demonic intercourse concealed in sacks, is silenced and substituted by involuntary discussion of shoes:

'What do you grease your boots with, lard or tar?' He didn't want to say that, he wanted to ask 'How did you, headman, get into that sack?' - but didn't understand himself how he said something completely different.<sup>34</sup>

As 'Vii's kleptomaniac bell-ringer Khaliava attempts to discuss the witchery of market-women in Kiev, in a story where witches are associated with sexualized transgression, "his tongue was unable to pronounce a single word [...] Nonetheless, he did not forget, according to his previous habit, to carry off the old sole of a boot".<sup>35</sup> The forced silencing of Khaliava on the subject of sexualized witches restricts him to the theft of a banal object, the old sole of a boot. An "old boot-sole" is one of two objects which "most noticeably of all" protrude from Pliushkin's dusty pile of hoarded belongings in *Dead Souls*,<sup>36</sup> an engrained habit of futile hoarding to which Pliushkin is reduced by the absence of love in his life, becoming "finally some kind of lapse in

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34 " 'чем ты смазываешь свои сапоги, смальцем или дегтем?' Он хотел не то сказать, он хотел спросить: 'Как ты, голова, залез в этот мешок?' - но сам не понимал, как выговорил совершенно другое" *SS I*, p. 267

35 "Заметивший, что язык его не мог произнести ни одного слова, [...] Причем не позабыл, по прежней привычке своей, утащить старую подошву от сапога" *SS 2*, p. 607

36 "заметнее прочего высовывался оттуда отломленный кусок деревянной лопаты и старая подошва сапога" p. 146, "старая подошва, бабья тряпка [...] все тащил к себе и складывал в ту кучу" p. 148 (*SS 5*)

humanity".<sup>37</sup> 'Nose' advertises that old boot-soles are sold every day from eight to three in the morning,<sup>38</sup> farcically inflating the apparent demand for them. In 'The Night Before Christmas', Vakula's quest for Oksana's love is displaced onto a quest for ornate imperial slippers, of which the obsessive quest for old boot soles by the loveless Pliushkin and the silenced Khaliava might be regarded as an abject travesty. Edyta Bojanowska highlights the fact that Vakula's request for the imperial slippers actually derails a conversation between the Empress and the Zaporozhian Cossacks over her attacks on the political autonomy of the Sech, denying his companions their opportunity to petition for the preservation of the Sech.<sup>39</sup> The imperial slippers thus have both sexual and ethnic significance: replacing Cossack comradeship while purchasing heterosexual marriage, and derailing Ukrainian political nationalism into submission to Imperial Russia.

In the opening scene of Gogol's *Marriage*, the hero Podkolesin is convinced that waxing his shoes will alert others of his intention to marry, suggesting that waxed shoes are now a universally recognised substitute for sexual discussion, as they were for the Cossack Chub in 'The Night Before Christmas'. Podkolesin's musings on social pressure: "it seems a meaningless thing, shoes, but all the same if they're badly sewn with rusty wax, in good society there won't be the same respect"<sup>40</sup> highlight the shoe's vulnerability to social judgement, in implied analogy with marriage. Chichikov's exposure at the governor's ball as playing "some kind of strange double-meaning role"<sup>41</sup> is compared to stepping into a filthy, stinking puddle with a well-polished shoe. Kochkarev judges the unmarried Podkolesin as "simply an old *babii bashmak* and not a

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37 "он обратился наконец в какую-то прореху на человечестве" SS 5, p. 152

38 "вызов желающих купить старые подошвы, с приглашением явиться к переторжке каждый день от восьми до трех часов утра." SS 3, p. 65

39 Bojanowska, *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism*, p. 71

40 "кажется, пустая вещь сапоги, а ведь, однако же, если дурно сшиты да рыжая вакса, уж в хорошем обществе и не будет такого уважения," SS 4, p. 418

41 "случилось ему оборваться, что он вдруг показался пред всеми Бог знает в каком виде, что сыграл какую-то странную двусмысленную роль" SS 5, p. 224

person, a mockery of a person, a satire of a person!"<sup>42</sup> The phrase '*babii bashmak*' in Russian represents a pun between 'a woman's *bashmak*' and 'a womanish/sissy *bashmak*', potentially motivating Gogol's choice of the *bashmak* shoe as symbol of the sterile bachelor, due to its alliterative effect with *babii*, analogous to an English phrase such as "sissy slipper". The hero of 'The Overcoat', an extreme example of the sterile bachelor, is named Bashmachkin after the *bashmak* shoe, while his forenames Akaky Akakievich may have an either innocent or excremental association, suggested by Karlinsky.<sup>43</sup> After gaining the purchasing power to obtain a coat, "his heart, generally perfectly tranquil, began to beat",<sup>44</sup> an enlivenment that causes him to look "as though at a novelty" at a painting of "some kind of pretty woman, who threw off her *bashmak*".<sup>45</sup> Ambiguity is thus preserved between the conventional interpretation that "some kind of pretty woman" is the object of Akakii's interest, and the alternative interpretation of Bashmachkin's excitement at the mere concept of releasing a *babii bashmak*. The motif of the enforced silencing or dissociation of sexuality or nationalism, and its banal substitution by footwear, as well as anxiety over the social judgement of the footwear, is consistent enough to suggest footwear as a personally legible symbol for Gogol, and repeated enough to indicate that symbol's emotional import.

'Vii's description of "an attractive young girl" hitting Khoma Brut with a spade, explained as the result of his urge to "feel and take interest in what kind of material her

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42 "Это просто старый бабий башмак, а не человек, насмешка над человеком, сатира на человека!" SS 4, p. 476

43 "The original Greek name Acacius (it occurs in Voltaire as Akakiah) means "immaculate" or "without blemish", but its Russian version sounds in pronunciation suspiciously as if it might be derived from *okakat* or *obkakat* - "to beshit", "to cover with excrement" "Karlinsky, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*, p. 137

44 "Сердце его, вообще весьма покойное, начало биться" SS 3, p. 173

45 "глядел на все это, как на новость [...] посмотреть на картину, где изображена была какая-то красивая женщина, которая скидала с себя башмак" SS 3, p. 177

chemise and skirt were made of",<sup>46</sup> allows heteronormative reading as flirtation while technically implying the substitution of clothing for woman as primary object of interest. In 'The Night Before Christmas', the devil's amorous flirtations are followed by a detailed description of the fashionable coats of townsfolk, with the claim that, by pursuing interspecies sex, the devil is "heading the same way himself" as coat-conscious townsfolk.<sup>47</sup> Direct substitution of wife by coat first appears in the surreal dream sequence of 'Ivan Fedorovich Shponka and his Auntie', in the wife's conversion to "some kind of woollen material" from which Shponka is pressured to sew himself a frock coat, with assurances of its fashionability.<sup>48</sup> In the opening scene of *Marriage*, Podkolesin anxiously questions whether his orders for the sewing of a high-quality coat have alerted the tailor of his intentions to marry.<sup>49</sup> This line of associations reaches its ultimate incarnation in 'The Overcoat', with Akakii Akakievich Bashmachkin's increase in social approval upon acquiring the titular coat, the ordering of which is described "as though he had married [...] as though he was not alone, but some kind of pleasant life companion had agreed to travel the road of life together with him".<sup>50</sup> A consistent mental connection between social prestige and heterosexuality is established by Gogol's repeated symbolic substitution of wives with fashionable clothing.

An ethnic dimension to the theme of externally imposed clothing is given in the second volume of *Dead Souls*: "a Ruthenian person is only decent, and efficient, and fine, and jaunty, and works a lot, for as long as he goes around in a shirt and homespun coat, but as soon as he gets into a German frock coat - he becomes clumsy, and plain,

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46 "одна смазливая молодка [...] он вздумал было пощупать и полюбобпытствовать, из какой материи у нее была сорочка и плахта" *SS 2*, pp. 596 – 597. A 'plakhta' is a traditional embroidered Ukrainian garment, worn similarly to a wraparound skirt.

47 "Когда эти люди не будут суетны! Можно побиться об заклад, что многим покажется удивительно видеть черта, пустившегося и себе туда же." *SS 1*, p. 231

48 "жена вовсе не человек, а какая-то шерстяная материя" *SS 1*, p. 364

49 "Может быть, он говорил, не хотим ли барин жениться? [...] Это приглядиесте" *SS 4*, p. 416

50 "как будто бы он женился ... как будто он был не один, а какая-то приятная подруга жизни согласилась с ним приходить вместе жизненную дорогу" *SS 3*, p. 172

and inefficient, and a loafer."<sup>51</sup> Imposed, alien clothing represents the demoralization of a people subjected to imposed ethnic identity. On one level, this remark serves as Slavophile criticism of the Westernizing of the Russian population. The attribute of "loafer" (*lentiai*), however, was one that Gogol particularly associated with Ukrainians in private correspondence: "okh, these countrymen of mine! What loafers you and I are, brother".<sup>52</sup> While the German represents an unambiguously external, Northern culture imposing itself on the Ruthenian, Gogol's description of the population's resulting degeneration into clumsy "loafers" echoes his private concept of Ukrainian demoralization. The "frock-coat", which Gogol uses to represent both imposed ethnicity and imposed wives, establishes equivalence between the two concepts, linking the demoralization of Ruthenian loafers to that of the *babii bashmak*.

Although Oscar Wilde expresses his psychological narrative of dissociation and censorship by encoding it in a complex vocabulary of mythological allusions that can be unravelled through familiarity with their sources, while Gogol improvises a homespun, idiosyncratic symbolism from items familiar to a Ukrainian country boy such as boots, coats, geese, cats, pigs, carriages and noses, whose symbolic meaning can only be approximately deduced by the consistency of contexts in which they recur, yet the psychological dynamics evoked by both symbolic systems are comparable. Wilde's motif of the enforced silencing of individualist Arcady by imperial Rome, with its ethnic pressure to become imperial *civis*, and its sexual pressure to burn ships and marry a Roman bride, may be paralleled with Gogol's motif of the enforced silencing of sexual transgression or political nationalism by supernatural agency and the pressure to adopt fashionable but demoralizing clothing. Wilde invests his mythic conflict, of

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51 "русский человек по тех пор только хорош, и расторопен, и красив, и развязен, и много работает, покуда он ходит в рубашке и зипуне, но что как только заберется в немецкий сертук - станет и неуклюж, и некрасив, и нерасторопен, и лентяй." SS 5, p. 440,

52 "Ох, эти земляки мне! Что мы братец за лентяй с тобою" SS 5, p. 103

nocturnal Arcady against the tyranny of Rome and Sun, with both ethnic and sexual implications; Gogol does the same with his frock-coat and imperial slippers.

### 9.3 Heterosexual Union Requiring Bystander Sacrifice

By uniting Virgil's myth of the Trojans, surrendering their language and nationality to assimilate to Rome through marriage, with the myth of the nightingale mourning a sacrificed and cannibalized boy, Wilde's 'The Burden of Itys' suggests the idea of heterosexual marriage being achieved by the violent sacrifice of an innocent bystander. This theme repeatedly features in the fiction of both Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde. Comparing and contrasting their treatment of it is the object of this section.

In Wilde's *The Duchess of Padua*, the hero Guido is compelled by Count Moranzone to reject his school companion Ascanio in the name of his civic duty of avenging his father, with the relationship of Guido and Ascanio characterised as "friendship of the antique world" and "love / Which beats between us like a summer sea".<sup>53</sup> Guido's renunciation of Ascanio as "schoolboy's dream", and assumption of his duty as *civis*, enables his heterosexual relationship with the titular Duchess, establishing heterosexuality and duty as core attributes of the social order to which antique friendship must be sacrificed. The sacrificed Ascanio's name recalls Ascanius, the Trojan son of Aeneas, hero of Virgil's *Aeneid*,<sup>54</sup> further suggesting the centrality of the *Aeneid* to Wilde's personal symbolism of enforced assimilation.

Patricia Behrendt interprets the significance of the sacrificed Itys within 'The Burden of Itys' with the claim that:

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53 *CI*, p. 617

54 Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. W. F. Jackson Knight, p. 47

The violent termination of Itys' innocent youth and beauty, in fact, may even be read as a metaphor for what happens when the awakening heterosexual passions in a male youth cause his homosexual lover to lose interest in him; he is "slain" in the eyes of his lover by his transformation from homosexual love object to pubescent heterosexual.<sup>55</sup>

Aside from the confusion of homosexuality and paedophilia inherent in imagining a prepubescent boy as "homosexual love object" and the heteronormativity of assuming "awakening heterosexual passions" in the undefined sexuality of Itys, Behrendt's interpretation is notable for positioning the homosexual as predator, fantasising the murder of heterosexual youths. Such an imagined relationship between the homosexual and heterosexual is a reversal of the poem's own evocation of homoerotic victimhood. Itys, defined by his archetypal innocence as prepubescent boy, rather recalls Gogol and Wilde's shared concept of infantile security as the core attribute of Grecian Lost Paradise. The boy Itys does not participate in the *pater familias'* crime of heterosexual rape, which prompts his violent sacrifice and cannibalization, marking him as an innocent bystander.

The closest parallel to Wilde's Itys may be found in the blood sacrifice and cannibalization of the prepubescent Ivas in Gogol's 'St. John's Eve'. The description of Petrus murdering him emphasizes the boy's innocence,<sup>56</sup> while his brutal sacrifice is required to permit Petrus to marry Ivas' sister Pidorka: "the elders never remembered such a happy wedding".<sup>57</sup> The happiness of the married couple is conditional on their maintained ignorance of the blood sacrifice that has enabled their union, with their contentment ruined by the amnesiac Petrus' efforts to remember. His final recollection

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55 Behrendt, *Oscar Wilde, Eros and Aesthetics*, p. 47

56 "innocent blood sprayed his eyes" "безвинная кровь брызнула ему в очи" *SS I*, p. 165

57 "старика не запомнили никогда еще такой веселой свадьбы" *SS I*, p. 167



immolates him and destroys his prosperity. While Wilde's nightingale suggests a crucified ego silenced but unable to "burn ships" by fully forgetting the burden of Itys, Gogol's Petrus portrays an ego uncomfortably aware of his dissociation, but unable to recall what it is that he has sacrificed, more closely fitting Jung's model of the psyche's repressed contents having become subliminal. The threatening potential of memory to destroy his marriage, prosperity and very life, is the major theme of the story. The striking similarity in the image of the murdered and cannibalized boy suggests that the central sacrifice is conceived in similar terms by both authors, though the ego positioning varies.

Within Wilde's 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime', Lord Arthur Savile's concern, that he should not marry the idealized Sybil Merton while predestined to commit a murder, is contrasted with a farcical unconcern over the prospect of concealing a murder committed prior to marriage. His marriage itself is posed as conditional on the murder of a bystander: Savile had recognised "where his duty lay, and was fully conscious that he had no right to marry until he had committed the murder."<sup>58</sup> The importance of the bystander's innocence is emphasised by Savile's judgement, with parodic English nobility, that "this was not the time for the gratification of any personal pique or dislike",<sup>59</sup> while Savile's repeated postponement of the marriage, with every failure in his murder attempts, underlines the blood sacrifice being precondition for marriage. The final scene depicts Savile's contented family life, presumably sustained by Sybil's ignorance of the murder, in which Savile claims he owes "all the happiness of my life" to the cheiromancy which prompted the killing.<sup>60</sup> Although a specious poetic justice, which offers the predictor of murder as the murder victim, helps to sustain the work's comic tone, the key feature of Gogol's 'St. John's Eve', a prosperous and happy marriage

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58 *CI*, p. 207

59 *CI*, p. 208

60 *CI*, p. 221

founded upon the concealed blood sacrifice of an innocent bystander, is present in 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime'.

In 'The Nightingale and the Rose', it is the nightingale herself who serves as blood sacrifice to facilitate a heterosexual romance to which she is a bystander, and whose participants remain in ignorance of the bird's death. The image of the nightingale, building a perfect red rose through her song and her heart's blood, is drawn from Persian legend, making the bird simultaneously representative of both Oriental and Arcadian idylls, while the image of the red rose as the gift of a martyred heart becomes the climax of 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol'. In all her multiple symbolic resonances, the nightingale and her heart's gift are discarded by the intellectual student for whose poetically described heterosexual love the bird has given her life, and who pronounces judgement on the bird's own singing as lacking sincerity, denying the Arcadian outsider's emotional reality while being fully consumed with his own. Wilde's own association of the nightingale with a rape victim whose tongue has been torn out, while she eternally mourns a cannibalized boy, implies that the bird's song is filled with authentic causes for pain and grievance, far more profound than the trivial passions of the student with which she is called to unrequited empathy, and for whom she gives her life.

Alienation from heterosexual union may be read in the conclusions of both *Hanz Küchelgarten* and 'Sorochinsky Market', where conventionally happy endings of weddings are undermined by a shift in the locus of empathy to abandoned school friends. A similar reflexive identification with outsiders may be read in the tendency of both authors to focus empathy on monstrous beings. The undine, a figure who lures youths to their drowning deaths in conventional Ukrainian folklore, is reimagined in Gogol's 'A May Night' as an innocent daughter sacrificed to facilitate her father's

marriage to a witch. Gogol's empathetically innocent "unhappy undine"<sup>61</sup> becomes, like Wilde's nightingale, the unselfish agent through which the marital union of the story's main lovers, Ganna and Levko, is achieved. She is permanently excluded from such marital happiness by death and by an incorporeal body made "from translucent clouds".<sup>62</sup>

Gogol entirely omits to represent the climactic wedding of his story 'The Night Before Christmas', to conclude instead with the universal social rejection of the transgressive outsider, in this case literally a devil. Utilizing the folkloric Ukrainian trope of the comical devil, who is mastered and forced to grant wishes by the hero, as a supernatural agent for achieving the marital union of the central pair, Gogol emphasises the devil's suffering and victimization. The pious Vakula's painting of "insulting caricatures" of the devil positions the blacksmith, rather than the devil, as primary aggressor in their feud.<sup>63</sup> Vakula's painting of the Last Judgement reverses the usual concept of devil as tormentor, to present him as tormented outcast of hell.<sup>64</sup> While portraying the vulnerability of the "poor devil",<sup>65</sup> Gogol likewise highlights the pleasure which Vakula takes in tormenting him,<sup>66</sup> the savage beating with a stick with which Vakula rewards the devil for his assistance in the blacksmith's marriage, and his finally drawing "the devil in hell, such a disgusting one that everyone spat when they walked past",<sup>67</sup> with this image of the devil's stigmatization concluding the story. Gogol

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61 "несчастной утопленницы" *SS I*, p. 208

62 "из прозрачных облак" *SS I*, p. 203

63 'обидные карикатуры' *SS I*, p. 242

64 "the frightened devil rushed in all directions, feeling the approach of its ruin, and the previously imprisoned sinners beat and chased it with whips, clubs and everything they could get their hands on." ( 'Испуганный черт метался во все стороны, предчувствуя свою погибель, а заключенные прежде грешники били и гоняли его кнутами, поленами и всем чем ни попало') *SS I*, p. 230

65 'бедный черт' *SS I*, p. 280 Iurii Mann places this representation within the tradition of the comically incompetent and humanized devil (Mann, *Poetika Gogolia*, p. 25)

66 "he was extremely amused at the way the devil sneezed and coughed when he took the little cypress cross from his neck and held it up to it" ('Его забавляло до крайности, как черт чихал и кашлял, когда он снимал с шеи кипарисный крестик и подносил к нему') *SS I*, pp. 267 – 268

67 "черта в аду, такого гадкого, что все плевали, когда проходили мимо" *SS I*, p. 282

focuses on the devil's transgressive sexuality: "his snout [...] is vileness of vilenesses, but even he conducts amorous flirtations!"<sup>68</sup> but offers no further cruelties which would vindicate the blacksmith's treatment of him.

Gogol's portrayal of the devil, as emphatically vulnerable, socially stigmatized outsider, offended by unsympathetic portraiture, may be compared to his portrayal of Jews in *Taras Bulba*. Though verbally stigmatized with exaggerated antisemitism, compared to dogs, filth, fire and plague, Jews are directly represented as victims of the dominant society, as in the drowning of the "poor sons of Israel" or Mardokhai's "signs of beatings, received for boldness" which he had "become accustomed to consider as birthmarks".<sup>69</sup> Bulba's loyal Jewish ally Iankel, who risks his life to unite Bulba with his son Ostap, laments his dehumanization: "everything that is bad, it all falls onto the Jew [...] because they think it is already not a person, if a Jew!"<sup>70</sup> Vladimir Zviniatskovsky notes that one of Gogol's primary sources for *Taras Bulba*, *The History of the Ruthenians (Istoriia Rusov)* cited Jews as spies of the Poles, while Gogol's work presents them as allies of the Cossacks, a rewrite which actively removes justification for their persecution.<sup>71</sup>

As manifestations of reflexive identification with stigmatized outsiders, Gogol's presentation of devils and Jews, as primarily victims of the dominant society, may be compared to Wilde's 'The Canterville Ghost', where the traditionally threatening supernatural outsider is conceived instead as oppressed by the normative family. The American family that the ghost pathetically attempts to haunt is portrayed as robustly self-assured and consistently invulnerable, while Wilde's ghost is physically vulnerable

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68 "Рожа ... мерзость мерзостью, однако ж и он строит любовные куры!" *SS I*, p. 231

69 "Бедные сыны Израиля" p. 451, "знаков побоев, полученных за удалство [...] привык им считать за родимые пятна" *SS 2*, p. 539

70 'все, что ни есть недоброго, все валится на жида [...] потому что думают, уж и не человек, коли жид' *SS 2*, p. 535. For a discussion of 'жид' [lit. 'yid'] as the standard Ukrainian word for 'jew' at the time, see Barabash, Yurii, *Vybrani Studii – Skovoroda. Hohol'. Shevchenko.*, pp. 450-451

71 Zviniatskovsky, *Pobezhdaiushchii Strakh Smekhom*, p. 131

to injury and suffering.<sup>72</sup> The compulsion to reimagine canonically threatening monsters, whether Jew, devil, undine or Canterville ghost, as instead victims of the dominant culture, suggests a primary perceived threat from the normative culture itself.

In Wilde's unfinished play, *A Florentine Tragedy*, the discontented married couple Simone and Bianca achieve renewed mutual appreciation through Simone's murder of the adulterously transgressive Prince Guido Bardi. The emphasised brutality of the murder, "die like a dog with lolling tongue! Die! Die!",<sup>73</sup> culminates in a final tableau of the marital pair kissing over the fresh corpse of their victim, a conventionally happy ending of marital reconciliation, presented here as the conclusion of a self-described tragedy. The heightened theatricality of *A Florentine Tragedy* may facilitate its use of the blood sacrifice motif outside of a supernatural setting. In the work of Wilde, promiscuity as sexual transgression is used to brand not only the sexual outsider Prince Guido Bardi, but also the socially sacrificed parents of *Lady Windermere's Fan* and *A Woman of No Importance*.

The social sacrifice of the sexually transgressive parents in *Lady Windermere's Fan* and *A Woman of No Importance* both conform to the pattern established by the blood sacrifice in Wilde's 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime', being achieved to facilitate a contented heterosexual union sustained by ignorance of the sacrifice. The marital union of the Windermers at the conclusion of *Lady Windermere's Fan* is portrayed as conditional on ignorance; Lord Windermere commands Lady Windermere to separate from her promiscuous mother, based on his ignorance of the true events in Darlington's rooms,<sup>74</sup> while Lady Windermere's obedience is based on her own ignorance of Mrs. Erlynne's being her mother; both ignorances are maintained by the willing self-sacrifice of Mrs. Erlynne herself, as necessary for the preservation of the Windermers' marital

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72 "barking both his knees severely, and bruising the knuckles of his right hand" *CI*, p. 241

73 *CI*, p. 686

74 "you are never to see her again" Act 4, *CI*, p 362

happiness. Although her betrothal to Lord Augustus softens Mrs. Erlynne's fate, preserving the light tone of the play, one of the conditions of the marriage is "that we live entirely out of England", which emphasises the sacrifice of parental relationship as absolute.<sup>75</sup>

A similar sacrifice of the parent is compelled in *A Woman of No Importance*, where Gerald's marriage to Hester is made conditional on his total rejection of his promiscuous father, through Hester's identification of herself with Gerald's abandoned mother, Mrs. Arbuthnot: "you cannot love me at all unless you love her also [...] In her all womanhood is martyred".<sup>76</sup> Gerald's mother, Mrs. Arbuthnot, rejects the parental overtures of Illingworth without informing their son, offering Hester to Gerald as an explicit substitute for his father: "I cannot give you a father, but I have brought you a wife".<sup>77</sup> Total rejection of the transgressor, sustained by Gerald's ignorance of Lord Illingworth's parental overtures, is maintained as the basis of the contented union of Gerald and Hester, with Mrs. Arbuthnot finally dismissing the transgressive father as "a man of no importance".<sup>78</sup>

This motif of rejecting transgressors and outsiders, to maintain marital contentment on a foundation of ignorance, may be read in two ways. Socially, the marital pair may be read as representatives of the culture of compulsory heterosexuality, to whom sexual outsiders must be sacrificed, while the dominant culture maintains its ignorance of the suffering of those outsiders by pressuring their silence. Psychologically, the motif may be read as a portrait of dissociation, in which the sacrificed transgressor represents the repressed aspect of self, while the contented marital pair represent the ego, which excludes the dissociated aspect from its conscious

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75 Act 4, *CI* p. 369

76 Act 4, *CI* p. 413

77 Act 4, *CI* p. 413

78 Act 4, *CI* p. 419

self-image. A consequence of dissociation in the psyche is the development of psychological conflict, experienced as a loss of infantile security, which may be read as reflected in both authors' choice of an innocent boy-child to represent the sacrifice, alongside sexual transgressor figures and monstrous outsiders.

#### 9.4 Compelled Marriage and Dictated Desire

Involuntary and externally dictated action is suggested in 'The Burden of Itys' to be the outcome of the blood sacrifices of Arcady and conquest by Rome and Sun. The poem concludes with the poet telling the bird that the moon, on whose behalf the bird is singing:

does not heed thee, wherefore should she heed, / She knows Endymion is not far  
away; / 'Tis I, 'tis I, whose soul is as the reed / Which has no message of its own to  
play, / So pipes another's bidding, it is I, / Drifting with every wind on the wide sea  
of misery.<sup>79</sup>

The Arcadian moon, for which the nightingale is "advocate", is nevertheless unable to "heed" the pained song of the bird, as the moon experiences love with her consort Endymion, comparable to the heterosexually active student who cannot comprehend the nightingale in 'The Nightingale and the Rose'. It is the poet, rather, who declares his affinity with the raped and silenced Philomel, through the silencing of the Arcadian reed of his soul, which grants it "no message of its own to play". The ideal of love, as the only proper music of the reed, is suggested in Wilde's *The Duchess of Padua*: "without love / Life is as silent as the common reeds [...] Yet out of these / The

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79 *CI* p. 736

singer, who is love, will make a pipe / And from them he draws music".<sup>80</sup> Echoing the rootless Chichikov of Gogol's *Dead Souls*, who views himself as "like some kind of vessel amidst ferocious waves",<sup>81</sup> Wilde's poet describes himself adrift on "the wide sea of misery" as a result of his compelled renunciation of love and brutal sacrifice of homoerotic innocence. This motif may be connected to a wider theme, in the work of both authors, of externally dictated desire, involuntary action and compelled marriage, analysis of which forms the subject of this section.

To be forced to defensively adopt the same culture that is perceived as violent oppressor, to burn ships and assimilate to Rome, is to induce a sharp internal discordance between public and private self, a state of involuntary irony in which the individual's actions are detached from their volition. This separation of action from intention, which Wilde represents in 'The Burden of Itys' as the outcome of blood sacrifices, is conventional to the genres of farce and possession horror, both of which are employed by both authors. Since severe dissociation is productive of psychological suffering, while farce is traditionally regarded as a trivial and amusing genre, the harnessing of the poetics of farce into a direct expression of the psychological state of dissociation may explain both authors' repeated theme of suffering intensely to the sound of universal laughter, discussed in **Chapter Five**.

A primary agent of compelled marriage and dictated desire for both authors is the intimidating matriarch. In *The Importance of Being Earnest*, marriage is dictated by Lady Bracknell's declaration: "when you do become engaged to someone, I, or your father, should his health permit him, will inform you of the fact".<sup>82</sup> The Duck in Wilde's

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80 *CI* p. 628

81 "как барка какая нибудь среди свирепых волн" p. 46, see also "he compared his life to a vessel among the seas" ("уподобил жизнь свою судну посреди морей") p. 350, "My life may be compared to a vessel among the waves" ("Жизнь мою можно уподобить судну среди волн") p. 364 (all *SS* 5)

82 *CI*, p. 498



'The Devoted Friend' whose "mother's feelings" mean she "can never look at a confirmed bachelor without the tears coming into my eyes",<sup>83</sup> forces her brood into unnatural performance by threatening that they will "never be in the best society unless you can stand on your heads".<sup>84</sup> In *Lady Windermere's Fan*, the character of Lady Agatha has no dialogue other than a repeated "yes, mamma", while her tastes are completely externally dictated by her controlling mother. Lady Agatha's total absence of volition or opinion is no obstacle to acquiring a suitor "attracted to dear Agatha's clever talk",<sup>85</sup> and the social approbation of Mrs. Erlynne as "just the type of girl I like!"<sup>86</sup> The internal voiding of both men and women, and their full compliance with matriarchal dictates, is thus shown by Wilde to be a precondition of their social and sexual success.

*An Ideal Husband* offers marriage itself as the dandy Lord Goring's sacrifice, most clearly in the narrowly averted necessity of sacrificing himself in marriage to Mrs. Chevelly for the sake of maintaining the contented marital union of the Chilterns. As in the blood sacrifice narrative of 'Lord Arthur Savile's Crime', the marital contentment of the Chilterns must be founded on the maintained ignorance of Lady Chiltern, for which Goring is to be socially sacrificed. Goring is also pressured to wed by his father, the *pater familias* Lord Caversham, as a sacrifice necessary to maintain the contentment of his parents' union: "I make your mother's life miserable on your account. You are heartless, sir, quite heartless".<sup>87</sup> The essential misery of the marital state is indicated by Lord Caversham's "it is your duty to get married. You can't be always living for pleasure".<sup>88</sup> The play's depiction of society's widespread preoccupation with compelling

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83 *CI*, p. 182

84 *CI*, p. 174

85 *CI*, p. 334

86 *CI*, p. 348

87 Act 3, *CI* p. 461

88 *CI*, p. 460

the marriage of Goring is humorously commented on by Goring himself: "self-sacrifice is a thing that should be put down by law. It is so demoralising to the people for whom one sacrifices oneself".<sup>89</sup> If the various heterosexual unions, for whose happiness bystanders must be bloodily or socially sacrificed, are understood as representative of the dominant order of compulsory heterosexuality, then Goring's comment can be read as an indictment of its fundamental immorality.

In Nikolai Gogol's 'Ivan Fedorovich Shponka and his Auntie', the matriarchal Vasilisa Kashporovna dictates the marriage of her nephew Ivan Shponka, in the belief that the 38-year-old is "still a completely young child, he knows nothing!"<sup>90</sup> In his central dream, Shponka is reduced to a bell while his aunt becomes the bell-tower, portraying Ivan as a musical instrument whose voice is helplessly drawn out at the bidding of others, similar to Wilde's repeated motif of the reed that pipes another's bidding. At a previous dinner scene, Shponka's neighbour Ivan Ivanovich boasted "how fat the geese are that run around his yard"<sup>91</sup> and that his turkeys are "even repulsive to look at when they walk in my yard, they're so fat!",<sup>92</sup> demanding social approval for the visceral repulsiveness of his poultry. This concept, of the boasting social display of viscerally repulsive livestock, is implicitly transferred to marriage within Shponka's central dream sequence, when he finds himself encircled by goose-faced wives:

it's strange to him; he doesn't know how to approach her, what to say to her, and notices that she has a goose's face. Inadvertently, he turns aside and sees another wife, also with a goose face. He turns in another direction – a third wife is standing. Behind – yet another wife. At that he is gripped by sorrow.<sup>93</sup>

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89 *СИ* p. 469

90 *'ще зовсім молода дитина, нічого не знає!'* *SS I*, p. 362

91 "как жирны те гуси, которые бегают у него по двору" *SS I*, p. 357

92 "даже противно смотреть когда ходят у меня по двору, так жирны!" *SS I*, p. 354

93 "Ему странно; он не знает, как подойти к ней, что говорить с нею, и замечает что у нее гусиное

Involuntary action characterizes the dissolution of comradeship in 'A Tale of How Ivan Ivanovich Quarrelled with Ivan Nikiforovich'. The comradeship's collapse is dictated by the overbearing, matriarchal Agafia Fedoseevna;<sup>94</sup> Ivan Ivanovich's lack of volition in the feud is emphasized as he is farcically accused of plotting the uncontrollable actions of a brown pig, which combines with conflict over a goose-house, and the fatal insult of "goose!", to cement the rift.<sup>95</sup> The final, abortive attempt to reunite the comrades is a hyperbolic symphony of involuntary action and externally dictated desire, as the mayor and "squinting Ivan Ivanovich", while pushing Ivan Nikiforovich and "our Ivan Ivanovich" involuntarily together, are involuntarily hindered by the mayor's injured leg and "squinting Ivan Ivanovich's" lack of depth perception. Involuntary action is thus associated by Gogol with both Ivan Shponka's dictated marriage and the dissolution of the two Ivans' comradeship.

Gogol's satire *Marriage* positions Podkolesin's act of marriage as a sacrifice, in this case to maintain Podkolesin's comradeship with Kochkarev, which is his primary emotional attachment in the play. Their comradeship is made conditional on marriage when Podkolesin's refusal prompts Kochkarev's melodramatic and conventionally romantic oath: "now between us everything is over, and don't show yourself to my eyes again!"<sup>96</sup> The major comic effect of the play lies in its displacement of all passionate,

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лицо. Нечаянно поворачивается он в сторону и видит другую жену, тоже с гусиным лицом. Поворачивается в другую сторону – стоит третья жена. Назад – еще одна жена. Тут его берет тоска" SS I, p. 364

94 "шушукала проклятая баба и сделала то, что Иван Никифорович и слышать не хотел об Иване Ивановиче" ("the damned woman whispered and made it so that Ivan Nikiforovich didn't want to even hear of Ivan Ivanovich") SS 2, p. 629

95 Karlinsky, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*, pp. 72 – 73. Karlinsky proposes, with the Freudian Yermakov, that pigs, geese and rifles function in the tale as sexual symbols to portray the quarreling of the men as motivated by unspeakable sexual potential between them, using a reading of the role of pigs in 'Sorochinsky Market', 'A Tale of How Ivan Ivanovich Quarrelled with Ivan Nikiforovich' and 'Vii' to assert that pigs "are associated with both sexuality and violence in Gogol's mind" (p. 73)

96 "Вот клянусь тебе, что теперь между нами все кончилось, и на глаза мне больше не показывайся!" SS 4, p. 473

romantic dialogue onto the matchmaking Kochkarev in place of the prospective groom Podkolesin, culminating in Gogol's displacement of the central proposal scene onto the two men, with Kochkarev kneeling before Podkolesin and begging him to marry (a woman) using traditionally romantic epithets:

Ivan Kuzmich! Honey, sweetie! Now, do you want me to get on my knees in front of you? [...] Now there, I'm even on my knees! Now, you see yourself, I'm begging you. I won't forget the favour for a century, don't be stubborn, darling!<sup>97</sup>

Podkolesin's actual proposal to the intended bride, Agafia, is spoken by Kochkarev from behind Podkolesin's back, with Podkolesin compelled to take her hand by Kochkarev's threatening him with his fist. As with the *pater familias* Lord Caversham's implying the incompatibility of marriage and pleasure, Kochkarev's pressuring of Podkolesin into matrimony is not connected to any expectation of his friend's happiness. He reproaches the matchmaker of his own marriage: "what devil did you marry me to? [...] Could I not have done without her?"<sup>98</sup> while openly resenting Podkolesin's contentment as bachelor: "it's all water off a goose's back to him, that's what's unbearable [...] I won't let him slip away!"<sup>99</sup> Just as Kochkarev's marital misery prompts him to justify his own sacrifice by trying to enforce it upon his friend, so the reluctant Podkolesin, after consenting to marry, becomes the hyperbolic voice of maximal compulsory heterosexuality, declaiming, "if I were the sovereign somewhere, I would give an order to marry to everyone, to absolutely everyone, so that in my

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97 "Иван Кузмич! Лапушка, милочка! Ну хочешь ли, я стану на колени перед тобой? [...] Ну вот я и на коленах! Ну, видишь сам, прошу тебя. Век не забуду твоей услуги, не упрямься душенька!" SS 4, p. 473

98 "на кой черт ты меня женила? [...] Без нее-то разве я не мог обойтись?" SS 4, p. 422

99 "с него все это так, как с гуся вода, вот что нестерпимо! [...] Экое противное создание!" SS 4, p. 474

kingdom there would not be a single person single!"<sup>100</sup> before himself leaping out of a window to escape his marital sacrifice. Useful here is Joseph Valente's concept of the 19th-century Irish as "at once agents and objects, participant-victims as it were."<sup>101</sup> Both Kochkarev and Podkolesin express the psychology of the participant-victim on the sexual level who, following their own capitulation to an oppressive order, become that order's most zealous enforcers. Externally dictated desire and farcically compelled action are consistent features of both authors' portrayals of courtship and marriage, frequently connected to the motif of the compelled sacrifice of an innocent bystander in order to maintain heterosexual union or atone for the sins of the *pater familias*.

Reviewing the bystanders who are so sacrificed in the works of Gogol and Wilde, it is possible to categorize them broadly as either emphatically innocent children (Wilde's Itys and Gogol's Ivas or undine), stigmatized sexual transgressors (Wilde's Prince Guido Bardi, Mrs. Erlynne and Lord Illingworth, and Gogol's poor devil) or confirmed bachelors (Wilde's Lord Goring and Gogol's Podkolesin). The equivalence that Wilde establishes in 'The Burden of Itys' between the sacrifice of the innocent Itys and that of the sexualized Hyacinth and Adonis, allows Wilde's innocents and transgressors to be read as variant aspects of a single sacrifice, suggesting infantile security as the internal perception of the Arcadian state, while adding stigmatized transgression as an external perception of the same. The sacrifice of the confirmed bachelor into marriage, to maintain the marital unions or justify the marital misery of others, is presented in a comic context, and can therefore be perceived as trivial by its intended audience. However, if this trope is read within the wider pattern of cannibalized innocents and blood sacrifice by which marital union is elsewhere sustained, then the marital sacrifice of the confirmed bachelor becomes associated by

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100 "Если бы я был где-нибудь государь, я бы дал повеление жениться всем, решительно всем, чтобы у меня в государстве не было ни одного холостого человека!" SS 4, p. 479

101 Valente, *Dracula's Crypt*, p. 3

its own authors with intense torture.

To summarise: the writing of both Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde displays a recurrent preoccupation with the involuntary silencing of sexuality, evoking effaced sexual themes through a personally legible, multivalent symbolic system. Gogol's idiosyncratic symbolic system, from banal items such as coats, shoes, geese and noses, is highly comparable as dissociation narrative with the mythological symbolic system of Oscar Wilde. The work of both authors is likewise characterised by a recurrent theme of heterosexual marriage being achieved through sacrifice of an outsider, variously embodied as innocent victim, stigmatized transgressor or confirmed bachelor, with the sacrifice itself conceived as social exclusion, brutal cannibalization or forced marriage. The contentment of heterosexual marriage is portrayed as conditional on one or both participants' maintained ignorance of the bystander sacrifice on which their marriage is founded. In 'The Burden of Itys', the poet's reluctant assimilation into Roman society and surrender to the Sun leads him to portray himself as an internally voided instrument of external compulsion, a motif recurrent in the fiction of both authors. Heterosexual desire is consistently represented as both externally dictated and intrinsic to social success. Gogol's use of a "frock-coat", to represent both an imposed ethnic identity and an imposed wife, establishes mental equivalence between the two concepts, while Wilde's association of the Roman Empire with both English imperialism and the compulsory heterosexuality of the *pater familias*, constitutes a similar mental equivalence, potentially enabling both authors to process sexual dissociation and ethnic dissociation through the same symbolic narrative.

## Chapter 10 -'Charmides': Realization of the Shadow

'Realization of the Shadow' is the Jungian term for the psychological crisis that results when the ego confronts the shadow, an imaginary antagonist formed from dissociated aspects of self. In the words of Jung, it is "an ethical problem of the first magnitude, the urgency of which is felt only by people who find themselves faced with the need to assimilate the unconscious and integrate their personalities."<sup>1</sup> The intense cognitive threat of the shadow is created by its mingled attraction and repulsion. On one hand, the shadow carries all the emotional pain or taboo which motivated its repression in the first place, provoking fear and repulsion in the ego, with a compulsion to disown, punish and exclude the shadow as monstrous. On the other hand, the striving for unity of self and infantile security, evoked by the ego's regressive longing for Lost Paradise, and sacrificed through the psyche's dissociation of personality, can only be restored by accepting and integrating the shadow into the ego's self-image, killing the ego to resurrect it as a new, individuated self.

In this chapter, Oscar Wilde's 1881 narrative poem 'Charmides', his 1893 symbolist play *Salomé*, first performed in 1896 in Paris, and his fable 'The Fisherman and His Soul', and Nikolai Gogol's apocalyptic horrors 'Terrible Vengeance', 'Vii' and 'Portrait', are analysed as archetypal narratives of Realization of the Shadow. To achieve this, the psychological roles of their characters must be defined. Characters are identified with the repressed shadow when characterized as buried, as submerged or as transgressive manifestations of either author's previously established Lost Paradise symbolism. The attributes of burial or submergence are associated with the psychological shadow through the symbolic association of vision and consciousness,

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1 Jung, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, p. 208

which codes objects removed from visibility as symbols of the repressed contents of the psyche. The concept that the originally positive attributes of each author's Lost Paradise would re-emerge as a shadow figure in demonic or threatening form, is predicted by Carl Jung: “even tendencies that might in some circumstances be able to exert a beneficial influence are transformed into demons when they are repressed”.<sup>2</sup> In other words, Lost Paradise becomes transgressive through the very fact of its repression. Characters are identified with persona when aligned with the dominant society's religious, social or sexual values, based on Carl Jung's concept of the persona as “a composite of the individual's behaviour and of the role attributed to him by the public”.<sup>3</sup> Each of the narratives under study dramatizes the cataclysmic or apocalyptic clash of a figure or figures representative of the dominant society or religion against a figure or figures representative of the submerged, subterranean or of demonic incarnation of previously established Lost Paradise, diagnosing the works in question as archetypal narratives of Realization of the Shadow.

The authors' own ego identification is estimated by their choice of protagonist, a reading suggested by Carl Jung.<sup>4</sup> Oscar Wilde's cataclysmic dramas of Realization of the Shadow, 'Charmides' and *Salomé*, portray the sexual rebellion of a shadow protagonist, associated with Arcady or Sodom, in unrequited love with a persona antagonist representing the dominant values of society and religion. By contrast, Nikolai Gogol's apocalyptic horrors of Realization of the Shadow, 'Terrible Vengeance' and 'Vii', portray pious Ruthenian persona protagonists, besieged by the sexualized threat of monstrous shadow antagonists, invested with distorted attributes of his Oriental and Cossack Lost Paradise and associated with the subterranean. Although

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2 Jung, *Man and his Symbols*, p. 93

3 Jung, *The Symbolic Life*, p. 579

4 “the essential function of the heroic myth is the development of the individual's ego-consciousness”, Jung, *Man and his Symbols*, p. 112



these divergent choices of protagonist might suggest Wilde's greater ego identification with his shadow, and Nikolai Gogol's greater ego identification with his persona, the apocalyptic terms in which both authors portray the essential conflict between the suppressive persona and the transgressive shadow are nevertheless highly comparable, and this comparison forms the subject of this chapter.

**Section 10.1** analyzes Oscar Wilde's third epic poem in his 1881 collection, 'Charmides', as an archetypal narrative of Realization of the Shadow, which brings the conflict established in 'The Burden of Itys' to a climactic confrontation. **Section 10.2** examines the theme of apocalyptic threat and cosmic retribution, as characteristic of both Gogol and Wilde's narratives of Realization of the Shadow. **Section 10.3** examines the ethnic coding of the shadow figure, as a potential use of ethnic conflict as displaced expression of psychological conflict. **Section 10.4** examines the repeated theme of the inseparability of persona and shadow across the narratives of both authors. **Section 10.5** compares the motif of the irreconcilable division of soul and body. **Section 10.6** examines the motif of female sexual aggressors under male controllers, while considering its potential as a displaced expression of homoeroticism. **Section 10.7** examines the recurrent theme of necrophilia in the work of both authors and its interpretation, in the context of their wider concepts of romantic reciprocity, before reviewing necrophilic theme as alleged evidence for their misogyny. The conclusion of the chapter defines the core characteristics of the crisis of identity symbolically incarnated as Realization of the Shadow in the writing of both authors, as critical psychological motivation for the individuation narratives assessed in **Chapter Eleven**.

### **10.1 'Charmides' as Archetypal Narrative of Realization of the Shadow**

The centrepiece of Wilde's poetic cycle, 'Charmides', abandons the theme of the

Arcadian transformation of modernity in favour of a sustained narrative poem of sexual transgression and divine retribution, located entirely within the Lost Paradise of Ancient Greece. Its protagonist, the "Grecian lad"<sup>5</sup> Charmides, is rhetorically associated with Arcady by his being likened to Dionysos, Hylas and Narcissus,<sup>6</sup> while being named after the physically alluring boy that Socrates encounters in a wrestling school in the Platonic dialogue 'Charmides', a philosophical dispute on the meaning of temperance.<sup>7</sup> As such, the choice of Charmides as hero establishes sexual temptation, and the proper boundaries of temperance, as the primary thematic concerns of the poem. Wilde's Charmides is depicted in unrequited love with the goddess Athena, who incarnates the values of *civis*, *polis* and chastity in her aspect as virgin patroness of the city of Athens, aligning her thereby with the values of the persona in personification of *polis*. By imagining the ideological conflict between the Arcadian and the *polis* as unrequited love, Wilde allows the transgressive shadow's rebellion against the persona to be sexual in nature, while emphasizing that the hostility of the *polis*, as incarnated in Athena Polias,<sup>8</sup> is not reciprocated by a vulnerable Arcadian Shadow who is doomed to desire union with his destroyer. By choosing the female Athena to represent tyrant *polis*, in preference to the male sun god Apollo whose tyranny dominated 'The Burden of Itys', formal heterosexuality is preserved within the narrative's necrophilic transgressions.

Charmides expresses his love through sexual molestation of the statue of Athena, the statue perhaps suggestive of persona as a dead mental image of *polis*, a sexual transgression attended by sinister omens and disturbance in nature, before the vengeful goddess herself rises from the sea and lures the youth to his drowning death.

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5 *CI*, p. 740

6 *CI*, p. 745

7 Cancik & Schneider ed., *Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike* vol. 2, p. 1106

8 Cancik & Schneider ed., *Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike* vol. 2, p. 162

Washed ashore, the youth's corpse is subjected to necrophilic sexual molestation by an infatuated Dryad, herself killed by the virgin goddess Artemis (Dian) for the crime of sexuality. The characterization of the nightingale as "light-winged Dryad of the trees" in John Keats' 'Ode to a Nightingale' may have influenced Wilde's choice of the figure of the Dryad as lover of Charmides,<sup>9</sup> rendering the Dryad's mourning for the sacrificed Charmides equivalent to Philomel the Nightingale's mourning for the sacrificed Itys, as symbols of the crucified ego's desire for union with the dissociated shadow. In Wilde's poem, the mercy of the love goddess Aphrodite allows Charmides and the Dryad to consummate their reciprocal love in Hades, where the poet self-consciously silences his account, suggesting Hades as a protected space for mutual love, outside the domain of the persona and of the representable, signifying full submergence of the ego into identification with the shadow.

As a narrative of sexual transgression and Realization of the Shadow, 'Charmides' establishes themes that resonate in many of Wilde's later compositions, particularly the rhetoric of celestial portent and evil omen that accompanies the incestuous and necrophilic transgressions of *Salomé*, the extended seashore depiction of necrophilic embrace of a corpse and divinely-mandated drowning which concludes 'The Fisherman and His Soul', and the confrontation between pagan lust and divine chastity which drives the plots of *Salomé* and *La Sainte Courtisane*. Its cataclysmic portrayal of sexual transgression, as productive of elemental upheaval and confrontation with divine or satanic forces, is paralleled by Nikolai Gogol's 'Vii' and 'Terrible Vengeance'. Analysis of this theme of apocalyptic threat and cosmic retribution in the work of both authors occupies the next section of this chapter.

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9 KEATS, John, 'Ode to a Nightingale', <http://poetryfoundation.org/poems/44479/ode-to-a-nightingale>  
Accessed 16/03/2019

## 10.2 Apocalyptic Threat and Cosmic Retribution

Cosmic upheaval and inexorable retribution are the punishment for sexual transgression in each author's narratives of Realization of the Shadow, whose protagonists are universally menaced by a destruction in which nature and cosmos participate. This theme may be read theologically, as a reflection of the severity of religious prohibition against sexual transgression. Alternatively, it may be read psychologically, as an indicator of the overwhelming power of the psychological forces unleashed by Realization of the Shadow, with the existential threat that they pose to the ego's identity. Such amplification of psychic energy is predicted by Jung: "repression has typical consequences: the energy-charge of the repressed contents adds itself, in some measure, to that of the repressing factor, whose effectiveness is increased accordingly".<sup>10</sup> The amplification of the repressing factor, or persona, into a universal antagonism toward the shadow, may be seen as a symbolic expression of this escalating energy-charge.

For Wilde, it is the moon, established as emblem of Arcady and lover of Endymion in 'The Garden of Eros', that becomes the primary portent of doom. In 'Charmides', the moon is "girdled with a crystal rim, / The sign which shipmen say is ominous / Of wrath in heaven",<sup>11</sup> a wrath which is then manifested by the rising of the virgin goddess, Athena Parthenos, to smite Charmides, as well as by the parallel smiting of the transgressive Dryad by the virgin goddess Artemis. *Salomé* offers the moon, which is rhetorically equated with the heroine Salomé, as both "seeking a dead thing"<sup>12</sup> and "like a mad woman, a mad woman who is seeking everywhere for lovers",<sup>13</sup> equating the heroine's quest for lovers with a quest for the dead, before

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10 Jung, *The Structure And Dynamics Of The Psyche*, p. 219

11 *CI*, p. 744

12 *CI*, p. 546

13 *CI*, p. 547

culminating in description of a blood-red moon as an evil portent, suggesting the demonic incarnation of Wilde's Lost Paradise symbolism, as predicted by Jung. The cosmic import of the play's transgressions is confirmed by characters repeatedly hearing the ominous beating of the wings of the angel of death, inexorable threat of divine retribution. In Wilde's 'The Fisherman and his Soul', it is Satan himself who separates the Fisherman from his Soul, establishing the personal intervention of divine or satanic forces as agents of destruction in all three narratives.

In Gogol's 'Vii', distant howls of wolves portentously precede supernatural episodes, suggesting the complicity of nature with the story's transgressive monsters, before the wolves finally herald the protagonist's doom in the arrival of the grotesque gnome king, Vii, whose gaze the protagonist is inexorably drawn to meet. In 'Terrible Vengeance', the entire landscape of Ukraine distorts to entrap the transgressive sorcerer, forcing him inexorably toward the avenging immortal rider who was betrayed by his ancestor, with trees becoming animated against him within a universal antagonism of nature, where even his horse laughs in his face at his attempts to stop his progress. God Himself is revealed to be the ultimate instrument of the immortal rider's vengeance, who has preordained that the sorcerer become "such a villain as has never yet been on earth",<sup>14</sup> revealing the transgressive villain as instead the helplessly doomed victim of cosmic predestination and divine retribution. The original villain who set the vengeance in motion is revealed to be a grotesquely distorted, subterranean monster born of betrayed Cossack comradeship, suggesting him as a demonic incarnation of Gogol's Cossack Lost Paradise, whose gigantic size leads him to shake the entire earth in his ominous struggles to rise.

Comparing the narratives of Gogol and Wilde reveals the common theme that

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14 "такой злодей, какого еще и не бывало на свете" *SS I*, p. 331

sexual transgression is inevitable, yet arouses the antagonism of the cosmos as well as fatal divine retribution, as maximal, hyperbolic expression of transgression anxiety. The apocalyptic terms in which the inevitable confrontation with the shadow is envisioned may reflect the intensity of its cognitive threat to destroy the ego. In Jungian terms, this represents “a negative inflation – i.e. a daemonic claim to power on the part of the unconscious which makes it all the more formidable.”<sup>15</sup>

The monstrous unconscious, whether as Wilde's blood-red Moon whose benign aspect he dedicated himself to the love of as “young Endymion”, or Gogol's grotesquely distorted subterranean monster born of betrayed Cossack comradeship, becomes cataclysmically powerful as well as menacing by negative inflation, through the fact of its repression. Following Jung's model, a presumption of severe dissociation on the part of both authors would thus motivate and explain their shared reliance on apocalyptic imagery for the expression of sexual transgression, as well as their shared investment of the demonic antagonist with attributes elsewhere associated by each with Lost Paradise.

### **10.3 The Ethnic Coding of Psychological Conflict**

Simon Karlinsky claims of the incestuous Islamo-Polish sorcerer, the shadow antagonist of 'Terrible Vengeance', that "it is indicative of Gogol's persistently xenophobic attitude that he refuses to differentiate in this story between Moslem Turks and the Catholic Poles".<sup>16</sup> Comparison with Oscar Wilde, in his use of the ethnic assimilation of Trojans by Romans as a symbol within his psychological narrative, might rather suggest Gogol's interchangeable use of the Oriental and Polish as ethnic stigma to mark the psychological attributes of shadow. This reading is further suggested

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15 Jung, *Aion: Researches Into The Phenomenology Of The Self*, p. 62

16 Karlinsky, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*, p. 42

by writings of Gogol which code both the Polish and the Asiatic as internal aspects of the divided nature of the Cossack, rather than as external threat.

The interchangeability of sexual and ethnic stigma is suggested by *Taras Bulba's* association of Andrii's defection to the Poles with his sexual transgression of loving a woman, and intensified in 'Terrible Vengeance' into a rhetorical association of the Poles with Sodom, by a description of promiscuous (heterosexual) Polish carousing as "a general Sodom".<sup>17</sup> Miroslav Popovich highlights the fact that Ostap and Andrii, the two sons of Taras Bulba, were alternate names for Gogol's most celebrated Cossack ancestor, who was simultaneously a Cossack headman and a Polish noble: "the noble 'of the Polish nation' Andrii Gogol and the Cossack headman Ostap Hohol were one and the same. And the author of 'Taras Bulba' knew that."<sup>18</sup> Separating a single Cossack ancestor into an unambiguously alien Polish aspect and an unambiguously assimilated Ruthenian aspect could allow Gogol to externalize and thus dramatize the Cossack's internal psychological conflict, externalizing it as the conflict between two brothers. In this conflict, the Polish aspect of Gogol's ancestor, Polish nobleman Andrii, difficult to integrate into Ukrainian self-image and thus potentially analogous to psychological shadow, becomes converted into a symbol of sexual transgression, provoking Andrii's exile from the Sech. The Ruthenian aspect of Gogol's ancestor, Cossack headman Ostap, the focus of Ukrainian nationalist patriotism and self-identification, and thus potentially analogous to the ego as conscious self-image, is nobly martyred for the Sech in *Taras Bulba*. M. C. Uvarov has pointed to biographical evidence of Gogol's friendship with the Polish national poet Adam Mickiewicz, and recorded statements in favour of Catholicism, to challenge assumptions of his anti-Polish bias, as has Edyta

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17 "общий содом" *SS I*, p. 310

18 "Так чи інакше "польської нації" шляхтич Андрій Гоголь і козацький ватажок Остап Гоголь - одна і та ж особа. І автор "Тараса Бульби" про це знав" Popovich, *Mykola Hohol*, p. 12

Bojanowska,<sup>19</sup> giving grounds to view *Taras Bulba's* conflict of Cossack and Pole as psychologically symbolic, rather than primarily xenophobic.

The conflict between the Islamic/Asiatic and the Ruthenian has been similarly imagined by Gogol as an internal psychological conflict within the character of the Cossack himself. In his nonfiction essay 'A View on the Formation of Little Russia', Gogol describes the nature of Cossacks:

and so were formed a people, belonging to Europe by faith and place of habitation, but yet by mode of life, customs and costume completely Asiatic - a people, in which two opposing parts of the world so strangely collided, two divergent elements, European caution and Asiatic carelessness<sup>20</sup>

Gogol's image, of a strange collision within the Cossack of opposing elements, suggests a psychological conflict between disinhibited "carelessness", as core attribute of an Oriental Shadow, and suppressive "caution", as core attribute of a European Persona. The sorcerer of 'Terrible Vengeance' is presented as a Cossack, father to the normative Ukrainian heroine, but coded as transgressive outcast through the ethnic stigma of his Islamic and Polish features. The geographically puzzling conflation of the Islamic and Polish, then, does not simply represent a xenophobic carelessness on Gogol's part as Karlinsky suggests, but may be viewed as a logical outcome of Gogol's use of the Islamic and the Polish as ethnic coding for the Cossack's own psychological shadow. Since the sorcerer is a maximally transgressive figure, "such a villain as has

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19 Uvarov, M. C., *Binarnyi arkhetyip*. p. 441, Bojanowska, *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism*, pp. 265-266

20 "и вот составилась народ, по вере и месту жительства принадлежавший Европе, но между тем по образу жизни, обычаям, костюму совершенно азиатский - народ, в котором так странно столкнулись две противоположные части света, две разнохарактерные стихии: европейская осторожность и азиатская беспечность" SS 7, p. 207



never yet been on earth",<sup>21</sup> it follows, symbolically if not logically, that he must be Islamo-Polish.

The Islamic Orient, conceived as an idyllic Lost Paradise in Scene IV of *Hanz Küchelgarten*, is rendered destructively sinister in its embodiment by seductive transgressors such as 'Portrait's Petromikhali or the Persian opium dealer of 'Nevsky Prospekt'. In Gogol's original 1835 version of 'Portrait', the relationship between the lovingly corrupting Petromikhali, with his "vivid imprint of a Southern physiognomy",<sup>22</sup> and the seduced Ruthenian Chertkov, in its association with inexorable fatality, apocalypse and the Antichrist, bears comparison to Gogol's other apocalyptic horrors, 'Terrible Vengeance' and 'Vii'. Taken collectively, their predominant themes are the vulnerable Ruthenian youth, the fascinating Oriental Shadow and fatal sexual transgression, though all three can never be united in a single narrative under compulsory heterosexuality. If the vulnerable Ruthenian youth and the Oriental Shadow are united, as in 'Portrait', the temptation must be financial and artistic rather than sexual. If the Oriental Shadow threatens fatal sexual transgression, as in 'Terrible Vengeance', it must be an incestuous threat to Gogol's only female protagonist. If the vulnerable Ruthenian youth is threatened with fatal sexual transgression, as in 'Vii', it must be the necrophilic threat of a female witch. The conclusion, that Gogol repeatedly utilizes his Oriental Lost Paradise, for which his hero Hanz expressed regressive longing, as the ethnic marker of his demonic shadow figures, might seem counterintuitive but exactly fits Carl Jung's model for the negative inflation of the repressed unconscious.

Gogol's 'Terrible Vengeance' begins with a clear identification with the perspective of the normative, pious Cossack family as protagonists, threatened and

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21 "такой злодей, какого еще и не бывало на свете", *SS I*, p. 331

22 "яркий отпечаток южной физиогномии" *SS 7*, p.353

rendered powerless by the enchantments of the monstrous Islamo-Polish-Cossack sorcerer-father as inexorable shadow antagonist. However, after the shadow's murder of the Cossack family, a sudden reversal reveals that the apparently powerful and inexorable shadow is himself the helpless victim of a divine curse to become the world's greatest villain, being drawn by inexorable destiny to a confrontation with the dark rider embodying divine retribution. As the helplessness of the sorcerer-father is revealed, he is transformed into a focus of antiheroic empathy, resembling Wilde's positioning of Charmides or Salomé as shadow protagonists. If Wilde's stable ego identification with the shadow is indicated by its consistent positioning as protagonist, Gogol may be claimed to exhibit a flexible ego identification in 'Terrible Vengeance', which shifts between the socially endorsed persona and the socially stigmatized shadow, while dramatizing their clash as the unrequited love of the Oriental Shadow for the Ruthenian persona, comparable to Wilde's concept of the unrequited love of Charmides for Athena.

The ultimate shadow of 'Terrible Vengeance' is Petro, a gigantic, grotesquely distorted and buried monster who eternally cannibalizes himself, and whose shaking of the earth in his struggles to rise serve as ominous premonition of his eventual cataclysmic return. Petro is revealed to have been a Cossack once, suggesting him as an incarnation of Cossack Lost Paradise rendered grotesque by its repression, in the same way that Gogol's other demonic shadows can be read as corrupted embodiments of Oriental Lost Paradise. Just as the many binaries established in Wilde's poetry – Apollo and Marsyas, Apollo and Hyacinth, Athena and Charmides, King Tereus and Philomel/Itys, Roman and Trojan, Artemis and Dryad – are confirmed by their interchangeable use to be variant mythological symbols of a single archetypal conflict between persona and shadow, so the various binaries established by Gogol – Cossack

and Pole, Ruthenian and Islamic, Holy Cossack and Buried Cossack – resolve themselves into variant topographic symbols of the same archetypal conflict of persona and shadow.

#### **10.4 Inseparable Connection of Persona and Shadow**

The origin story of Petro and Ivan is narrated at the conclusion of 'Terrible Vengeance', revealing that all the horror and sexual transgression of Gogol's narrative is a divine curse, inflicted on multiple generations, in terrible vengeance for the betrayal of a holy bond of Cossack comradeship. The reanimated corpses of all the Islamo-Polish sorcerer's ancestors are doomed to suffer torment from his every sin, before cannibalizing their descendants forever in a deep abyss. In light of both authors' use of the cannibalization of innocents, Gogol's Ivas and Wilde's Itys, as their chosen image for the sacrifice of infantile security through dissociation, the deep abyss of intergeneration cannibalism could be viewed as an allegory of vampire syndrome, the intergenerational infliction of dissociation by the dissociated, or trauma by the traumatized participant-victims, given its most extreme and cataclysmic form with the prophetic vision of generations of ancestors as a chain of living corpses gnawing forever on each other in mutual agony. The original dissociation of the Cossack comrades Petro and Ivan was achieved when Petro betrayed and murdered Ivan and his infant son and, in death, Petro is condemned for his treachery by the righteous, suppressive soul of Ivan, to grow forever underground, tormented by an insatiable hunger that causes him to self-cannibalize. The divinely vindicated comrade Ivan is nevertheless condemned by God for the severity of his chosen revenge, permanently excluded from heaven and forced to forever bear witness to the agonies of Petro and his descendants, suggesting shadow and persona to be ultimately inseparable, though

irreconcilable antagonists.

The idea that the persona and shadow are inseparably connected, with the persona's antagonism therefore ultimately a form of self-harm, recurs throughout the work of both writers. God's final judgement converts Ivan's punishment of his shadow, Petro, into his own exclusion from heaven, inseparably bound to the suffering Petro. Wilde's Dorian Gray, whose portrait has become a grotesquely distorted and monstrous shadow through its suppression, cannot destroy the portrait without killing himself. Wilde's Fisherman is condemned to keep his corrupted Soul once he accepts it back, suggesting the impossibility of restoring the psyche's dissociation once its repressed unconscious is made conscious: "once in his life may a man send his Soul away, but he who receiveth back his Soul must keep it with him forever."<sup>23</sup> The angel of death heralds doom for the suppressive Jokanaan as much as for the transgressive Salomé, uniting the two in universal fatality under a blood-red Arcadian moon. The conflict between the transgressive prostitute Myrrhina and the saint Honorius in Wilde's *La Sainte Courtisane* (fragment published 1908) ends ironically rather than fatally, with the repentance of the prostitute and the seduction of the holy man, confirming their innate interchangeability. In Gogol's 'Terrible Vengeance', the virtuously suppressive Katerina becomes herself transgressive and socially outcast by her tormented inability to separate emotionally from her transgressive father. The blood relationship between the two provides a plausible explanation for Katerina's inexorable attachment, despite her revulsion at the sorcerer's crimes, but their bond essentially resembles Chertkov's more mysterious repulsed attraction to Petromikhali's portrait. Katerina's Cossack husband makes his love and society's acceptance conditional on Katerina's refusal to take mercy on her shadow father: "if you thought of it, then you would not be a wife to

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23 *CI*, p. 292

me".<sup>24</sup> By releasing her father, Katerina becomes guiltily complicit in his subsequent crimes, including the destruction of her own family and herself. The Islamo-Polish sorcerer and Katerina must both die because they can neither separate nor marry, as Chertkov dies under the gaze of Petromikhali's portrait that he can neither sell nor destroy. By visualizing a destructive, unrequited love of transgressor for suppressor, whether the incestuous love of Gogol's Islamo-Polish sorcerer for Katerina or Salomé's necrophilic love for Jokanaan's head, both authors render their dramas of sexual crisis multivalent: as psychological conflict between persona and shadow; as doomed romance of fatal love; and as metaphor for the sexual transgressor's conflict with suppressive society.

### **10.5 Irreconcilable Division of Soul and Body**

In 'Terrible Vengeance', the Islamo-Polish sorcerer-father summons his daughter, Katerina, to confess his incestuous desires to her. She is protected from physical sexuality by the detachment of Katerina's soul from her body; her soul manifests in the transparent, ethereal physicality which Gogol elsewhere associates with the inviolate feminine, in the undine of 'A May Night' and Alkinoia of 'Woman'. 'Terrible Vengeance' offers an apparent portrayal of repressed memory in its assertion that Katerina "does not know a lot of that which her soul knows",<sup>25</sup> referring to traumatic knowledge of her mother's murder by her father and to consciousness of his incestuous desire for her, from which she has dissociated herself. Katerina's divided consciousness, as a consequence of incest, may be compared to Salomé's ambiguous response to the incestuous gaze of Herod: "I know not what it means. In truth, yes I know it".<sup>26</sup> It is Katerina's body that is conceived by Gogol as innocent, while her soul has been

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24 "Если бы ты вздумала, тогда бы ты не жена мне была" *SS I*, p. 309

25 'она многого не знает из того, что знает душа ее' *SS I*, p. 302

26 *CI*, p. 540

corrupted by forbidden knowledge of the Oriental Shadow.

This may be contrasted with the division of the corrupted Soul from the innocent body in Wilde's 'The Fisherman and his Soul'. The corruption of the Fisherman's "evil" Soul is located in its inability to love: "when thou didst send me forth into the world thou gavest me no heart",<sup>27</sup> positioning the body as locus of love and therefore of virtue, contradicting the dominant Judaeo-Christian concept of the body as the source of original sin. The position of the body conforms to each author's previously observed ego-identification: for Gogol, Katerina's body is securely identified with her persona and the Cossack collective, while her dissociated soul has forbidden knowledge of the Oriental Shadow that cannot be integrated. For Wilde, the Fisherman's body firmly embraces the Arcadian mermaid as submerged shadow, while his corrupted Soul wanders the visible world as an alienated persona, grown evil through its detachment from love. This characterization may also be compared to Wilde's *Canterville Ghost*, an embittered persona trapped in eternal, meaningless theatrical performance by his exclusion from an Arcadian "Garden of Death" where the nightingale sings. If the irresistible attraction of the antagonists discussed in the previous section represents the inseparability of persona and shadow, then the repeated motif of the division of the protagonist's soul and body presents persona and shadow as incapable of merging, just as they are equally incapable of separating, fuelling the tension of their repulsed attraction that underlies the narratives.

## **10.6 Female Sexual Aggressors under Male Controllers**

The sacrifice of Cossack comradeship, ultimately revealed to be the origin of all the apocalyptic horrors of 'Terrible Vengeance', is the opening catalyst for the horror

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<sup>27</sup> *CI*, p. 305

narrative of Gogol's 'Vii'. Beginning with an extended, humorous depiction of a rowdy schoolboy idyll of seminary comrades, the horror is initiated by the witch's separation of the school comrades for the night because her "heart won't be at peace if you lie together".<sup>28</sup> Khoma Brut's emotional reactions while being ridden by the elderly witch, and then mastering her and riding her himself, are highly suggestive of sexuality: "his legs [...] lifted against his will [...] a wearying, unpleasant and at the same time sweet feeling that entered his heart [...] a demonically sweet feeling [...] suddenly he felt some kind of refreshment; he felt that his step began to grow more lazy [...] her wild cries [...] became weaker, more pleasant, purer".<sup>29</sup> While experiencing this associatively sexual emotion, Brut's attention is drawn to a beautiful, laughing mermaid, untouchable within a visionary, reversed underwater world, as taunting sexual potential. When the elderly witch is herself transformed into a youthfully beautiful woman, and thus legible to Gogol's heteronormative readership as a potential sexual partner, this revelation coincides with her painful death, which drives Brut to flee. The death of the witch may be attributed to her submission: the witch is reported as having caused the spontaneous combustion of figures such as the huntsman Mikita, by seducing and riding them, but dies herself after allowing herself to be ridden by Brut. If riding is understood as a metaphorically sexual act within the text, it should be noted that Gogol contrasts his sinister presentation of unnatural, potentially fatal riding by women with a positive scene of benign and playful riding between Cossack men, also highlighted by Karlinsky.<sup>30</sup>

As complex metaphor of sexualized abandon with a female aggressor,

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28 "[у меня] не будет спокойно на сердце, когда будете лежать вместе" SS 2, p. 567

29 'ноги ... подымались против воли' p. 569 'томительное, неприятное и вместе сладкое чувство подступавшее к его сердцу' p. 570 'бесовски сладкое чувство ... вдруг почувствовал какое-то освежение; чувствовал что шаг его начинал становиться ленивее' p.571 'дикие вопли ... становились слабее, приятнее, чище' SS 2, pp. 571-572

30 Karlinsky, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*, p. 93

comparison may be drawn between 'Vii' and Oscar Wilde's 'The Fisherman and his Soul' with its portrait of spinning with a witch:

“Faster” cried the Witch, and she threw her arms around his neck, and her breath was hot upon his face. “Faster, faster!” she cried, and the earth seemed to spin beneath his feet, and his brain grew troubled, and a great terror fell on him, as of some evil thing that was watching him<sup>31</sup>

The spinning of Wilde's terrified fisherman resembles Khoma's disorienting ride, in that initiative is transferred wholly to the demonic witch, while the male is void of volition, his own desires obscured by his reported disorientation. As the initiator of unpleasant or terrifying sexualized experience, the Witch is simultaneously rendered abject to the desirable, unreciprocating male: Wilde's fisherman repulses the witch who "clung to his knees weeping"<sup>32</sup> while Khoma witnesses the dying witch groan, "turning up eyes filled with tears".<sup>33</sup> The trope of a sexually aggressive Witch allows the female body to facilitate sexualized action and voice abject desire for the male, without committing the male character to expression of heterosexuality.

In 'The Fisherman and His Soul', the sexualized spinning with the witch, which dissociates the protagonist's soul from his body, is dictated by the watching figure of Satan. The fascinated fisherman "watched him, as one snared in a spell", emphasizing his emotional powerlessness with the male, in contrast to his resistance against the abject Witch. Satan is described with "heavy eyelids drooped over his eyes",<sup>34</sup> to render his transfixing gaze itself impenetrable, a figure whose inexorable power and dread fascination conform to the psychological attributes of the shadow as impenetrable to the

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31 *CI*, p. 291

32 *CI*, p. 293

33 'стонала, возведя кверху очи, полные слез' p. 572 *SS 2*

34 p. 292, *CI*



ego but threateningly able to penetrate it. Gogol's subterranean gnome king, Vii, is likewise portrayed as dominant and inexorable to Khoma Brut who cannot resist the gnome king's gaze, in contrast to his robust resistance to the abject witch, with Vii's gaze marked by grotesquely drooping eyelids.

Although the figure of Vii is briefly sketched, retaining his ominous mystery, his characterization as a large, subterranean and grotesquely distorted revenant, heralded by sinister omens of nature, parallels the characterization of Petro, the ultimate shadow in 'Terrible Vengeance', whose origin is explicitly traced to the betrayal of Cossack comradeship. The threatening male shadow is a source of demonic fascination to the protagonist, and ultimate arbiter of his fate, while the female functions as a displaced site on which the sexual expression of the shadow's threat can be enacted. Comparison of the characterization of the sorcerer in 'Terrible Vengeance', who combines inexorable dominance with sexual threat toward the heroine, and the divided menace of 'Vii' between the witch's sexual threat and the Vii's inexorable dominance, illustrates the pattern. It may be read as a demonic variant of the pattern already noted in **Chapter Eight**'s analysis of Gogol's 'Woman', where the female Alkinoia is presented as the site on which Telecles' romantic infatuation with the ideals of Plato is sexually expressed. The languorous-eyed Henry Wotton, whose fascinating influence is enacted by Dorian on the body of Sybil Vane, may be offered as a further example.

### **10.7 Necrophilia, Reciprocity and Misogyny**

In 'The Fisherman and his Soul', the re-emergence of the dissociated Fisherman and mermaid into Wilde's narrative coincides with the death of the mermaid, converting the directly described expression of the Fisherman's love into a necrophilic embrace of her corpse. Patricia Behrendt interprets Wilde's necrophilic motif as a representation of

his "Blind Eros", which "signifies that the lover is enthralled with his or her own experience while the love object – its nature, its needs, its responsiveness, its capacity for reciprocity – is not only secondary but perhaps irrelevant".<sup>35</sup> It should be noted, however, that Wilde repeatedly asserts reciprocal love to be his ideal, though protecting it from direct representation in an apophatic undersea realm ('The Fisherman and His Soul'), or relocating it to Hades ('Charmides') or a Garden of Death ('The Canterville Ghost'), where death cannot threaten the dead. It might also be noted that Robert Chiltern of *An Ideal Husband* explicitly defines unreciprocal marriages as more "horrible" than loveless ones.<sup>36</sup>

In 'Charmides', Wilde offers an idealized representation of reciprocal sexuality within the deadness of Hades itself: "all his hoarded sweets were hers to kiss, / And all her maidenhood was his to slay, / And limb to limb in long and rapturous bliss / Their passion waxed and waned", immediately followed by the poet's self-conscious silencing: "O why essay / to pipe again of love, too venturesome reed!"<sup>37</sup> The reed, portrayed both as "o'er daring Icarus"<sup>38</sup> and as lover of Icarus,<sup>39</sup> a character archetypally defined by his overreaching hubris and immanent destruction by the antagonistic Sun, is silenced until "thou hast found the old Castalian rill, / Or from the Lesbian waters plucked drowned Sappho's golden quill!"<sup>40</sup> referring to a fount of inspiration and homoerotic poetess from Grecian Lost Paradise, suggested as the only location for the open expression of reciprocal love.

The suggestion that both authors' motif of dead lovers is symbolic, rather than

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35 Behrendt, *Oscar Wilde; Eros and Aesthetics*, p. 44

36 "Loveless marriages are horrible. But there is one thing worse than an absolutely loveless marriage. A marriage in which there is love, but on one side only; faith, but on one side only; devotion, but on one side only and in which of the two hearts one is sure to be broken" *CI*, p. 485

37 *CI*, p. 757

38 "o'er daring Icarus" *CI*, p. 758

39 "in yon stream there is a little reed / That often whispers how a lovely boy / Lay with her once upon a grassy mead, / Who when his cruel pleasure he had done / Spread wings of rustling gold and soared aloft into the sun." *CI*, p. 751

40 *CI*, p. 751

expressive of their own necrophilia, may be supported by their use of previously established sexual symbols as inanimate lovers. Wilde's 'The Happy Prince' offers the reed, from his homoerotic floriography of Arcady, as the inanimate beloved of his swallow protagonist. Humorous pun is employed to enable the Reed to perform as love interest without suggesting any internal volition: nodding and shaking her head, "flirting with the wind", being "attached to her home" and having "no conversation".<sup>41</sup> The censorious judgement of onlooking Swallows, characterising the swallow's attachment as "ridiculous", is based not on the manifestly inanimate vegetable nature of the reed, but on the social criteria of her having "no money, and far too many relations",<sup>42</sup> a farcical assertion of the irrelevance of individual volition to their social assessment. Gogol's use of the overcoat, elsewhere a symbol of imposed identity, as the inanimate beloved in 'The Overcoat', likewise suggests the necrophilic love of objects as the culmination of his sexual symbolism, rather than as the direct representation of the author's own necrophilia suggested by Vasily Rozanov. In 'Charmides', Wilde's need to silence his hubristic reed from portraying reciprocal love, and his resulting association of compulsory heterosexuality with deadness, may motivate his choice of corpses and statues to represent lovers, which also allows him to portray the transgressor's love for *polis* as a grotesquely unrequited craving for union.

Behrendt's claim that Wilde's representations of sexuality are misogynist is also debatable, like Karlinsky's reading of misogyny in the sexual narratives of Nikolai Gogol.<sup>43</sup> The fiction of Oscar Wilde displays an usually high degree of conceptual gender reversibility. Where female love interests are objectified as reed or statue, marriage to Jack Worthing is objectified as forming "an alliance with a parcel".<sup>44</sup> Lord

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41 *CI*, p. 156

42 *CI*, p. 156

43 Karlinsky, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*, p. 112

44 *CI*, p. 501

Henry Wotton is characterized interchangeably with his cousin Gladys, who directly voices sexual desire for Dorian. Mrs. Erlynne and Lord Illingworth play parallel roles as sexual transgressors and rejected parents, while Lord Caversham and Lady Bracknell both dictate their children's romantic relationships. Liberty is incarnated as a female Christ that Vera worships as "crucified mother".<sup>45</sup> Even a gender-essentialist statement such as Sir Robert Chiltern's "true Love should pardon. A man's love is like that. It is wider, larger, more human than a woman's"<sup>46</sup> actually echoes the Duchess of Padua's gender-essentialism when horrified by male refusal to pardon: "no love where there is any guilt! O God / How differently do we love from men!"<sup>47</sup> Gender reversibility is also demonstrated by the necrophilic symmetry between Charmides' love of a female statue and Salomé's love of the head of Jokanaan, while the Dryad's embrace of the male corpse of Charmides parallels the Fisherman's embrace of the female corpse of the mermaid. Some of these examples may be explained functionally, as cosmetic sex swaps required to preserve compulsory heterosexuality, but others, such as the image of a female Christ or the symmetry of Lord Illingworth's status as "man of no importance" suffering the same punishment for adultery inflicted on women, have no sexual utility and appear to be an ideological assertion of the essential reversibility of the genders.

With Gogol's tendency to marginalize female characters, gender reversibility is not as prominent in his writing as it is in Wilde's, but nor is it absent: where women are objectified in courtship as geese or overcoats, their male counterparts are objectified as bells and *bashmak* shoes; the sexually threatening relationship of Katerina to her Islamo-Polish father in 'Terrible Vengeance' mirrors that of Khoma Brut to the maternal witch in 'Vii'; the death of the benevolent but emotionally stunted and banal Pulkheria Ivanovna in 'Old World Landowners', upon developing a minimal sexual consciousness

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45 *CI*, p. 599

46 *CI*, p. 458

47 *CI*, p. 645

through realization of her cat's preference for sexual abandon, mirrors the death of the benevolent but emotionally stunted and banal Akakii Akakievich in 'The Overcoat', upon developing a minimal sexual consciousness through excitement over a new coat; the role of the "unhappy undine" of 'A May Night', as a supernatural outcast enabling the marriage of a normative pair, is comparable to that of the "poor devil" of 'The Night Before Christmas'; the sportive homosocial comradeship among female undines in 'A May Night' echoes that among male Cossacks; the beatific portrayal of Catherine the Great as inspired ruler in 'Portrait' parallels the presentation of Kostanzhoglo as inspired landowner in *Dead Souls*. The fiction of Nikolai Gogol may thus be claimed to feature significant conceptual reversibility of gender, beyond its technical use in sexual narratives under compulsory heterosexuality. The reversal of genders between Wilde's 'Charmides' and his *Salomé*, and between Gogol's 'Terrible Vengeance' and his 'Vii', does not, therefore, necessarily indicate conceptual difference between the male narrative and the female. For this reason, no attempt to locate the Jungian Anima, conceived as man's archetypal image of woman, has been made in this analysis.

The conclusion of 'Vii', the death of Khoma Brut, is explained as the result of his fear. Where Brut is robustly able to master the witch repeatedly, and to withstand the onslaughts of hoards of hellish demons of increasingly grotesque appearance, through confidence in his own religious beliefs and through personal courage, yet he is unable to withstand the inexorable gaze and pointing finger of the Vii as final shadow. Rather than being physically murdered by the demons, Brut dies from the emotional shock of the confrontation. Such inexorable dread likewise characterizes the inability of Katerina to separate from her Islamo-Polish sorcerer father, and the sorcerer's own inability to avoid confrontation with the dark rider Ivan, in which all of nature is complicit. The cognitive threat of simultaneous attraction and repulsion is not only

intrinsic to the horror genre, as described in **Chapter Six**, but characteristic of a deeply dissociated psyche which, like Khoma Brut, fears confrontation with its shadow too intensely to integrate it into self-image. Wilde's protagonists, Charmides and Salomé are, by contrast, clear and unambiguous in their desire to unite with the persona. Their punishment is an external persecution of their sexuality rather than an internal conflict, reducing the cognitive threat and thus the horrific potential of their narratives.

To summarise: the writings of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde both represent sexual transgression as fatal crisis, opposed to the cosmic or natural order, to society and to divine will. If the 'Burden of Itys' represents a dissociation from Lost Paradise, then 'Charmides' portrays its transgressive re-emergence as rebel shadow, triggering an irreconcilable state of psychological discord, associated with dread, cosmic retribution and cataclysm. In the narratives of Oscar Wilde, sexually transgressive protagonists are associated with attributes of Wilde's Arcady or Sodom, while their suppressive objects of desire are identified with the values of the *polis* or religion. Nikolai Gogol positions the suppressive Ruthenian Christian as protagonist, menaced by a transgressive shadow associated with the Oriental, the Cossack and the subterranean. An ambiguity in Gogol's ego positioning may be observed in 'Terrible Vengeance', which begins in identification with a Christian Cossack family and ends in identification with the Islamo-Polish sorcerer as terrified shadow facing divine retribution. Gogol's own writings suggest his perception of the Cossack as internally divided between the inhibited European/Ruthenian and the disinhibited Asiatic/Polish, rendering his ethnic conflicts potentially symbolic of psychological conflict, while simultaneously legible as conflict between assimilable and irreconcilable aspects of Ukrainian identity under pressure of russonormativity. Heterosexual transgressions of incest and necrophilia are deployed by both writers to dramatize stigmatized sexuality and its punishment,

conceived in maximally cataclysmic terms. A symbolically dead or demonic female preserves formal heterosexuality within sexual transgressions, while a fascinating and controlling male shadow is given ultimate authority over male protagonists. Dissociation of soul and body, as the result of sexual transgression, is a recurrent theme, with the body conceived as innocent and the soul as corrupted. The final image from both authors' narratives of sexual crisis is an inexorable conflict of irreconcilable shadow and persona, as an apocalyptic destruction of the ego.

## Chapter 11 -'Panthea': Individuation

Individuation is the Jungian term for the individual's recognition and integration of the shadow into their identity, to achieve a state of self-knowledge and self-mastery, unleashing dormant potential within the psyche through elimination of the cognitive tension of dissociation. Through the symbolic association of vision and consciousness, the resulting expansion of self-awareness and release of dormant potential may be symbolically expressed through enlightenment imagery such as radiance or solar attributes, or flight and elevation imagery as expansion of vision. In contrast to the “preconscious wholeness” of *Lost Paradise*, a unity of self founded on ignorance of psychological conflict, individuation represents a “conscious wholeness” consisting in “successful union of ego and self”,<sup>1</sup> requiring acceptance of negative experience and recognition of internal duality, a paradoxical union of opposing forces termed by Jung as “*coniunctio oppositorum*” and frequently symbolized as marriage.<sup>2</sup> **Section 11.1** examines the fourth poem in Wilde's 1881 cycle, 'Panthea', as an archetypal image of individuation which resolves the conflicts established in the previous poems of the cycle. **Section 11.2** analyses the use of sexualized nature imagery in the writing of Nikolai Gogol and compares it to the sexualized nature imagery of Wilde's 'Panthea'. **Section 11.3** tests the hypothesis that *Dead Souls* is an individuation narrative fundamentally concerned with the social integration of homoerotic consciousness, utilizing comparison with Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* to provide potential context. **Section 11.4** examines the figure of Kostanzhoglo in the second volume of *Dead Souls* and Wilde's Young King, as conforming to Carl Jung's description of archetypal images of individuation. **Section 11.5** examines both authors' manifestos for the regeneration of

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1 Jung, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, p. 225

2 Jung, *Aion: Researches Into The Phenomenology of the Self*, p. 31



society, as universal projections of personal individuation. **Section 11.6** examines both authors' expressions of patriotism as projections of personal individuation. The conclusion summarizes the key features of each author's individuation narrative.

### **11.1 Wilde's 'Panthea' As Archetypal Image of Individuation**

The fourth poem in Wilde's cycle, 'Panthea', is once more a direct address to an ungendered lover within a modern setting, evoking the Garden of Eros but expanding the protected garden into a universal conception of nature that incorporates imagery of both heterosexuality and cruelty, establishing a sense of nature as *coniunctio oppositorum* of conscious wholeness. 'Panthea' proposes a simultaneous recognition and acceptance of both erotic and punitive impulses: "let us walk from fire unto fire / from passionate pain to deadlier delight".<sup>3</sup> The apparent antinomy of "passionate pain" and "deadlier delight" allow passion and fatality to coexist inseparably, a shift from the poet's earlier instruction in 'The Garden of Eros' that only those flowers associated with erotic pleasure should be plucked. Following an ode to Arcadian gods and their passions, the poet accepts that these passions are inaccessible to modern lovers and renounces them: "wearied of this sense of guilt, / Wearied of pleasure's paramour despair".<sup>4</sup> His negative concept of the guilty and despairing individual is then redeemed by a lyrical and ecstatic universalizing of desire, through its incarnation in floral and meteorological allegory.

'Panthea' proposes self-identification with universal nature, a strategy that reconciles the three primary conflicts created by 'Charmides': the internal discord between sexual and punitive impulses; the concept of the beloved as murderer of the lover; the intolerable alienation of the transgressive individual from his persecuting

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3 *CI*, p. 769

4 *CI*, p. 771

society and cosmos. Wilde individuates this psychological conflict pantheistically through outward projection, achieving simultaneous identification with both persecutor and victim within a holistic concept of nature: "we are part / Of every rock and bird and beast and hill,/ One with the things that prey on us and one with the things we kill".<sup>5</sup> Final redemption is offered through a merging with the cosmos in both its positive and negative aspects: "all the live World's throbbing heart shall be / One with our heart [...] we shall not die, / The Universe shall be our immortality".<sup>6</sup> The dominant theme of 'Panthea' may thus be defined as projected Individuation: simultaneous identification with oppressor and oppressed, the universalization of sexuality as natural impulse and a redemptive concept of the universalized self.

The theme of sexualized landscape dominates 'Panthea'. Wilde's reported statement to Henry Marillier: "if I do live again, I would like it to be as a flower - no soul but perfectly beautiful"<sup>7</sup> locates the significance of the floral expression of sexuality in the flower's freedom from the corruption of soul, an idyllic expression of the same urge more tragically portrayed in 'The Fisherman and his Soul'. The sexualized landscape in 'Panthea' is conceived as an incarnation of the passions of the poem's lovers: "this hot hard flame with which our bodies burn / Will make some meadow blaze with daffodil [...] The boy's first kiss, the hyacinth's first bell, / The man's last passion, and the last red spear / That from the lily leaps",<sup>8</sup> resolving the antagonism of nature portrayed in 'Charmides', by reimagining the natural world instead as sympathetic echo of human passions.

"And when the white narcissus wantonly / Kisses the wind its playmate some

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5 *CI*, p. 772

6 *CI*, p. 774

7 Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 268

8 *CI*, p. 772

faint joy / Will thrill our dust, and we will be again fond maid and boy",<sup>9</sup> suggests either that the poet and his lover are a heterosexual pairing of "fond maid and boy", whose passion nevertheless resonates with the homoerotic passion of Narcissus or, alternately, that the implicitly homoerotic "young Endymions" from 'The Garden of Eros' play the roles of "fond maid and boy" within their lovemaking, a reading suggested by Charles Parker's testimony in Wilde's trial.<sup>10</sup> In either case, the lines represent a conceptual expansion of the primarily homoerotic Garden of Eros, to assert the capability of the homoerotic and heteroerotic to interchangeably represent one another, dismantling the minoritization of the homoerotic on which its social stigma is founded. In 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol', Wilde portrays a man hanged for the murder of his wife, and renders this heterosexual tragedy emblematic of his own homosexual experience through the universalizing refrain "all men kill the thing they love",<sup>11</sup> asserting that a specifically homosexual experience of socially destructive love is universally relatable to the poet's heterosexual readership, even as it equates the emotions of the homosexual lover with those of a heterosexual murderer.

The projection of psychological dynamics of individuation onto nature or society, illustrated by 'Panthea's attempted reconciliation of the transgressive and persecuting force through their dual embodiment in eternal nature, is a recurrent theme across the writing of both Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde, in fictional works such as Gogol's *Dead Souls* and in nonfiction such as Wilde's 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' and Gogol's *Selected Passages From Correspondence With Friends*. Analysis of these themes is the subject of this chapter, beginning with a comparison between Gogol's use of the theme of sexualized landscape and Wilde's 'Panthea'.

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9 *CI*, p. 772

10 See Hyde, *Oscar Wilde: A Biography*, p. 237 for discussion of Charles Parker's testimony of Wilde's preference for playing the role of a heterosexual couple during homosexual lovemaking.

11 *CI*, p. 841

## 11.2 Sexualized Nature Imagery in the Writing of Nikolai Gogol

Wilde's preference for homoerotic floriography can be compared to the abstracted sexuality of nature imagery in the early writing of Nikolai Gogol. In 'A May Night', a pond is described as "like a powerless old man; he held the dark and distant sky in his cold embraces, spreading his icy kisses over the fiery stars",<sup>12</sup> giving abstracted expression to the sexual embraces of an older lover, later central to the horror of 'Vii' and 'Terrible Vengeance'. Gogol then describes how "virginal thickets of cherries fearfully stretched their roots into the cold of the spring, and occasionally mutter with their leaves, as though angered and indignant, when a beautiful gust of breeze - the night wind, stealing up in an instant, kisses them".<sup>13</sup> This passage contrasts the fearful reaction of the virginal cherries to the cold spring, previously compared to a powerless older lover, with their feigned indignation when kissed by a desirably "beautiful" male wind-lover. 'A May Night' then describes a "riverside reed, touched by... the airy lips of the wind",<sup>14</sup> a rare example in Gogol's published fiction in which grammatical heterosexuality is not preserved, both reed and wind being masculine in Russian. Gogol's high sensitivity to grammatical gender in his sexualization of objects makes the homoeroticism of the pairing of reed and wind potentially significant, and it is possible that his established interest in Classical Greece extended to familiarity with the legend of Calamus. A chain of associations is thereby established in the nature imagery of 'A May Night', between the undesirable older lover as pond, the virginal cherries expressing preference for the kisses of the beautiful wind over the fearful pond,

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12 "Как бессильный старец, держал он в холодных объятиях своих далекое, темное небо, обсыпая ледяными поцелуями огненные звезды" *SS I*, p. 177

13 "Девственные чаши черемух и черешен пугливо протянули свои корни в ключевой холод и изредка лепечут листьями, будто сердясь и негодуя, когда прекрасный ветреник - ночной ветер, подкравшись мгновенно, целует их" *SS I*, p. 181

14 "будто приречный тростник, тронутый... воздушными устами ветра" *SS I*, p. 203

and the masculine reed being touched by the airy lips of the masculine wind. 'Sorochinsky Market' opens with the image of the sky as "immense, blue ocean, bending in a voluptuous dome over the earth, seemingly fallen asleep, utterly immersed in languor, hugging and squeezing the beauty in his airy embraces!"<sup>15</sup> The absence of any comparably sensual descriptions of human lovers in Gogol's work illustrates the writer's marked preference for incarnating erotic impulses in nature. Gogol's high sexualization of nature might be advanced as an argument against the author's putative asexuality, with comparison to Oscar Wilde's homoerotic floriography offering an alternative context for it, as representing the author's use of nature metaphor to express sexual impulses which cannot be embodied in the acceptable heterosexual sign and to imagine those impulses as essentially natural.

### **11.3 Nikolai Gogol's *Dead Souls* as Individuation Narrative**

This thesis contends that Nikolai Gogol's epic *Dead Souls* may be read as a quest for personal individuation through the social integration of homoerotic consciousness. Three lines of argument are proposed to support this contention. Firstly, by thematic analysis of the frequency and consistency with which the theme of the protagonist Chichikov's sterile bachelorhood recurs, to establish this issue as a core preoccupation of the text. Secondly, by noting the parallel between Chichikov's status as a perpetrator of victimless crime which induces chronic exposure anxiety, and that of Robert Chiltern in Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband*, to argue that this condition may plausibly be contextualized as displaced expression of homoerotic consciousness. Thirdly, by analysis of the frequency and consistency with which Chichikov's transaction of "dead souls" is rhetorically equated with love or homoeroticism within

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15 "голубой, неизмеримый океан, сладострастным куполом нагнувшийся над землею, кажется, заснул, весь понувши в неге, обнимая и сжимая прекрасную в воздушных объятиях своих!" *SS I*, p. 120

the text. The section will conclude with a brief review of evidence in support of reading *Dead Souls* as a quest for the social integration of homoerotic consciousness.

The primary thematic importance of Chichikov's sterile bachelorhood is established from the character's entrance to N. in a "tolerably pretty, sprung, small curricle in which bachelors travel",<sup>16</sup> while his acquisition of "dead souls" (serfs whose deaths are not yet officially recorded) is explained by his intention to marry and thereby "acquire weight in society",<sup>17</sup> with the reader informed that "our hero was very worried about his descendants".<sup>18</sup> The theme of Chichikov's bachelorhood, and inability to convert his fictitious landowning as master of "dead souls" into a real domestic establishment, recurs continually as the narrative's central concern. Misfortune drives Chichikov to feel shame before an imaginary "respectable father of a family" and before his own imaginary children, concluding that he "burdens the earth in vain".<sup>19</sup> His emotional investment in self-image as family man is demonstrated as he smiles into the mirror while picturing a nursery,<sup>20</sup> with the second volume of *Dead Souls* following a similar fantasy, specifying two sons and two or even three daughters, with a reflection that an individual's imagination "is pleasant to him even when he himself is convinced that it will never come true!"<sup>21</sup> Gogol also identifies directly as an unrecognized writer with Chichikov's sterile plight as a traveller without family.<sup>22</sup> Taken collectively, these repeated references are indicative of Chichikov's sterility, and undefined inability to

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16 "довольно красивая рессорная небольшая бричка, в какой ездят холостяки" SS 5, p. 7

17 "для приобретения весу в обществе" SS 5, p. 99

18 "Герой наш очень заботился о своих потомках" SS 5, p. 112

19 "with what eyes can I now look any respectable father of a family in the eyes? How can I not feel pangs of conscience, knowing that I burden the earth in vain, and what will my children say?" ("какими глазами я стану смотреть теперь в глаза всякому почтенному отцу семейства? Как не чувствовать мне угрызения совести, зная, что даром бремению землю, и что скажут потом мои дети?") SS 5, p. 307

20 "gazing in the mirror, he thought of many pleasant things, of a little woman, of a nursery, and a smile followed such thoughts" ("поглядывая в зеркало, подумывал он о многом приятном: о бабенке, о детской, и улыбка следовала за такими мыслями") SS 5, p. 301

21 "бывает ему любо даже тогда, когда уверен он сам, что это никогда не сбудется!" SS 5, p. 534

22 "unrecognised writer, without sharing, without response, without sympathy, like a traveller without family." "непризнанному писателю; без разделенья, без ответа, без участия, как бессемейный путник, останется он один посреди дороги." SS 5, p. 170

establish himself domestically, being central preoccupations of *Dead Souls*.

Chichikov may be compared to Sir Robert Chiltern of Wilde's *An Ideal Husband*, as protagonists whose social prestige is founded upon concealment of technical fraud, enabling a sustained drama of exposure anxiety without condemning its protagonist as malicious or sadistic, potentially analogous to the position of homosexuality as victimless crime in 19<sup>th</sup> century society.

Aside from their function as abject travesty of domestic establishment, Chichikov's dead souls are suggested as substitute for the meaning of Chichikov's existence, in being "the main object of his taste and inclinations" on which Chichikov "embarked completely, body and soul",<sup>23</sup> opening a hypothetical space at the heart of the narrative that facilitates deniable or deprioritized expression of the object of the protagonist's inclinations. If *Dead Souls* as a whole is read as a picaresque odyssey towards the individuation of Chichikov, each of the characters that he encounters may be interpreted as representing variant solutions to his primary domestic lack, in which the hypothetical dead souls are notably repeatedly associated with expressions of love or homoeroticism.

Manilov becomes a family man in spite of his Greek sympathies, indicated by his farcically naming his children after the Athenian leader Themistocles and Alcide, Virgil's patron of Arcadians, but remains afflicted with a comically excessive thirst for physical and emotional intimacy with both his wife and Chichikov, becoming "neither Bogdan in town nor Selifan in the country",<sup>24</sup> a phrase which anticipates Oscar Wilde's characterization of Jack Worthing as "Ernest in town and Jack in the country".<sup>25</sup> Manilov's affinity with Chichikov is expressed by his gifting him with dead souls in

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23 "главный предмет его вкуса и склонностей [...] погрузился весь в него и телом и душою" SS 5, p. 49

24 "ни то ни се, ни в городе Богдан, ни в селе Селифан» SS 5, p. 29

25 *CI*, p. 492

recognition of their shared "heartfelt attraction" and "magnetism of the soul", rendering the dead souls directly expressive of love.<sup>26</sup>

Nozdrev lies thoughtlessly and without conscience or consequence, bragging of hyperbolic heterosexual conquest before publicly exposing Chichikov's trade in dead souls, while making loudly feminizing professions of affection and comically attempting to kiss him: "allow me, darling, I'll stick a *baiser* on you [...] allow me to stamp a little *baiser* on your snow-white cheek!"<sup>27</sup> after which Chichikov feels "exposed, that he suddenly showed himself in front of everyone in God knows what form, that he played some kind of strange double-meaning role".<sup>28</sup> The exposure of trade in dead souls is thereby associated with humiliating public expressions of affection by a reckless and destructive man.

Sobakievich embodies stoical pragmatism, including acceptance of variation in sexual taste as an unremarkable fact of life, demonstrated when Chichikov's refusal to purchase female souls leads him to declare that "there's no law for tastes: some love the priest, some the priest's wife, as the saying goes".<sup>29</sup> Living in a house of robust furniture, adorned with Grecian warriors, his remark allows a direct assertion of natural sexual variation, rendered hypothetical through its application to dead souls.

Pliushkin dedicates his loveless life to meaningless hoarding, implicitly akin to Chichikov's meaningless acquisition of dead souls, providing the protagonist with a chilling glimpse of his potential future through Pliushkin's degeneration into an emotionally dead "lapse in humanity".<sup>30</sup> Pliushkin's brief flicker of awakening from

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26 "сердечное влечение, магнетизм души" SS 5, p. 45

27 "позволь, душа, я тебе влеплю один безе [...] одну безешку позволь напечатлеть тебе в белоснежную щеку твою!" SS 5, p. 220

28 "случилось ему оборваться, что он вдруг показался пред всеми Бог знает в каком виде, что сыграл какую-то странную двусмысленную роль" SS 5, p. 224

29 "На вкусы нет закона: кто любит попа, а кто попадью, говорит пословица" SS 5, p. 136

30 "он обратился наконец в какую-то прореху на человечестве" SS 5, p. 152



this deadened state occurs when recalling school comradeship,<sup>31</sup> recalling Gogol's repeated association of school comrades with Lost Paradise, discussed in **Chapter Eight**, and with the homoeroticism of 'Nights at the Villa'.

It may be claimed, through the storylines of Manilov, Nozdrev, Sobakievich and Pliushkin, that dead souls are significantly associated in the first volume of *Dead Souls* with homoeroticism or expression of love between men, which is deprioritized through the hypothetical status of the souls themselves. Taken in conjunction with repeated references to Chichikov's sterile bachelorhood, his posited inability to love as a consequence of being neither fat nor thin,<sup>32</sup> his reported conviction that his own fantasies of having children will never come true, as well as with Chichikov's parallels with Wilde's Robert Chiltern as perpetrators of victimless crime under chronic threat of exposure, *Dead Souls* becomes plausible as an expression of homoerotic consciousness in quest of individuation and social integration.

#### **11.4 Kostanzhoglo and the Young King as Icons of Personal Individuation**

In his description of icons of personal individuation, Carl Jung identifies illumination as characteristic: “the growth of personality is synonymous with an increase of self-consciousness. For the same reason, most heroes are characterized by solar attributes, and the moment of birth of their greater personality is known as illumination”.<sup>33</sup> Jung likewise characterizes individuation by an “inflation of the ego” in which the release of dormant potential and expansion of consciousness triggered by release from the cognitive tension of dissociation leads to feelings of immense empowerment or predestination, associated with the figures of monarchs, heroes or

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31 SS 5, p. 160

32 “Нельзя сказать наверно, точно ли пробудилось в нашем герое чувство любви, - даже сомнительно, чтобы господа такого рода, то есть не так чтобы толстые, однако ж и не то чтобы тонкие, способны были к любви” SS 5, p. 215

33 Jung, *The Development of Personality*, p. 184

Christ.<sup>34</sup> This definition of the heroic icon of personal individuation is highly applicable to the characterization of Kostanzhoglo in Nikolai Gogol's *Dead Souls*, as well as to the hero of Wilde's 'The Young King'. Analysis of their portrayals is the subject of this section.

Chichikov's ongoing quest to become domestically established as "not an illusory landowner but an actual one"<sup>35</sup> finally finds its preferred model for personal individuation and fulfilment in the second volume of *Dead Souls*, through the figure of Kostanzhoglo, "the first person in all Russia to whom he felt personal respect".<sup>36</sup> Kostanzhoglo describes his love for productive husbandry as a pantheist merging with the natural order,<sup>37</sup> an idyll whose hyperfertility and productivity is emphasized,<sup>38</sup> while the landowner achieves satisfaction "because you see that you are the cause of all and the creator of everything".<sup>39</sup> Like Wilde's reconciliation of eros in 'Panthea', Gogol proposes the pantheistic reconciliation of Chichikov's infertility through its transformation into a husbandry productive of universal fertility. This pantheist doctrine is maximally glorified both through the narrator's description that Kostanzhoglo "shone like a tsar on the day of his triumphant coronation"<sup>40</sup> while delivering his speech, and through the protagonist's reaction: "like the singing of a bird of paradise, Chichikov listened spellbound to the sweet-sounding words of his host. His mouth gulped drool".<sup>41</sup> The radiant solar attribute of Kostanzhoglo and his inflation of status while shining like a Tsar, may be read as indicators of his status as icon of individuation.

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34 Jung, *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, p. 22

35 "помещиком не фантастическим, но действительным" SS 5, p. 598

36 "первый человек во всей России, к которому почувствовал он уважение личное" p. 583, SS 5

37 "here the person goes along with nature, with the seasons, partner and confidant to everything that takes place in creation" ("Тут человек идет рядом с природой, с временами года, соучастник и собеседник всему, что совершается в творенье.") SS 5, p. 576

38 "everything around you multiplies and multiplies, yielding fruit and profit" ("вокруг тебя все множится да множится, принося плод да доход") SS 5, p. 577

39 "потому, что видишь, как ты всему причина и творец всего" SS 5, p. 577

40 "как царь в день торжественного венчания своего, сиял он" SS 5, p. 578

41 "как пенья райской птички, заслушался Чичиков сладкозвучных хозяйских речей. Глотали слюнку его уста." SS 5, p. 578

In his own person, Kostanzhoglo incarnates the successful harnessing and full integration of the Oriental Shadow:

he struck Chichikov with the swarthy face, the harshness of his black hair, prematurely grey in places, with the lively expression of his eyes and some kind of jaundiced imprint of a fiery southern pedigree. He was not completely Russian ["Ruthenian"?]. He himself didn't know where his ancestors came from. He didn't occupy himself with his genealogy, considering that this wasn't relevant and was superfluous in husbandry. He was even completely convinced that he was Russian, and knew no other language but Russian.<sup>42</sup>

Where the Islamo-Polish sorcerer of 'Terrible Vengeance' is a born Cossack who has adopted the transgressive cultures of Muslims and Poles, Kostanzhoglo is a naturally "Southern" figure, which codes him as suggestively of Muslim ancestry, who has consciously chosen to integrate himself into Russian society and to harness his "fiery" nature in service of social productivity. Kostanzhoglo's model of integration is also sexual, in his heterosexual marriage to the sister of the Grecian ideal Plato Mikhalych Platonov. The sister is an unnamed character defined entirely by her resemblance to her brother: "she was like two peas in a pod with Platonov, only with the difference that she was not indolent, like him, but talkative and cheerful".<sup>43</sup> As his exact double, Plato's sister, in her cheerfulness, implicitly represents a possible resolution to Plato's spiritual stagnation, through a prosperous marital union with the

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42 "поразил Чичикова смуглостью лица, жесткостью черных волос, местами до времени поседевших, живым выраженьем глаз и каким-то желчным отпечатком пылкого южного происхождения. Он был не совсем русский. Он сам не знал, откуда вышли его предки. Он не занимался своим родословием, находя, что это в строку нейдет и в хозяйстве вещь излишняя. Он даже был совершенно уверен, что он русский, да и не знал другого языка, кроме русского." SS 5, p. 562

43 "походила как две капли на Платонова, с той разницей только, что не была вяла, как он, но разговорчива и весела." SS 5, p. 558

fiery yet integrated Kostanzhoglo. This natural resolution is denied to Plato himself because of his gender, just as Chichikov cannot imitate Kostanzhoglo in husbandry because his landowning is illusory and founded on dead souls.

Chichikov's self-identification with the ideal of Kostanzhoglo suggests Gogol's recognition of the Oriental Shadow as an aspect of the protagonist's self that must be integrated, representing the personal individuation of the conflict between Ruthenian and Oriental that occupied 'Portrait' and 'Terrible Vengeance'. This individuation is founded on extended *coniunctio oppositorum*: an Oriental non-Oriental non-Russian Russian in a heterosexual marriage with a Grecian ideal of masculine beauty. Kostanzhoglo's resplendent characterization, shining "like a Tsar" during his inspired speech on the vocation of landowning, can be compared to that of the "divinely beautiful" Catherine the Great, during her inspired speech on the vocation of monarchy in 'Portrait', who is also characterized by solar attributes, possibly suggesting Catherine herself as an icon of individuation through her status as a *coniunctio oppositorum* of woman and ruler, a fusion of abject androphilic shadow and socially acclaimed persona. In spite of his radiant attributes, Kostanzhoglo's status as an unsatisfactory compromise is affirmed, as his triumphant speech on universal fertility and Chichikov's rapturous reception of it are undermined by the voice of Plato behind them: "but however you tell it, all the same, it's dull".<sup>44</sup>

In Wilde's fiction, his main icon of personal individuation is the Young King as Arcadian Christ. The importance of Christ to Wilde as icon of individuation may be deduced by his philosophical attempts to demonstrate that Jesus Christ embodies his philosophy of Individualism, interchangeably with Classical Greece, which take up large portions of 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' and 'De Profundis'. In Jung's view,

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44 "Что ни рассказывай, а все, однако же, скучно" SS 5, p. 578

“Christ exemplifies the archetype of the self”,<sup>45</sup> a *coniunctio oppositorum* of outcast beggar and 'King of Kings', simultaneously specific historical personage and universal eternal God, living and dead, maternal and man. Wilde's figure of Arcadian Christ additionally represents a personal individuation of the central conflict of *Salomé*, between the ascetic moralizing of John the Baptist and the eroticism of Salomé, opposing forces that are united into an accepting and forgiving whole by the Young King as Arcadian Christ.

'The Young King' is Wilde's most sustained fictional portrait of a Christ figure. Raised in a state of Arcadian innocence and ignorance of his position as heir to the throne, the Young King combines an aesthetic passion for beauty with altruistic conscience, for which he renounces his kingly robes, made from the blood sacrifice of enslaved peoples, to wear a goatherd's dress and crown of thorns. Rather than a literal Christ, the Young King represents an authentic following of Christ's example by an Arcadian who is ironically rejected by the Christian Church itself, until divine intervention crowns him with roses and covers him in golden light, causing him to be recognized as King, an image of solar attribute and ego inflation suggestive of Jung's model of individuation. The mental connection between divinity and the integrated self is emphasized in the theories of Carl Jung: “the self... is a God-image, or at least cannot be distinguished from one”.<sup>46</sup> The story concludes with his people refusing to look the Young King in the face because it is too angelic, suggesting that the individual may become Christ-like through solidarity with others, but that those others would then alienate him through their worship. This conclusion also agrees with Jung's own analysis: “the development of personality from the germ-state to full consciousness is at once a charisma and a curse, because its first fruit is the conscious and unavoidable

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45 Jung, *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, p. 37

46 Jung, *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, p. 22

segregation of the single individual from the undifferentiated and unconscious herd”.<sup>47</sup>

In an oral story recalled by Charles Ricketts as 'Our Lady of the Sorrows', Wilde imagines a Venus Mary, worshipped by Arcadians and mother of Eros, who returns to her shrine after a night of revelry to resume her mourning for Christ as her other son.<sup>48</sup> Like the Empress Catherine the Great, the Venus Mary offers a powerful feminine icon of individuation, while the concept of Eros and Christ as her dual sons recalls the image in 'The Burden of Itys' of a “smitten-lipped” Christ, discussed in **Chapter Nine**, as representing a compulsion to unite sacred sexuality with the figure of Christ. Carl Jung notes that “the Christian image of the self – Christ – lacks the shadow that properly belongs to it”,<sup>49</sup> citing Ebionite traditions that supply the lack by proposing Satan as a brother of Christ.<sup>50</sup> Wilde's proposal of Eros, rather than Satan, as brother of Christ may be read as reflecting his more positive conception of shadow and its desirable integration. This integration, achieved in the feminine figure of Venus Mary as erotic divine queen-mother, is held apart by the separation of her male sons between the hidden shadow, Eros, and the persecuted self, Christ. The positioning of the queen by both authors as icon of individuation, for the primary psychic conflict induced by dissociation of androphilia under pressure of compulsory heterosexuality, offers an alternative explanation for the significance of reigning women in the homoerotic male imagination, compared to that proposed by Jung's own reading of mother complex as the origin of homosexuality. Both authors' 'Lost Paradise' imagery of original sexuality notably lack comparably powerful female figures.

In 'The Happy Prince', altruistic conscience is idealized in a manner similar to 'The Young King', as a Swallow renounces his love for an Arcadian reed and his

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47 Jung, *The Development of Personality*, p. 173

48 Quoted in Wright, *Table Talk Oscar Wilde*, p. 76 - 77

49 Jung, *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, p. 45

50 Jung, *Aion: Researches in to the Phenomenology of the Self*, p. 57

longing for Egypt, established as location of Lost Paradise in Wilde's 'The Sphinx'. Instead, the swallow bonds with The Happy Prince, a statue whose golden gilding resembles a monument to Apollo, suggesting his analogy to the statue of Athena in 'Charmides' as an emblem of socially acclaimed persona. The swallow helps the statue to strip away his jewels and gold to share with the poor and needy of the city. Wilde's previous use of the nightingale, as bird emblem of crucified ego, and the swallow's status in Greek mythology as bird emblem of Procne, sister of the nightingale Philomel, might suggest the Swallow's dismantling of the statue as a piecemeal sacrifice of socially acclaimed persona by a crucified ego ever longing to reunite with Lost Paradise, ending in the pair's mutual death and social rejection, but also in their divine endorsement by God.

In both 'The Young King' and 'The Happy Prince', Wilde's fictional portrayal of personal individuation depicts it as incompatible with society, a fundamental incompatibility which can also be read in the alternate gendering required of Chichikov and Plato in order to achieve the socially integrated happiness of Kostanzhoglo and Plato's sister. A logical consequence of the perceived incompatibility of personal individuation with society would be a striving toward social change. In Wilde's 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' and Gogol's *Selected Passages from Correspondence With Friends*, both authors presented manifestos for the regeneration of society, in each case legible as a universal projection of personal striving toward individuation.

### **11.5 Manifestos of Social Regeneration as Projected Individuation**

The surviving chapters of the second volume of *Dead Souls* conclude, not with the vision of personal individuation represented by the union of Kostanzhoglo and Plato's sister, but with recognition of an urgent need for social change. The authority

figure of a Duke forgives his corrupt subordinates and gives instructions for the moral regeneration of society. The futility of political reform is emphasized, where universal corruption is attributed not to social organization but to the collective impact of individual fraud, of which external regulation is impossible: "by no remedies, no intimidations, no punishments can fraud be rooted out".<sup>51</sup> Instead, the individual is called upon to voluntarily embody the ethic of an ideal society, in order to have positive influence on others through their self-denial, to "suppress their personal ambition and sacrifice their identity" upon which the Duke "could not but notice their dedication and great love for good, and would finally accept useful and wise counsel from them".<sup>52</sup> Though Gogol's intended conclusion to *Dead Souls* is unknown due to his burning of the manuscript, the surviving text significantly concludes with a quest for alteration of the social order, in place of personal fulfilment. That is, a shift of emphasis from personal individuation, the individual's integration of their internal psychological conflicts into a new wholeness of identity, toward universal individualism, the messianic projection onto society of the individual's striving for psychological integration.

Oscar Wilde's 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' imagines a universalizing of his ethic of Individualism, conceived of as a form of utopian socialism. For Wilde, "Socialism itself will be of value simply because it will lead to individualism".<sup>53</sup> Wildean Individualism, with its emphasis on the rejection of external influence and of perfected self-realization, resembles a projection of psychological individuation into universal social philosophy. Nikolai Gogol's work on the fictional individuation

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51 "никакими средствами, никакими страхами, никакими наказаниями нельзя искоренить неправды" *SS 5*, p. 646

52 "подавить в себе собственное честолюбие и пожертвовать своею личностью. Не может быть, чтобы я заметил их самоотверженья и высокой любви к добру и не принял бы наконец от них полезных и умных советов" *SS 5*, p. 646

53 Wilde, *De Profundis, The Ballad of Reading Gaol & Other Writings*, p. 248



narrative of *Dead Souls* coincided with his publication of *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends*, a prescriptive political treatise on the ideal transformation of Russian society through a universal adoption of Christian/Grecian ethic. Gogol's belief in the capacity of personal individuation to symbolize universal individualism is affirmed: "first find only the key to your own soul; when you find it, then with that same key you will unlock the souls of all".<sup>54</sup> The social philosophies of Gogol and Wilde are apparently opposed, in Gogol's emphasis on altruism and the futility of political reform, contrasting with Wilde's emphasis on the futility of altruism and the importance of political reform, to reconstruct "society on such a basis that poverty will be impossible".<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, comparison of Wilde's explicit philosophy in 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' and Gogol's explicit philosophy in *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends* reveals that both represent political manifestos of projected individuation, albeit by alternative social means, with Gogol consistently the more conservative and Wilde the more radical.

Both men propose the Christian ethic, with its repudiation of external judgement and maximized personal responsibility, as the ideal basis of social organization, but Gogol additionally embraces organized religion and the authority of the Orthodox church, while Wilde proposes the authentic Christian ethic as a form of Individualism: "the message of Christ to man was simply 'Be thyself.' That is the secret of Christ."<sup>56</sup> Wilde regards Christ's teaching as emblematic of the restoration of infantile security: "he took children as the type of what people should try to become".<sup>57</sup> The critical importance of this aspect of Christian teaching to Nikolai Gogol is indicated by the Biblical quotation Mark 10:15 being among his final deathbed writings: "whoever does

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54 "найди только прежде ключ к собственной душе; когда же найдешь, тогда этим же самым ключом отопрешь души всех" SS 6, p. 47

55 Wilde, *De Profundis, The Ballad of Reading Gaol & Other Writings*, pp. 247-248

56 Wilde, *De Profundis*, p. 255

57 Wilde, *De Profundis*, p. 80

not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it".<sup>58</sup> Gogol makes his aim explicit in his will, which affirms the goal of universal Christian ethic to be the establishment of a self-organizing or even anarchic society:

society will only correct itself when every individual person will attend to himself and live like a Christian, serving God with those instruments given to him, and trying to have a good influence on the small circle of people surrounding him. Everything will then get in order, correct relationships between people will be established on their own, the lawful limits to everything will be defined. And humanity will move forward.<sup>59</sup>

Both men propose the renewal of society through the restoration of Ancient Greek values, with Wilde claiming that "the new individualism is the New Hellenism"<sup>60</sup> and Gogol's 'On the Odyssey translated by Zhukovsky' advocating *The Odyssey* as a model for the renewal of Russian society, but Gogol conservatively emphasizes the civic virtues of Homer over the debauchery of Wilde's Arcadian gods. Wilde saw in the anarchist philosopher Peter Kropotkin "the soul of that beautiful white Christ that seems coming out of Russia",<sup>61</sup> while Gogol romanticizes the anarchic tendencies of Cossacks, but embraces the enlightened despotism of Tsars in preference to tyranny of the majority. Each man proposes the renewal of society through the positive influence of the uncoerced individual; Wilde imagines this influence through full self-realization, while Gogol conceives it as voluntary self-denial. Hedonistic self-indulgence and

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58 "Аще не будете малы, яко дети, не внидете в Царствие Небесное" *SS 6*, p. 532

59 "общество тогда только поправится, когда всякий частный человек займется собою и будет жить как христианин, служа Богу теми орудиями, какие ему даны, и стараясь иметь доброе влияние на небольшой круг людей, его окружающих. Все придет тогда в порядок, сами собой установятся тогда правильные отношения между людьми, определяться пределы, законные всему. И человечество двинется вперед" *SS 6*, p. 532

60 Wilde, *De Profundis*, 280

61 Wilde, *De Profundis*, p. 84

altruistic martyrdom might appear to be opposing values, yet Wilde himself proposes them as alternative strategies to resist social pressure, the driving force of dissociation: "to the claims of charity a man may yield and yet be free, to the claims of conformity no man may yield and remain free at all".<sup>62</sup> The Duke of Gogol's *Dead Souls* explicitly advocates altruistic self-denial as an antidote to social conformity, a going "against the universal flow".<sup>63</sup>

Effectively, Gogol's *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends* represents an attempt to philosophically demonstrate that all the material problems of Russian society may be solved by the adoption of a Christian/Grecian ethic. Though condemned by contemporaries such as Vissarion Belinsky, Belinsky's own alternative of political reform would have had no effect on social stigma, the primary concern of a stigmatized minority. Indeed, by satisfying the material problems of the Russian majority, political reform might actively eliminate the majority's incentive to adopt the Christian ethic required by the stigmatized minority. Gogol's effort to advocate universal Christian ethic as the solution to the political concerns of his own time, as well as to assert the interchangeability of Christian and Grecian ethic, may be compared with Wilde's superficial adoption of the fashionable doctrine of socialism to authorize his own advocacy of universal Christian ethic, while asserting its interchangeability with Grecian ethic, as being logical expressions of the censored homoerotic perspective.

### **11.6 Expressions of Patriotism as Projected Individuation**

Wilde's statement in *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* that "art is

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<sup>62</sup> Wilde, *De Profundis*, p. 258

<sup>63</sup> "почти невозможно многим идти противу всеобщего течения" SS 5, p. 646

individualism"<sup>64</sup> recalls his nomination of the Celt in *The Critic As Artist* as natural leader in the arts,<sup>65</sup> implying that universal Individualism might be led by a Celtic spirit, albeit one as abstracted and detached from its geographical body as the fisherman's Soul. By transferring his allegiance to a universalized concept of "New Hellenism", Wilde located his patriotism in a Utopia whose borders were as wide as the world he wanted to convert, and as narrow as the self in which it must first be incarnated. Wilde's own status as a self-identified Irishman speaking on behalf of the English in his fiction, may thus be associated with a wider compulsion, demonstrated in 'Panthea', to affirm the stigmatized minority's capacity to be representative of the majority, also evident in his reported statement "my own idea is that Ireland should rule England".<sup>66</sup> These tendencies, briefly sketched in Wilde's sparse recorded references to Ireland, are more fully expressed in Nikolai Gogol's visionary concept of Rus within *Dead Souls*.

The satire of Russia in the first volume of *Dead Souls* is interrupted by the narrator's direct addresses to Rus, as idealized abstraction. The term "Rus" was then in use among Slavophiles to emphasize an indigenous Russian essence in defensive nationalist opposition to the values imposed by Westernizers, but likewise refers to Kievan Rus, as an origin point of the Ruthenian centered on the territory of Ukraine. In 1844, two years after the publication of the first volume of *Dead Souls*, Gogol wrote to Alexandra Smirnova-Rosset describing his concept of the relationship between the Russian and Ukrainian:

I would never give an advantage either to the Little Russian ahead of the Russian, or to the Russian ahead of the Little Russian. Both natures are too

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64 Wilde, *De Profundis*, p. 264

65 Wilde, *De Profundis, The Ballad of Reading Gaol & Other Writings*, p. 232

66 Quoted in Coakley, *Oscar Wilde: The Importance of Being Irish*, p. 196

generously gifted by God and, as if deliberately, each of them apart contains what the other lacks, a clear sign that they should supplement each other [...] then, having merged into one, form themselves a thing the most perfect in humanity.<sup>67</sup>

This quote indicates that Gogol's growing preoccupation with a visionary merged essence of Rus and 'Ruthenian soul', a term which Gogol applied equally to the Ukrainian Cossacks of *Taras Bulba* and to the anonymous provincial settings of *Dead Souls*, did not represent his abandonment of a Ukrainian nationalist concept of Ukraine's difference from Russia, or even of Ukraine's binary opposition to Russia, nor of its entitlement to parity of esteem. Rather, Gogol's perception of the binary opposition of the Ukrainian and Russian fuelled his impulse to merge them, anticipating an unleashing of dormant potential resulting in the "most perfect thing in humanity", highly suggestive of ecstatic release from the cognitive tension of dissociation and of inflation of the ego through expanded consciousness. Effectively, Gogol's concept that the Ukrainian and Russian should be merged, precisely because of their binary opposition, proposes a perfected *coniunctio oppositorum*, representing a psychological striving towards the individuation of Rus. Edyta Bojanowska's concept that "Gogol's Russian nationalism was not a deeply and sincerely held conviction, but a rather contrived aspect of his public persona" must then be qualified.<sup>68</sup> If Gogol can be demonstrated, as Bojanowska's wide-ranging and comprehensive analysis of his public and private writings suggests, to have identified privately with a Ukrainian nationalism which he was increasingly induced to censor, while identifying his public persona with

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67 "никак бы не дал преимущества ни малороссиянину перед русским, ни русскому перед малороссиянином. Обе природы слишком щедро одарены Богом, и, как нарочно, каждая из них порознь заключает в себе то, чего нет в другой — явный знак того, что они должны дополнять одна другую. [...] потом, слившись воедино, составить собою нечто совершеннейшее в человечестве», quoted in Tomenko, *Ukrains'kyi Romantyk Mykola Hohol*, p. 57

68 Bojanowska, *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism*, p. 369

Russian nationalism, this does not preclude a deep emotional investment in the imperative to individuate Ukrainian shadow and Russian persona, suggested by the visionary characterization of ecstatic union with Rus in *Dead Souls*.

From lyrical description of the expansiveness of Russia's geographical body, Gogol universalizes further, to predict the future birth of a "boundless thought" and its incarnation in a *bogatyr*, a mythic warrior such as the Cossack Iliia of Murom, archetypally representing heroic patriotism unbounded by subordination to the collective.<sup>69</sup> Personal incarnation of patriotic essence and abstraction of sexuality merge within Gogol's final image of Rus seizing him: "and thunderously the mighty expanse encompasses me, with terrible force reverberating in the depth of me; with unnatural power my eyes lit: ooh! what a flashing, wondrous, unearthly horizon! Rus!"<sup>70</sup> Mikhail Epshtein has analyzed the rhetoric in which Gogol conceives of his encounter with Rus as forming part of a "demonic chronotope" which subverts the passage's patriotism by visualising Russia as demon.<sup>71</sup> However, the same "chronotope" is notable in *Hanz Kuchelgarten's* visionary encounter with Athens: "Athens, to you, in the heat of wondrous tremblings, I am captivated by my soul".<sup>72</sup> This vocabulary of compulsion to merge with Lost Paradise, which acquired threatening overtones when characterizing the demonic shadows of 'Terrible Vengeance', 'Vii' and 'Portrait', is reclaimed in *Dead Souls* through ecstatic universalism, suggesting the visionary Rus as an icon of individuated self, as shadow and ego merged, from which an unrealized potential of

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69 "here, in you, won't boundless thought be born, when you yourself are without end? Here, won't a *bogatyr* come to be, when there is space for him to spread out and stretch his legs?" ("Здесь ли, в тебе ли не родиться беспредельной мысли, когда ты сама без конца?") SS 5, p. 283

70 "И грозно объемлет меня могучее пространство, страшную силою отразясь во глубине моей; неестественной властью осветились мои очи: у! какая сверкающая, чудная, незнакомая земле даль! Русь!" SS 5, p. 283

71 "it is meetings of Gogol's characters with the Evil One that are permeated with this steady, bewitching gaze, containing within itself a devilish power over the individual. This motif may be found in 'A Terrible Vengeance', 'Vij' and 'The Portrait'" Epshtein, Mikhail, "The Irony of Style: The Demonic Element in Gogol's Concept of Russia" in Spieker, Sven ed. *Gogol: Exploring Absence*, p. 57

72 "Афины, к вам, в жару чудесных трепетаний / Душой приковываюсь я" SS 7, p. 20,

boundless thought and a *bogatyr's* heroic individualism may be born.

The carriage, proof of Chichikov's bachelorhood in the novel's opening, is itself transformed into a symbol of Gogol's visionary Rus at the conclusion of the first volume: "are you not so also, Rus, that hurtle along like a brisk troika that cannot be overtaken?"<sup>73</sup> Comparing the troika to the elemental power of lightning and whirlwind, with mighty steeds inspired by God, for which other nations are forced to make way, maximally empowers the carriage as epic symbol of the visionary self. At the start of the second volume of *Dead Souls*, Chichikov is rewarded by upgrading his own carriage to a *koliaska* after selflessly volunteering as intermediary to romantically reconcile the star-crossed lovers Tentetnikov and Ulinka, implying that the progressive upgrading of the carriage, as Chichikov improved morally, was to be a theme of the narrative. Chichikov's own troika features a spotted horse which doesn't pull its weight and is stigmatized as useless: "his portion was always of the worst oats, and Selifan never poured it into his trough without first saying 'ekh, you scoundrel!'"<sup>74</sup> Gogol's stated mission, at the conclusion of the first volume of *Dead Souls*, in choosing Chichikov as hero, "finally to harness the scoundrel too",<sup>75</sup> implies his object to be transforming the stigmatized "scoundrel" Chichikov into an integral part of the visionary troika of Rus, as Gogol envisioned Ukraine becoming integral to Russia in his letter to Smirnova-Rosset, as Chichikov's spotted scoundrel-horse was presumably intended to become integral to his own troika, and as the stigmatized shadow must become an integral part of the psyche. Analysis of Kostanzhoglo makes clear that both sexual and ethnic identities are engaged in *Dead Souls'* psychological narrative of reconciliation, potentially explaining why Bojanowska was able to read an ethnic crisis

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73 "Не так ли и ты, Русь, что бойкая необгонимая тройка несешься?" SS 5, p. 318

74 "ему на часть и доставался всегда овес похуже и Селифан не иначе всыпал ему в корыто, как сказавши прежде: 'эх ты, подлец!'" SS 5, p. 112

75 "пора наконец припрячь и подлеца" SS 5, p. 287

of identity from the same biographical and literary material which Karlinsky used to argue a sexual crisis of identity.

Nikolai Gogol's *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends* and Oscar Wilde's 'De Profundis' each constitute attempts to individuate the discord between public and private voice, by reimagining private correspondence as public address. The psychological toll of chronic exposure anxiety may be read in Wilde's reported thinking at his trial: "how splendid it would be, if I was saying all this about myself!"<sup>76</sup> as it can in Gogol's "oh, how we need to be publicly spat on, in the sight of all!"<sup>77</sup> In 'De Profundis', Wilde's weariness with effacement may be judged by his categorical statement "to deny one's own experiences is to put a lie into the lips of one's own life. It is no less than a denial of the Soul."<sup>78</sup> Although he expressed the strong desire to make further art,<sup>79</sup> Wilde experienced a creative crisis in the remaining years before his death, with 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' being his only further publication. Gogol's stated goal to "harness the scoundrel" in *Dead Souls*, to imaginatively transform Chichikov and reveal a profound, spiritual purpose to his existence as an integral element of his nation, led to a decade of similar creative crisis which culminated in the burning of his manuscript. Both authors appear to have reached a threshold beyond which they could not express themselves, at least within their own eras and cultures. To a degree, the individuation narratives of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde may thus be viewed as thwarted individuations. In their fiction, individuation is imagined through alternate gendering, as in the marriage of Kostanzhoglo and Plato's sister or the unity of Wilde's Venus Mary, through its abstracted projection onto nature or through total transformation of the ethical foundations of society. The fully

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76 Wilde, *De Profundis*, p. 102

77 "О! как нам бывает нужна публичная, данная в виду всех, оплеуха!" SS 6, p. 176

78 Wilde, *De Profundis*, p. 60

79 "if I can produce even one more beautiful work of art I shall be able to rob malice of its venom, and cowardice of its sneer" Wilde, *De Profundis, the Ballad of Reading Gaol & Other Writings*, p. 62



individuated figure of Ruthenian *bogaty*r or Arcadian Christ, a messianic concept of ego inflation through anticipated release from the cognitive tension of dissociation, was never fully manifested.

To summarise: the writings of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde are strongly marked by an impulse toward individuation, and the concept of the stigmatized individual as symbolic incarnation of nature and society. Recurrent features of this pattern include: the abstraction of sexuality through its impersonal displacement onto landscape and the individual's empowerment to bring forth universal fertility of nature and/or social productivity; the implied empowerment of the homosexual and heterosexual to be mutually symbolic; the patriotic ideal as visionary abstract, incarnating psychological individuation; the stigmatized individual's heroic transformation by the release of unrealized potential through individuation, as an acquisition of solar, monarchic or divine attributes indicative of inflation of the ego and expansion of consciousness; the elevation of Christ as social and personal model. Taken collectively, these patterns represent an attempted reconciliation through *coniunctio oppositorum* of the otherwise irreconcilable discord between persona and shadow suggested by the authors' narratives of sexual transgression. Their impulse to project psychological individuation onto society as a whole points to each author's perception of the incompatibility of the individuated self with the existing social order.

## Chapter 12 -'Humanidad': Regressive Restoration of Persona

In Jungian theory, the inability to properly integrate insight and expanded consciousness, acquired through individuation, into self-image is regarded as triggering a regressive restoration of persona. Rebounding to the protective safety of the established persona, “a composite of the individual's behaviour and of the role attributed to him by the public”,<sup>1</sup> results in the individual experiencing an increased psychological alienation from their social role, through its incapacity to accommodate their expanded consciousness. Depiction of renounced insight and resulting psychological alienation from impoverished social role appears to be the dominant theme of Oscar Wilde's 'Humanidad', the final poem of his 1881 poetic cycle. This chapter examines the theme of alienated persona within the work of both Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde. **Section 12.1** analyses the key features of Wilde's poem 'Humanidad' as an archetypal image of regressive restoration of persona. **Section 12.2** analyses tropes in both Gogol and Wilde's works that may be read as abject travesties of their previously established Lost Paradise imagery, induced through alienation of persona. **Section 12.3** compares and contrasts the theme, common to both authors, of the superior social success of the alienated persona, as product of internal void. **Section 12.4** examines Gogol and Wilde's use of the prioritization of food as a hallmark of the self-comforted or emotionally impoverished character. The conclusion assesses the key features of both authors' conception of alienated persona.

### 12.1 'Humanidad' as Archetypal Image of Regressive Restoration of Persona

As the opening of the cycle, 'The Garden of Eros', declared "it is full summer

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1 Jung, *The Symbolic Life*, p. 579

now" before celebrating homoerotic love,<sup>2</sup> so the closing poem, 'Humanitad', declares that "it is full winter now", before depicting capitulation to the *polis*,<sup>3</sup> [JK 59] confirming the poet's conception of the five poems as a coherent whole to be read collectively. After an extended description of the landscape in winter, Wilde's poet explicitly renounces physical passion and surrenders to Athena, goddess of wisdom, chastity and *polis*, previously depicted as beloved destroyer of the Arcadian Charmides. The poet visualizes a future thawing for winter, but excludes his "wretched soul" from spring's awakening, for lack of "essence not subdued".<sup>4</sup> In contrast to 'Panthea's imagined reconciliation of homoerotic passion with nature, 'Humanitad' portrays the poet's alienation from the natural cycle, to "pass into a life more barren, more austere".<sup>5</sup> The poet dedicates himself to Athena: "I am Hers who loves not any man / Whose white and stainless bosom bears the sign Gorgonian",<sup>6</sup> referring to the myth of Athena's aegis (goatskin breastplate) bearing the head of Medusa, whose repulsive gaze turned men to stone, potentially motivating Wilde's recurrent theme of "mute and marble" statues as lovers.<sup>7</sup> The poet struggles to nurture that wise calm taught at Athens, to become "self-poised, self-centred and self-comforted",<sup>8</sup> a state which Wilde's poet declares himself incapable of, even as this narcissistic state of self-sufficiency defines the popular perception of the Wildean dandy. The dominant theme of the first section of the poem, then, is separation from Nature through renunciation of eroticism and capitulation to the goddess of *polis* and chastity, a full regressive reversal of the pantheistic merging with nature which characterized the individuation narrative of 'Panthea'.

'Humanitad' continues with an extended eulogy of Mazzini, the Italian

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2 *CI* p. 708

3 *CI* p. 779

4 *CI*, p. 781

5 *CI*, p. 782

6 *CI*, pp. 782-783

7 Cancik & Schneider ed., *Der Neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike* vol. 4, p. 1157

8 *CI*, p. 783

revolutionary nationalist whose theories inspired the Young Ireland movement in which Wilde's mother Speranza took part, establishing mental equivalence between the political suppression of republican nationalism and Wilde's sexual suppression as disciple of Athena or, conversely, between Mazzini's struggle to liberate Rome and Wilde's rebellious sexual impulse. Wilde symbolizes the oppressive force as unjust Sun: "our lives grow colourless / For lack of our ideals, if one star / Flame torch-like in the heavens the unjust / Swift daylight kills it",<sup>9</sup> uniting Rome, Athena and Apollo as the poem's interchangeable suppressive figures within a conceptual unity of sexual rebellion and political nationalism. Unification of Body and Spirit is defined by Wilde as "the last, the perfect creed", recalling Mazzini's journal *Pensiero ed Azione*, in its promotion of embodied thought in action, as well as Sufi theories of spiritualized sexuality, while characterizing the *coniunctio oppositorum* of body and mind as "harmony more mystical than that which binds the stars planetary".<sup>10</sup> This harmonious blending of soul and body is confined by Wilde's imagination to a Lost Paradise "when the world was young", incompatible with a modernity of enforced hypocrisy in which "we are most wretched who / must live each other's lives and not our own", evoking the state of the participant-victim.<sup>11</sup>

In his defensive adaptation to the *polis*, Wilde assumes the identity of his oppressor, breeding suspicion of universal inauthenticity by consciousness of his own inauthenticity. The poet thus recognizes "self-slain Humanity" as simultaneously "the lips betraying and the life betrayed", a universalized conception of the participant-victim as human condition.<sup>12</sup> 'Humanitad' concludes with an image of humanity

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9 *CI*, p. 786

10 *CI*, p. 789

11 *CI*, p. 789

12 *CI*, pp. 789 - 790

crucified, in which "that which is purely human, that is Godlike, that is God".<sup>13</sup> Rather than worship the crucifix as symbol of salvation, Wilde portrays it as an external persecution of Christ, or of the Christlike selfhood of all men: "loosen the nails - we shall come down I know."<sup>14</sup> The crucifixion thus becomes an ultimate emblem of thwarted individuation, suggesting the cruelly enforced sacrifice of the Arcadian Christ discussed in **Chapter Eleven**. The dominant themes of 'Humanitad' are thus the poet's conscious abandonment of love, of sexuality, of individualist self-realization and of republican nationalist ideals, his attempt to compensate by a narcissistic doctrine of self-sufficiency and his resulting alienated sense of life as barren, austere and colourless. These core themes of 'Humanitad', psychologically suggestive of regressive restoration of persona, resonate throughout the fiction of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde.

## 12.2 Abject Travesty of Lost Paradise

The image of winter, by which Wilde expresses the final renunciation of the Garden of Eros in 'Humanitad', has its clearest prose parallel in 'The Selfish Giant'. The Giant's attempt to exclude children from his garden, emblems of infantile security, to "allow nobody to play in it but myself"<sup>15</sup> establishes his narcissistic goal as becoming "self-poised, self-centred and self-comforted", the state that 'Humanitad's' poet extols when devoting himself to Athena. The result is an austere and barren reign of Snow, Frost, Hail and North Wind in a state of eternal winter, converting the garden into an abject travesty of the Garden of Eros. Discovering that "the children are the most beautiful flowers of all",<sup>16</sup> the Giant can only revive his garden by destroying its

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13 *CI*, p. 790

14 *CI*, p. 790

15 *CI*, p. 169

16 *CI*, p. 171

defences, allowing its penetration by children as a form of altruistic individuation. The Giant's final acceptance into Paradise by the Christ child is accompanied by the child's demonstration of his "wounds of Love",<sup>17</sup> which propose the acceptance of pain as precondition for the experience of love. The story as a whole may be read as an indictment of the model of narcissistic self-sufficiency, advocating surrender to the Christian ideal as a mode of escape from barren psychological alienation.

If the snowbound garden of the selfish Giant is an abject travesty of Wilde's Garden of Eros, then Nikolai Gogol's short story 'Koliaska' ('The Carriage') represents an abject travesty of his previously established Lost Paradise of Cossack comradeship. The story depicts a modern military comradeship conditional on the competitive flaunting of female possessions. During the dinner party of the general of a cavalry regiment, rhetorical displays of vaunted heterosexual prowess by a staff captain initiate competitive boasting.<sup>18</sup> Rhetorical heterosexual display is followed by the general's direct display of his female horse, Agrafena Ivanovna, for the scrutiny and admiration of the company. In view of *Dead Souls'* reference to a generic mistress as "Agrafena Ivanovna",<sup>19</sup> and with the general's horse described as a wild "southern beauty",<sup>20</sup> Agrafena Ivanovna may be suggested as representing a surrogate Oriental mistress. Chertokutsky's response is to boast of his *koliaska* carriage, inviting the company to come view it and his wife interchangeably.<sup>21</sup> The objectification of women in ritualized heterosexual display, as a precondition for male comradeship, is defamiliarized by its displacement onto actual objects, whether horse or carriage. Chertokutsky's escalating drunkenness, and consequent inability to perform socially, is manifested by his failure

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17 *CI*, p. 173

18 "the staff captain ... rather freely and smoothly recounted his romantic adventures" 'штаб-ротмистр [...] рассказывал довольно свободно и плавно любовные свои приключения" *SS* 3, p. 205

19 "к какой Аграфене Ивановне навевается" *SS* 5, p. 228

20 "южная красавица" *SS* 3, p. 201

21 "познакомитесь с хозяйкой дома" *SS* 3, p. 204

at cards, during which he "twice threw down a jack in place of a queen [lit. 'lady']".<sup>22</sup> If "throwing down a lady" represents a public display of female symbol, analogous to the ostentatious display of Agrafena Ivanovna and the *koliaska*, then the slip of playing a jack constitutes a mistake in the gender of the displayed card, analogous to a slipped pronoun in verbal display. In Gogol's one-act play, *The Gamblers*, he portrays a society of card sharps who mimic the etiquette and honour code of Gogol's own society while founding the entire social ritual on universal fraud, a concept which may be read as expressive of alienated persona. The role of the protagonist Ikharev's love interest is played by a deck of cards named Adelaida Ivanovna, who he casts aside after her betrayal with the stage directions revealing that "ladies and pairs [i.e. queens and deuces] fall to the floor",<sup>23</sup> a direction whose high symbolic value to the author may be deduced by the impossibility of its being visible to the audience in performance. This sequence, like Scene 12 of Gogol's *Marriage* where the heroine Agafia Tikhonovna compares her suitors to a king of clubs,<sup>24</sup> suggest a consistent mental association by Gogol of courtship ritual with cards, supporting the reading of Chertokutsky's slipped jack as a metaphorical error in courtship protocol.

The climax of 'Koliaska', in which the *koliaska* is thoroughly scrutinised by the company of men and revealed to have "simply nothing to it",<sup>25</sup> before being opened to reveal Chertokutsky in a humiliating state of undress and unusual bent posture within, positions spectacular failure of social performance and humiliating public exposure as the climax of a narrative of ostentatious heterosexual display. 'Koliaska', the Russian word for a type of light carriage, recalls a fusion of "Kolia" and "Paraska", with Paraska being the beautiful heroine of both Gogol's 'Sorochinsky Market' and of his

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22 "вместо дамы два раза сбросил валета" SS 3, p. 205

23 "Дами и двойки летят на пол" p. 533, SS 4

24 "трефовый король значит здесь дворянин" p. 429, SS 4

25 "Просто ничего нет.", p. 211, SS 4

father Vasily's only surviving play, *The Simpleton*,<sup>26</sup> and "Kolia" being the standard abbreviation of "Nikolai", suggesting *koliaska* as possibly representative of feminine alter-ego. This reading would give potential additional resonance to the hero's humiliation when revealed hiding inside, as the climax of a narrative of exposure anxiety. Though this reading is speculative, it may be further supported by noting the prominent positioning of the *koliaska* in *Dead Souls*, both colliding with Chichikov while carrying the nameless blonde to whom he develops his ambiguous infatuation in the first volume,<sup>27</sup> and becoming his own upgraded carriage after a selfless act in the second. The contention may also be circumstantially supported by Sergei Aksakov's account of Gogol's private cross-dressing.<sup>28</sup>

In summary, the fiction of both Oscar Wilde and Nikolai Gogol contains imagery that may be understood as abject travesty of their established Lost Paradise tropes. In Wilde's case, the conversion of the garden, associated with eros and Arcadian self-realization in 'The Garden of Eros', into a snowbound travesty of itself, is attributed in 'The Selfish Giant' to the protagonist's narcissistic rejection of altruism and children, marking the self-absorption which is a core feature of the Wildean dandy character as an essentially abject state in its author's own conception, further indicated by the use of winter as metaphor for renunciation of love in 'Humanitad'. In Gogol's case, the military comradeship which Gogol exalts in *Taras Bulba* as superior to familial bonds and inseparable from patriotism and piety, as discussed in **Chapter Eight**, can be viewed as replicated in abject travesty in 'Koliaska', where comradeship is conditional on the meaningless display of feminine objects. The portrayal in *The Gamblers* of an entire social ritual founded on universal fraud depicts the *polis* as a ritualized display of alienated persona, akin to Wilde's concept in 'Humanitad' of "self-slain Humanity" as

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26 'Простак', full text in Tomenko, pp. 63 - 76

27 SS 5, p. 113

28 Karlinsky, *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*, p. 205-206



universally "the lips betraying and the life betrayed".<sup>29</sup> A logical outcome of regarding the display of alienated persona as integral to social ritual would be the greater social success of the least motivated and most alienated individual. In *The Gamblers*, the protagonist Ikharev voices this view as the final moral of the play:

The devil take it! Such is the puffed-up earth! Luck only comes to he who is thick as a post, has no clue about anything, thinks nothing, does nothing and only plays boston for a groat with secondhand cards!<sup>30</sup>

This theme, of the vacuity or apathy of a character being intrinsic to their social success, recurs repeatedly in the works of both authors, to be analysed in the next section.

### 12.3 The Social Dominance of the Alienated Persona

The original prototype of the Wildean dandy is Prince Paul Maraloffski of his 1880 play *Vera, or the Nihilists*, first performed in 1883. The play's pivotal moment comes in its Third Act, with the acceptance of Prince Paul, former Prime Minister of Russia, into the conspiracy of nihilists on the grounds that his desire for revenge gives him "a right to be one of us".<sup>31</sup> This decision, acclaimed by all the nihilists apart from Vera, despite their short acquaintance with Maraloffski and their established hostility to him, is implausible from a realist perspective, which highlights its symbolic significance to Wilde as a recognition that his dandy's social rebellion constitutes a form of nihilism.

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29 *CI*, pp. 789 - 790

30 "Черт возьми! Такая уж надувательная земля! Только и лезет тому счастье, кто глуп, как бревно, ничего не смыслит, ни о чем не думает, ничего не делает, а играет только по грошу в бостон подержанными картами!" *SS 4*, p. 534

31 *CI*, p. 592

The nihilist's oath: "to stab secretly by night; to drop poison in the glass; to set father against son, and husband against wife; without fear, without hope, without future, to suffer, to annihilate, to revenge" is echoed in the activities of Prince Paul throughout the play.<sup>32</sup> Stabbing is suggested in the accusation that Paul "would stab his best friend for the sake of writing an epigram on his tombstone",<sup>33</sup> his occupation as Prime Minister is seen as a form of poisoning, having "poured into [the Czar's] ear the poison of treacherous council",<sup>34</sup> which also fulfill's the nihilist oath by setting the Czar as father against his son Alexis, while Prince Paul sets husband against wife by seducing the Marquis de Poivrard's wife and banishing her husband. Prince Paul's statement, when faced with the threat of losing one's head, that it "must often be very dull to keep it"<sup>35</sup> associates his subversive activities with suicidal levels of boredom, an alienated unconcern for his own life that sees him act "without fear, without hope, without future", while his stated aim of revenge against the Czarevitch, completing the last requirement of the oath, finally gains him admittance into the Nihilist conspiracy. Where the nihilists Vera and Alexis are unable to fulfil their oath "to strangle whatever nature is in me; neither to love nor to be loved; neither to pity nor to be pitied",<sup>36</sup> Prince Paul stands as an authentically loveless nihilist.

The central irony of *Vera, or, the Nihilists* is thus its revelation that it is not Prince Paul who poses as a nihilist, but the society of Nihilists who are posing as Prince Paul. There is major discrepancy between popular perceptions of the Wildean dandy as an amusing pose, and Wilde's original conception of the dandy as a destructive nihilist. Wilde's stage instructions direct the usually poised Prince Paul to speak "bitterly" when declaring: "the people, Prince, are not content with their own lives, they always want to

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32 *CI*, p. 573

33 *CI*, p. 584

34 *CI*, p. 582

35 *CI*, p. 595

36 *CI* p. 572

take their neighbour's too",<sup>37</sup> posing his nihilism as an embittered revenge for being forced to live an inauthentic life, while recalling Wilde's own characterization of "self-slain Humanity" as living each other's lives in 'Humanitad'. The inauthenticity enforced upon Paul becomes a social asset, productive of an alienated apathy that allows him to adapt to revolution and regime change with equal indifference while being eternally socially rewarded and invulnerable: "this is the ninth conspiracy I have been in in Russia. They always end in a *voyage en Sibirie* for my friends and a new decoration for myself."<sup>38</sup>

The social dominance and acclaim of the dandy is established as a general law by Lord Illingworth of *A Woman Of No Importance*: "the future belongs to the dandy. It is the exquisites who are going to rule."<sup>39</sup> Dr. Daubeny, acclaimed by society as "the most sympathetic of husbands. Quite a model!"<sup>40</sup> is introduced revelling in the society of the dandy Lord Illingworth,<sup>41</sup> before describing his wife apophatically through her blindness, deafness and inability to remember events beyond early childhood "since her last attack".<sup>42</sup> Mrs. Daubeny's disablement and absence become the necessary basis of Dr. Daubeny's social prestige as model husband, comparable to the dandy Illingworth's own disposable use of women. Lord Henry Wotton's social dominance over dinner parties in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* can equally be read as a product of the character's repeatedly expressed alienation, as discussed in **Chapter Five**. Wilde's stage directions for *An Ideal Husband* describe Lord Goring as "a flawless dandy" with an "expressionless face", being "fond of being misunderstood. It gives him a post of

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37 *CI*, p. 590

38 *CI*, p. 599

39 *CI*, p. 397

40 *CI*, p. 409

41 "I have never enjoyed myself more" *CI*, p. 391

42 *CI*, p. 393

vantage."<sup>43</sup> The dandy's emotional opacity and willingness to be misunderstood, like Khlestakov's or Chichikov's, facilitates others in the projection of their desires upon him, becoming the source of his "vantage", "flawlessness" and social power, though Prince Paul indicates that this social mastery comes at the cost of suicidal alienation.

The matriarch Lady Markby, in Wilde's *An Ideal Husband*, declares that "high intellectual pressure [...] makes the noses of the young girls so particularly large. And there is nothing so difficult to marry as a large nose; men don't like them"<sup>44</sup> implying her self-appointed duty to marry noses off while subjecting them to a social and sexual scrutiny farcically detached from their owners. Anxiety over the social and sexual scrutiny of an absent nose by ladies, and by the matriarch Podtochina in particular, forms the central plot of Gogol's 'Nose'. Freudian analyses of 'Nose', such as Peter Spycher's self-explanatory 'N. V. Gogol's "The Nose": A Satirical Comic Fantasy Born of an Impotence Complex',<sup>45</sup> emphasize the nose as surrogate penis. However, the resemblance between Wilde's concept of the sexually scrutinized noses of girls, and Gogol's concept of the sexually scrutinized noses of men, suggests that phallic symbolism may not be primary, with the nose also representing an immobile facial feature that is compulsorily displayed, characterised by Kovalev, hero of 'Nose', as "such a noticeable part of the body".<sup>46</sup> The character of Nozdrev, whose name suggests the Russian for "nostrils" (*nozdrī*), is described by Gogol as part of a tribe who "are always talkers, revellers, daredevils, noticeable people",<sup>47</sup> that is, those who live for their social image, his attributes recalling the bragging military comradeship of 'Koliaska'. Not only is an individual's nose displayed to all, but it can only be partially glimpsed by the individual themselves, with anxious scrutiny of one's own nose

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43 *CI*, p. 427

44 *CI*, p. 435

45 In *The Slavic and East European Journal*, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 361 – 374

46 "такой заметной части тела" *SS* 3, p. 66

47 "они всегда говоруны, кутилы, лихачы, народ видный" *SS* 5, p. 88

resulting in a squint like that of the socially self-conscious and self-deprecating "squinting Ivan Ivanovich", discussed in **Chapter Five**, even as the madman Poprishchin's total loss of self-awareness leads to his conviction that noses are living independently on the moon.<sup>48</sup> The Freudian interpretation, originating in the heterosexual male perspective, identifies sexual performance anxiety as the underlying issue motivating social interactions. The nose symbolism of Gogol and Wilde, however, conversely suggests social performance anxiety as the underlying issue motivating sexual interactions. Like Wilde's hypothetical Ernest, Gogol's sentient nose represents a hyper-competent and admired social performer of uncertain existential status, with whom the anxious protagonist struggles to merge his own identity. That is, a persona. The aesthetics of farce, with their conventional detachment of action from intention, or even the foregrounded absence of apophasis, may be required to convey the inherently surreal experience of personal dislocation from persona, induced by social censorship and thwarted individuation. The defining feature of Gogol's nose, apart from his uncertain humanity and surreal detachment from the individual to whom he theoretically belongs, is that he outranks the protagonist and performs socially approved values such as piety more skillfully, as illustrated during the central confrontation in Kazan Cathedral. This concept, that total alienation or internal void are social assets, is a core attribute not only of the surreal nose but of the Wildean dandy and the Gogolian impostors Khlestakov and Chichikov.

If the culture of the *polis* is conceived as abject travesty founded on the ritual display of persona, then the individual with least sincerity can best dominate it, fitted by his internal alienation with maximal adaptability of image. This is true of Gogol's

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48 "The moon itself is such a tender sphere that people can't live on it and now only noses alone live there. And that's why we can't see our noses, because they're all on the moon" ("Самая луна — такой нежный шар, что люди никак не могут жить, и там теперь живут только одни носы. И по тому-то самому мы не можем видеть носов своих, ибо они все находятся в луне") *SS 3*, p. 234

rootless impostors, Chichikov and Khlestakov, in the effortless with which they socially dominate provincial towns, as does the compulsive liar Nozdrev. The similarity between the characterization of Khlestakov and Nozdrev, in their shared absence of inner monologue, and Khlestakov's resemblance to the detached Nose itself, has been noted by Yuri Mann.<sup>49</sup> The importance of internal void to Gogol's conception of Khlestakov is underlined in his notes to the actors of *The Inspector General*, which emphasise the character's absence of motivation through his description as "empty-headed. Talks and acts without any forethought".<sup>50</sup> For readily accepting the fantasies that the townspeople project onto him, Khlestakov is richly rewarded with multiple bribes and hospitality, before leaving town without facing any consequences for his impersonation. An intercepted letter of Khlestakov's reveals his own ability to see through the personas of each of the townspeople, while he himself remains opaque to them. Among the fantasies in which he colludes, Khlestakov makes undifferentiated kneeling proposals to both the mayor's wife and his daughter, before physically fleeing the marriage itself. Khlestakov's romantic rhetoric becomes maximally hyperbolic through its liberation from consequence, intensified even through threat of suicide: "I love you. My life hangs by a thread. If you do not crown my eternal love with success, then I am unworthy of earthly existence. With fire in my chest I ask for your hand".<sup>51</sup> Such rhetoric, when addressed to a married woman and repeated immediately thereafter to her daughter, with identical kneeling earnestness, all within the context of Khlestakov's imminent and permanent departure, devalues the social rituals of marriage and love, detaching them from both the individuality of their object and the intentions

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49 The characterization of Khlestakov is compared to Kovalev's nose on p. 231; Khlestakov is compared to Nozdrev in their shared lack of inner monologue on p. 323, Mann, *Poetika Gogolia*

50 "один из тех людей, которых [...] называют пустейшими. Говорит и действует без всякого соображения" SS 4, p. 294

51 "я влюблен в вас. Жизнь моя на волоске. Если вы не увенчаете постоянную любовь мою, то я недостоин земного существования. С пламенем в груди прошу руки вашей." SS 4, p. 376

of their speaker. Khlestakov's romantic triumphs, like his social success, are conditional on his absence of motivation or emotional investment and on his paradoxically empowering alienation.

In chapter 9 of *Dead Souls*, the plot of *The Inspector General* is spontaneously fantasized by the townsfolk of N. and projected onto Chichikov without his participation, during his convalescence from an illness. After the governor's ball, the male society of N. devise the hypothesis of Chichikov's being an incognito government agent, while the society of ladies fantasize a "secret heartfelt connection" between Chichikov and the governor's wife,<sup>52</sup> utilized to gain access to the governor's daughter. The farcically hyperbolic heterosexuality assumed of the absent Chichikov also credits him with the intention of abducting the governor's daughter, after a fantasized proposal which the governor would have allowed "if the reason was not [Chichikov's] wife, who he had abandoned (how they found out that Chichikov was married – nobody knew)",<sup>53</sup> adding a pre-existing fantasized marriage to the fantasized intended marriage supposedly furthered through a fantasized affair with a married woman. The overall result is to implicitly demonstrate Gogol's concept of Khlestakov's personal redundancy to the plot of *The Inspector General*, in that plot's ability to be fully generated and even embellished within the imagination of a provincial town, without the knowledge or participation of its protagonist.

Such a portrayal of the hero's redundancy to his own courtships may be compared to Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, where Cecily fantasizes her love affair with Ernest prior to the arrival of his impersonator, supporting her version of events by her diary as documentation, including detailed social rituals of gifts and compliments that climax in an absentee proposal as "worn out by your entire ignorance

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52 "сердечную тайную связь" SS 5, p. 244

53 "если бы причиною не была жена его, которую он бросил (откуда они узнали, что Чичиков женат, - это никому не было ведомо)" SS 5, p. 244

of my existence, I determined to end the matter one way or the other, and after a long struggle with myself I accepted you under this dear old tree here."<sup>54</sup> Wider comparison can be drawn between *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *The Inspector General*, as farces in which the social prestige and perceived sexual attractiveness of the protagonists are based on mistaken identity, expressive of alienation from persona.

The hyperbolic heterosexuality attributed to Chichikov by the gossiping women is compared by Gogol's narrator to a hypothetical researcher, who concludes decisively of ancient literature: "so this is the *narod* that must be understood, so this is the perspective from which the subject should be viewed!"<sup>55</sup> Although *narod* can refer more broadly to any group of people, its primary meaning is a nation, folk or ethnic group, raising the possibility of the critic's misattributing ethnicity in the work under study, as equivalent to farcical heteronormativity. Compare Wilde's statement in *The Decay of Lying*: "nations and individuals, with that healthy natural vanity which is the secret of existence, are always under the impression that it is of them that the Muses are talking ... always forgetting that the singer of life is not Apollo but Marsyas".<sup>56</sup> The brutally silenced satyr Marsyas, compared to the Nightingale in 'The Burden of Itys', is here claimed to represent authentic nationality as well as authentic individual identity, each misread by the vanity of Apollo. A mental association, by both authors, of the Russian/English with compulsory heterosexuality could explain their shared effacement of Ukrainian/Irish identity within narratives of farcical heterosexuality and mistaken identity.

The townspeople's attribution of social mastery to Chichikov, through mistaken identity, peaks with the assumption of his being not only Napoleon, but thereby the

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54 *CI*, p. 515

55 "так вот какой народ надо разуметь, так вот с какой точки нужно смотреть на предмет!" *SS 5*, p. 241

56 Wilde, *De Profundis, the Ballad of Reading Gaol & Other Writings*, p. 164



Antichrist who "will take over the whole world",<sup>57</sup> a maximal zenith of attributed agency, skill and social dominance to the impostor's detached persona, while of minimal utility to the man himself. The spotted horse, described like Chichikov as a "scoundrel", is also farcically cursed as "you damned Bonaparte!"<sup>58</sup> In the same chapter, Chichikov is mistaken for the one-legged and one-armed Captain Kopeikin, who may have avenged himself against an uncaring society by becoming a bandit chief. Though a farcical comparison, due to the manifestly intact limbs of Chichikov, a deeper equivalence with Kopeikin would connote Gogol's protagonist as metaphorically mutilated or irrevocably lacking in comparison with the rest of society. The suggestion that Chichikov's quest to domestically establish himself fraudulently is comparable to the vengeance of a bandit chief, may be compared to Wilde's suggestion that Prince Paul's dandyism is comparable to revolutionary nihilism. Although Chichikov has more complex inner life than the "empty-headed" Khlestakov, his defining characteristic is his lack of personal integrity in adapting himself to the expectations of others: "our Pavel Ivanovich demonstrated an unusually pliable ability to adjust to everything".<sup>59</sup> As with the Wildean dandy, so the Gogolian impostor is a masterful abject who derives social power from opacity and from willingness to be projected upon, proceeding from poverty of emotional attachment and alienation from persona.

#### **12.4 Prioritization of Food as Hallmark of Self-Comfort**

The prioritization of food, as a form of self-pleasuring independent of emotional investment in others, features in the work of both authors as the hallmark of the "self-poised, self-centred and self-comforted" man. Prince Paul Maraloffski repeatedly

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57 "овладеет всем миром" SS 5, p. 264

58 "Бонапарт ты проклятый!" SS 5, p. 50,

59 "Павел Иванович наш показал необыкновенно гибкую способность приспособиться ко всему" SS 5, p. 521

demonstrates his prioritization of food over political revolution, as when defining the turbulent history of France through its culinary expressions: "*côtelettes à l'imperiale* vanished of course with the Bonaparte, and omelettes went out with the Orleanists. La Belle France is entirely ruined, Prince, through bad morals and worse cooking".<sup>60</sup> His statement that "a prison where one's allowed to order one's own dinner is not at all a bad place" expresses apparent indifference to liberty,<sup>61</sup> or potentially suggests that Paul's affluent life is itself lacking in freedom, to the point of being meaningfully distinguished from prison only by the quality of its cookery.

The other Wildean character most strongly characterized by prioritization of food, Algernon Moncrieff of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, dedicates his life to "Bunburying", the practice of social deception and fictitious exploit, while finding love to be conditional on his impersonation of Ernest, the all-powerful persona whose hypothetical existence dominates the play. Algernon's lack of altruistic attachment to his aunt, demonstrated by eating her cucumber sandwiches, is the first tangible evidence of his prioritization of self-comfort and of his poverty of emotional attachment. Algy's chronic hunger accompanies a pronounced tendency towards philosophical nihilism, regarding nothing as beyond dispute and stating that argument is "exactly what things were originally made for".<sup>62</sup> Jack's response, "upon my word, if I thought that, I'd shoot myself",<sup>63</sup> suggests Algy's nihilism as potentially productive of suicidal impulse, recalling Prince Paul's boredom over keeping his head, to form a broader association between prioritization of food, nihilism and suicidal alienation. Algernon himself later admits "one must be serious about something, if one wants to

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60 *CI*, p. 583

61 *CI*, p. 581

62 *CI*, p. 502

63 *Ibid.*

have any amusement in life. I happen to be serious about Bunburying",<sup>64</sup> affirming the dandy's own emotional need for earnestness, though within a thematic antinomy whereby deception itself becomes his authentic object.

Patricia Behrendt suggests that the cucumber sandwiches and muffins of *The Importance of Being Earnest* "provide the auto-erotic accompaniment to discussions of sentiment and love",<sup>65</sup> proposing Wilde's equation of romantic satisfaction to the "autoerotic" satisfaction of food, as a further manifestation of his alleged "Blind Eros". Though Algernon's eating of muffins during a romantic crisis is branded "perfectly heartless", he himself proposes that he is "eating muffins because I am unhappy",<sup>66</sup> posing the consumption of food as substitute for emotional fulfilment rather than autoerotic accompaniment. The overall effect of concluding the second act with a dispute over muffins is to trivialize the significance of its heterosexual romantic plot through the dandy's "heartless" prioritization of food. Wilde himself stated "there are two ways of disliking my plays. One is to dislike them, the other is to like *Earnest*",<sup>67</sup> indicating that, while it arguably represents the peak of Wilde's craftsmanship in its sustained generation of interpretative suspense through apophatic protagonist and compounded thematic antinomy, the play was regarded by the author himself as least representative of his personal themes. No nightingale sings in the dear old tree beneath which Cecily Cardew accepts the proposal of a man who never existed. The significance of prioritized food within this narrative of nihilistic narcissism, as a reflection of renounced romantic reciprocity, characteristic not of autoerotic ideal but of abjection, may be further indicated by close comparison with the theme of prioritization of food in the work of Nikolai Gogol.

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64 *CI*, p. 522

65 Behrendt, *Oscar Wilde; Eros and Aesthetics*, p. 74

66 *CI*, p. 523

67 Quoted in Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 561 - 562

In the opening chapter of *Dead Souls*, Gogol divides the society of men into two sexual categories according to their girth, "the thin, who constantly hung around the ladies ... the fat, or those like Chichikov, that is, not too fat, but then again, not thin. These, on the contrary, looked askance at and backed away from the ladies".<sup>68</sup> This is followed by a long description of the fat as being domestically established and naturally the more productive members of society, a description which does not include those who are "not too fat, but then again, not thin", suggesting that Chichikov represents an ambiguous intermediate category, neither productive nor sexually successful. During the governor's ball of chapter eight, which provides the most circumstantial evidence of Chichikov's heterosexuality, Gogol states that it is "doubtful whether gentlemen of that sort, that is not quite fat but not quite thin, were capable of love",<sup>69</sup> attributing their avoidance of romance to absence of desire.

Association of gluttony with emotional invulnerability is implied most clearly by the second volume's portrayal of Petr Petrovich Petukh, as archetypal self-comforted man. Petukh's invulnerability is suggested when he is introduced, fishing in a lake: "drowning, by reason of his girth, wasn't possible".<sup>70</sup> His narcissism is demonstrated by his indifference to his children's inheritance, which frustrates the involuntarily childless Chichikov. Petukh's solution to the *ennui* of Plato is to recommend that he try lunching better, even as Chichikov believes that Plato requires an estate, each projecting the primary object of their own tastes as cure for the undefined alienation of the Grecian beauty. The reader is told that Petukh's descriptions of food "would wake an appetite in

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68 "тоненькие, которые всё увивались около дам ... толстые или такие же, как Чичиков, то есть не так чтобы слишком толстые, однако ж и не тонкие. Эти, напротив того, косились и пяtilись от дам" SS 5, p. 17

69 "сомнительно, чтобы господа такого рода, то есть не так чтобы толстые, однако ж и не то чтобы тонкие, способны были к любви" SS 5, p. 215

70 "потонуть, по причине толщины, он не мог" SS 5, p. 543

a dead man",<sup>71</sup> with even the deadened Plato conceding "naturally, if you lunch like that, how could *ennui* enter into it!"<sup>72</sup> endorsing prioritization of food as cure for Grecian alienation. The role of food as sexual substitute is further implied by Petukh's dispensing second helpings with the statement "neither a person nor a bird can live on earth without a mate".<sup>73</sup>

If the equivalence of Chichikov and Captain Kopeikin is accepted as more than farcical, then Chichikov's frustration in witnessing the domestic establishments of others, while involuntarily lacking his own, becomes equivalent to Kopeikin's frustration in witnessing the lavish meals of others while his own diet is impoverished through involuntary crippling. Heterosexual sex is directly compared to breaking Lenten fast by Cossacks in both 'The Night Before Christmas' and 'Vii',<sup>74</sup> suggesting sexuality as tempting but prohibited appetite. In 'Old World Landowners', the prioritization of food over the romantic is total, with the final words of the husband to his dying wife, traditionally an emotionally significant moment, being devoted to rituals of eating: "perhaps you would eat something, Pulkheria Ivanovna?"<sup>75</sup> Within the hyperfertile yet sexless idyll of Gogol's 'Old World Landowners', whose marital couple limit their conversation to banalities of food and clothing, while the pregnancy of female servants is treated as a mysterious phenomenon of narratively obscured cause, the first explicit reference to sexuality comes from a "seduced" cat who "had acquired romantic principles that poverty with love was better than a palace",<sup>76</sup> interpreted by Pulkheria Ivanovna as an omen of her impending death. The forbidden knowledge that the cat represents, of the insufficiency of prioritized food in the absence of sexual

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71 "у мертвого родился бы аппетит" SS 5, p. 555

72 "Разумеется, если этак пообедаеть, как тут прийти скуке!" SS 5, p. 552

73 "Без пары ни человек, ни птица не могут жить на свете" SS 5, p. 550

74 Khoma rejects the witch's advances with "не захочу оскоромиться" in *Vii* (SS 2, p.569), while Cossacks in *The Night Before Christmas* compare having wives to a weakness for *skoromnii* (SS 1, p. 275)

75 "может быть, вы чего-нибудь бы покушали, Пульхерия Ивановна?" SS 2, p. 401

76 'набралась романтических правил, что бедность при любви лучше палат' SS 2, p. 398

passion, is thereby proposed as the trigger for Pulkheria's destruction. Taken collectively, these references represent a consistent theme of prioritized food as hallmark of the invulnerable asexual and as sexual substitute, comparable to the association of the romantically apathetic and socially masterful Wildean dandy with prioritization of food.

The social dominance and acclaim which both authors associate in fiction with the characters of the Wildean dandy and the Gogolian impostor was matched in actuality by the critical and commercial success of works dominated by these personas, particularly Gogol's *The Inspector General* and Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. It is therefore worth noting that the poetic cycle of Wilde's *Poems* establishes this theme, the valorization of the "self-poised, self-centred and self-comforted" man in 'Humanitad', not as the direct representation of the poet's desires but as a regressive restoration of persona, enforced by socially thwarted individuation. That Wilde's entire individuation cycle, whose symbolism resonates throughout his fiction, was already expressed in his first volume of published poetry, justifies his claim in 'De Profundis' that "all this is foreshadowed and prefigured in my art [...] At every single moment of one's life one is what one is going to be no less than what one has been."<sup>77</sup> The conceptual cycle in *Poems* mirrors a chronological cycle in the fiction of Nikolai Gogol, from the conceptualizing of Lost Paradise in *Hanz Kuchelgarten*, through the themes of dissociation and realization of the shadow in the Ukrainian tales, to culminate in the masterful persona and individuation narrative of *Dead Souls*, implying the psychological authenticity and resonance of Wilde's composition.

The major study dedicated to Nikolai Gogol's homosexuality, Simon Karlinsky's *The Sexual Labyrinth of Nikolai Gogol*, was founded on the presumption of Gogol's

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<sup>77</sup> Wilde, *De Profundis, the Ballad of Reading Gaol & Other Writings*, pp. 68-69

internalized homophobia and chronic sexual guilt. Noting how profound the conceptual parallels are between Gogol's portrayal of sexuality and that of Wilde, whose active homosexuality is documented, as well as Wilde's stated belief that Uranian love was "more noble than other forms",<sup>78</sup> suggests either that Karlinsky's reading of Gogol's severe internalized homophobia is incorrect, or that it is applicable only to the final phase of Gogol's life after his creative output ceased, or that their shared experience of social stigma shaped both authors' portrayals of sexuality more profoundly than their divergent personal attitudes towards that sexuality. This shared experience of social censorship, in shaping the authors' parallel fears of exposure through artwork, compelling their parallel use of wholesale interpretative suspense which defines their distinctive aesthetics, and dictating a closely parallel psychological narrative of dissociation and thwarted individuation as their major theme, becomes foundational to the literary achievement of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde.

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78 Holland, *Irish Peacock & Scarlet Marquess; The Real Trial of Oscar Wilde*, p. xxxvi

## Conclusion

"Only the real masters of style ever succeed in being obscure" - Oscar Wilde, 'Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young'

Study of the shared themes, narratives and aesthetic devices of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde ends not in a mighty climax, with the thunderous rise of a Ruthenian *bogaty*r or the resplendent emergence of an Arcadian Christ, but with an alienated persona wandering the world like a detached nose, winning always greater acclaim and success than the human behind it. When regarding two personalities as opposite as those of Oscar Wilde and Nikolai Gogol, extroverted Irish anarchist and introverted Ukrainian conservative, the extensive similarities which this thesis has documented in their fiction must raise the question of whether they could have written in any other form. If not, our choice to elevate narrative genres of art as canonical and representative at the expense of farce, horror and fable, amounts to a reinforcement of mainstream perspectives in society at the expense of censored perspectives. The dominance of magic realism in a Latin American literature shaped by ethnic hybridity and political dictatorship, or its use by Salman Rushdie to explore ethnic and religious tensions in India, offer themselves as examples of an organic connection between censorship pressures and aesthetics on the global stage. The relationship between Jewish humour and the assimilation pressures experienced by the Jewish diaspora could be cited as a further example.

At the conclusion of the literature review of **Chapter One**, I undertook to assess this thesis under several headings: as a comparative study of Russo-Ukrainian and Anglo-Irish literature; as an application of Gogolian aesthetics of negativity to the work



of Oscar Wilde; as an exploration of the intersection of the metrocolonial and homoerotic imaginations, toward the possible contextualization of Nikolai Gogol as a closeted writer; and as a step toward a transhistorical and transcultural Jungian model of the homoerotic male imagination. The success of these aims is reviewed below.

### **Towards Comparative Study of Russo-Ukrainian and Anglo-Irish Literature**

The highly comparable position of Ukraine and Ireland in the 19th century, as colonized nations without statehood, under assimilation pressure to the neighbouring imperial power, opens up wide fields of literary comparison between the two nations. The task of reclaiming Russo-Ukrainian literature, in the broadest sense of all compositions by Ukrainian writers in the Russian language, and conceptualizing its significance to the Ukrainian canon, may be accelerated through its detailed comparison to Anglo-Irish literature, since the reclamation of Anglo-Irish literature into an Irish canon is more advanced because of the greater erosion of Ireland's native language. The extensive parallels located by this thesis in the treatment of ethnicity by Oscar Wilde and Nikolai Gogol point toward the viability of such a project. Other possible areas of comparison might include the strategies of Vasily Kapnist and Jonathan Swift as 18th-century satirists and polemicists, the use of Spain as oppressive state by narratives of the demonic antihero such as Nikolai Gnedich's *Don Corrado de Gerrera* and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, the aristocratic female construction of peasant culture by Marko Vovchok and Lady Augusta Gregory, the sexualization of ethnic contamination and the theme of the precolonial revenant in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Nikolai Gogol's 'Terrible Vengeance', or the magic realism of Mikhail Bulgakov and Flann O'Brien. The use of concepts such as anglonormativity or russonormativity, to apply the literary models of queer theory to the complex

psychology of ethnic assimilation, which is suggested by the equivalence that Wilde and Gogol themselves perceived between the two issues, may have wider productive application to analysis of any author's Ukrainian ethnicity when writing in the Russian language or of any Irish author writing in English.

Aside from the general utility of Anglo-Irish literature toward the reclamation of Russo-Ukrainian literature, Nikolai Gogol also has specific utility for Irish contextualization of Oscar Wilde's ethnicity. Gogol's extensive treatment of Ukraine before switching wholly to Russian themes, and his demonstrable labelling of Ukrainian materials as Russian in the process, have prompted a large body of Ukrainian scholarship devoted to the analysis of Nikolai Gogol's ethnic crossing or artistic closeting and its psychological dynamics. References to Ireland in the published writings of Oscar Wilde are, by contrast, extremely sparse, in spite of the continued engagement with Ireland's cultural revival demonstrated by his joining the Irish Literary Society in the 1890s. By making a detailed comparative analysis of patterns of ethnic representation in the writing of Nikolai Gogol and Oscar Wilde, this thesis has established their extensive conceptual parallels, opening a potential avenue for Irish researchers to more securely define Oscar Wilde as a closeted nationalist, whose expression of Irish identity was constrained by its consistent association with a censored homoerotic identity.

### **Applying Gogolian Negativity to the Fiction Of Oscar Wilde**

This thesis has established that Oscar Wilde and Nikolai Gogol share a wide range of recurrent features in their depiction of the artistic process, including repeated preoccupation with mimesis as a source of horror, exposure through art-work, the destruction of artists through the artistic process and aversion to reader interpretation.

The high correlation between both authors in their treatment of these themes, and the high consistency with which these themes are repeated within the fiction of each author, suggests that Gogol and Wilde may be fruitfully compared as closeted authors, rather than divided by their attribution to the distinct literary schools of Russian realism and Victorian aestheticism. Nikolai Gogol's overt rupture of literary convention has necessitated new schools of literary criticism for the purpose of defining and appreciating his poetics. As discussed in **Chapter One**, criticism of Gogol played a foundational role in the development of the critical school of Russian formalism, while emerging theories of literary negativity, focussed on the employment of apophasis, antinomy, hypertrophy and hypotrophy have been productively applied to the author more recently. Oscar Wilde was more conventional in his usage of established genres such as the society comedy, Gothic horror or fairy-tale, allowing his artistic success or failure to be evaluated according to conventional generic expectations. It is the finding of this thesis that the poetics of negativity, already applied extensively to the work of Nikolai Gogol, have equal application to the fiction of Oscar Wilde, allowing his contextualization within an alternate poetics of 'aesthetic of effacement', whose primary goal is the generation of interpretative suspense and deprioritization, for the purpose of plausibly deniable self-expression, towards an alternative canon of censored authors whose work should be judged according to their distinct representational imperatives.

### **Towards Intersectional Study of the Metrocolonial Homoerotic**

The conclusion of this thesis is that all major patterns within Nikolai Gogol's literary treatment of sexuality have direct parallels in the fiction of Oscar Wilde, suggesting that the fiction of Nikolai Gogol may plausibly be contextualized as an expression of closeted homoeroticism. Further, the high correlation between Gogol's

treatment of ethnicity and that of Wilde is suggestive not only of a shared experience as a metrocolonial people – in the sense of partially assimilated colonized subjects – but of self-expression shaped by the unique intersection of the homoerotic and metrocolonial, in which each state becomes expressive of the other through heightened sexualization of ethnic conflict, through ethnic coding of sexual conflict and through artistic closeting of the homeland by its patriotic association with homoeroticism. The evidence of homoeroticism in Bram Stoker's 1872 letter to Walt Whitman, and the strong thematic parallels between Stoker's *Dracula* and Gogol's 'Terrible Vengeance', suggest Stoker as the most immediate candidate for further comparative analysis. The iconic dream sequence in *Dracula* where sexually aggressive female vampires dominate the passive protagonist before being revealed as powerless agents of the more fascinating and dominant Dracula, exactly matches the pattern of representation noted in Gogol's 'Vii' and Wilde's 'The Fisherman and his Soul' and discussed in **Chapter Ten**, while Stoker's short story 'The Dualitists' is highly suggestive of dissociation anxiety. Rather than attempting to read an isolated author's homosexuality into postcolonial discussions of their ethnicity, the high convergence of thematic patterning in Gogol and Wilde's treatment of both sexuality and ethnicity, as well as their further parallels with Stoker, may point the way to the formation of a distinctive postcolonial queer canon from which a general model can be extrapolated.

### **Toward a Transhistorical and Transcultural Jungian Model of the Homoerotic Male Imagination**

The conclusion of this thesis is that the psychological dynamics evident in Oscar Wilde's cycle of epic poems within his first published poetry collection, *Poems*, are not only fundamental for the decipherment of Wilde's later personal symbolism, but are

closely echoed by the psychological dynamics within Nikolai Gogol's fiction and explicable by Carl Jung's model of the individuation cycle. This suggests both that Wilde's poetry should receive more extensive critical attention as a sincere expression of its author's psychology, and that it may form the basis of a more robust Jungian model of the homoerotic male imagination. While all the archetypal patterns which Jung attributed to the psychological dynamics of repression are represented in the fiction of Wilde and Gogol, Jung's specific theories on the nature and origin of homosexuality are not corroborated, nor were they based on a detailed transhistorical and transcultural analysis of homoerotic writers of genius, equivalent to the technique by which Jung extrapolated his general psychological model. This thesis contends that Jung's model of psychological repression, and its symbolism by the imagination, is more relevant to censored perspectives than to the perspectives of the dominant group, and that Jung's own methodology may be used to address blind-spots within his research. In its applicability to the imagination of Nikolai Gogol, the psychological cycle of Wilde's *Poems* proposes itself as a highly culturally appropriate tool, from a canonical gay icon, through which to redress the balance. Only its further application to other writers, cultures and time periods can confirm how universal it may be as a model of closeted homoerotic psychology.

Artistic expression offers perhaps our most direct access to the worldview and imagination of another human being, which is the source of both its fascination and its terror to the censored or dissociated, as *The Picture of Dorian Gray* compellingly illustrates. Only a deeper investigation of the techniques of masking has the potential to uncover that which those masks both conceal and reveal, to reconstruct the lost subjectivities of historically censored groups. The status of Oscar Wilde, as a writer whose important works were composed under censorship conditions, and yet whose

censored self was extensively exposed and documented, make him an almost uniquely suitable subject toward the extrapolation of a robust, widely applicable model of artistic and literary closeting, whose capacity to illuminate the writings of the traditionally elusive Nikolai Gogol might represent only the first of many applications.

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## Appendix 1 - LIBRARY OF CONGRESS SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATION

### – RUSSIAN

А а – A a

Б б – B b

В в – V v

Г г – G g

Д д – D d

Е е – E e

Ё ё – Ё ё

Ж ж – Zh zh

З з – Z z

И и – I i

Й й – I i

К к – K k

Л л – L l

М м – M m

Н н – N n

О о – O o

П п – P p

Р р – R r

С с – S s

Т т – T t

У у – U u

Ф ф – F f

Х х – Kh kh

Ц ц – TS ts

Ч ч – Ch ch

Ш ш – Sh sh

Щ щ – Shch shch

Ъ ъ - “ “

Ы ы – Y y

Ь ь - ' '

Э э – E e

Ю ю - IU iu

Я я – IA ia

## **UKRAINIAN**

Г г – H h

Ґ ґ – G g

Є є – IE ie

И и – Y y

І і – I i

Ї ї – I i