

‘(RE)HIBERNICIZING WILDE? A GENETIC ANALYSIS OF *THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY*’

The 1980s and 1990s marked the beginnings of sustained attempts to recover the Irish Oscar Wilde, a project that continues to be the subject of contention to this day. While the lack of explicitly Irish matter in Wilde’s creative output led critics such as Declan Kiberd and Jerusha McCormack to judge Wilde’s Irishness to be a conflicted, shifting and, often, paradoxical affair, the manner in which this end-of-the-century rehabilitation of ‘Wilde the Irishman’ was being conducted (particularly in the collection of essays bearing that name) was contested by another Wilde scholar, Ian Small, who, for one, considered certain aspects of this hibernicisation to be ‘highly speculative’.¹ To avoid this critical impasse in Wilde studies, alternatively, Small suggested that ‘a useful project’ for this field would be ‘to reconcile the insights generated by critical theory with the attention to secure evidence associated with traditional empiricist historiography’.² Contemporaneously, Neil Sammells also warned his compeers that ‘to understand Wilde’s Irishness we should not scrape away the accretions of Englishness to uncover an authentic Celtic core or essence’ and proposed that Wilde’s Irishness should be understood as ‘a form of discursive play and performance ... [where] national identity becomes a theatrical, “liminal space” in which Irishness and Englishness encounter and collapse into each other.’³ Sammells’s call to reappraise Wilde’s national identity in line with the commitment to anti-essentialism and performativity that can be adduced from both his works and life can be felt, for example, in Maureen O’Connor’s focus on Wilde’s ‘[dis]identification’ with Ireland. Observing how Wilde’s ‘very fissured and fantastic’ vision of Ireland produced ‘startling literary hybrids’, O’Connor explored how this conscious *méconnaissance* on Wilde’s part led him to resurrect the genre of the Irish national tale

in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.⁴ That the debate over the precise constituency of Wilde's Irishness continues apace is suggested by the publication in 2014 of articles on this subject by Thomas Wright, Anne Markey and Richard Haslam. Where Wright underlines Wilde's commitment to Irish affairs by uncovering his membership of the (Liberal) Home Rule Association, the Eighty Club, from 1887 onwards, by contrast, both Haslam and Markey continue to strenuously question the manner in which the recovery of the Irish Wilde has been conducted.⁵ In particular, Haslam's article, to which mine is in many ways a response, reignites Small's warnings of what he, in this instance, considers to be the 'hermeneutic hazards' attending the 'hibernicizing' of Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Suggestively, the publication of Wilde's original ('Uncensored') typescript of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Harvard University Press in 2011, which putatively precedes the Lippincott's Magazine version of 1890, both invites further anti-essentialist readings of the novel analogous to Sammells and Markey's critiques and affords the theoretical and materialist rigour that Small and, latterly, Haslam stipulate should attend the recovery of the Irish Wilde.⁶ Here, the application of (French) genetic criticism in its desacralization of '*The Text*' *per se* in favour of tracing the texts inhering in the text, its exploration of both the changing temporal developments of the text and the impact of 'external social, economic and cultural' forces on production draws attention to the amendments and additions that can be elicited from the three extant versions of the novel that are now available to us.⁷ Indeed, the immediate reservations about the integrity and originality of the 'Uncensored' Harvard version expressed by Josephine Guy and editor Nicholas Frankel's subsequent defence of this putative ur-text underline the necessity of further genetic critique of the novel.⁸ While, according to Frankel, the value of the 'Uncensored'

version rests on its revelation of ‘the social antagonisms and broader political forces’ that underpinned the novel from its very outset, significantly, genetic criticism can also be deployed to effect a reappraisal of the seven new chapters that Wilde produced for the final version of *Dorian Gray* for Ward, Lock & Company in 1891.⁹ In light of the ways in which critics from David Lloyd to Declan Kiberd have variously characterised Ireland’s relation to Britain in the nineteenth century in colonial terms, it is striking that this new material is expressly concerned not only with the ramifications of contemporary British imperialism and, for Wilde, its links to material and social inequality in *fin-de-siècle* England but also was written during the unfolding of the sexual scandal in which Charles Stewart Parnell became mired.¹⁰ With the novel variously overlapping the conception and dissemination of the utopian global aesthetics that Wilde first mooted in his critical dialogue ‘The True Function and Value of Criticism’ between July and September 1890 and his protests against material and political inequality in ‘The Soul of Man Under Socialism’ (February 1891), the mediation of class, Englishness and empire to be adduced from *The Picture[s] of Dorian Gray* promises to elucidate the shifting valences of Wilde’s national self-fashioning further.¹¹

Avant-Textes?

In editing a collection of essays (*Wilde Discoveries*) based on the ‘Oscar Wilde and His Circle’ archive housed at the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library in California, Joseph Bristow has stressed the ways in which Wilde’s ephemera ‘enables us to gain insight into such matters as Wilde’s sedulous methods of composition, his revealing corrections to proof copies and his various lives as a fashionable celebrity, public lecturer and prolific journalist’.¹² In this respect, genetic criticism’s various

interests in applying a range of critical approaches - from composition history to gender theory- to the documents and manuscripts that precede and influence '*the Text*' (the so-called '*avant-textes*') have proven invaluable in assessing the extent to which Wilde's early letters, lectures, reviews, and poetry can be seen variously to shape the three extant versions of his only novel.¹³ And, in line with Sammells's vision of Wilde's anti-essentialist and performative identity, it is significant that this archive of *avant-textes* elicits an evolving national identity on Wilde's part from the outset of his career. Elsewhere, in his analysis of Wilde's decorated books Nicholas Frankel uses the fact of Wilde publishing twenty-four poems in Irish magazines (until 1879) while simultaneously perfecting his English accent at Oxford as evidence of a 'split' in his national identity. Similarly, an early letter to Father Matthew Russell, the editor of the Catholic magazine the *Irish Monthly*, also reveals a conflicted national identity on Wilde's part when discussing proposed editorial changes to his sonnet 'Heu Miserande Puer' which was to appear in the July 1877 number. In response to criticism levelled at him by Russell for using the phrase '*our* English land' in his poem, a terse Wilde disclosed a defensive attitude to English culture. Agreeing to change his use of the offending possessive adjective to 'the' because he 'would not shock the feelings of [*Monthly*] readers for anything', he, nonetheless, qualified his seeming compliance with Russell's editorial changes by asserting that he considered it a 'noble privilege to count oneself of the same race as Keats or Shakespeare.'¹⁴ Tellingly, the offending phrase would be restored to the sonnet for a transatlantic market when retitled 'The Grave of Keats' for Wilde's *Poems* of 1881. Another early poem, 'Ave Imperatrix' (1880) exposes a further sense of divided national allegiances on Wilde's part as initially the poem appears to read both as a celebration of the exotic aspects of the lands conquered by the British Empire and a paean to the

English lives sacrificed in its service. And yet, the fact that it concludes by predicting the implosion of the British Empire in the ‘fiery web’ of violence that it had instigated across the globe and from out of which a new (possibly Irish) ‘republic’ would arise strikes an unexpectedly insurgent note.¹⁵ For Bristow, the anti-imperialist tenor of the poem was certainly grasped by at least one reviewer in the American press for whom it seemed to ‘outweigh a hundred cartoons of “Punch”’.¹⁶

Where American audiences had been primed to receive Wilde by the satirical cartoons of him that had appeared in *Punch*, an ensuing lecture tour of North America in 1882 sought to promote and capitalise on his simultaneous depiction as the ‘fleshy poet’ Reginald Bunthorne in Gilbert & Sullivan’s operetta *Patience*. However, Wilde’s role as a professional aesthete (lampooned or otherwise) was soon offset by his newly ascribed role as ‘Speranza’s Son’, a newspaper moniker referencing his mother, the celebrated Young Ireland poet (*The Irish Nation*, 14 January 1882). While Lady Wilde’s essay ‘The American Irish’ which celebrated the ‘republican ... sentiment’ of this ‘great and mighty people’ for rejecting “‘Home Rule’ with its feudal distinctions of class and caste’ would go into its second edition that year, conversely, her son in a February interview for the *St Louis Daily Globe Democrat* acknowledged himself a ‘Home Ruler’. Explicitly rejecting the Land League’s ‘no rent manifesto’ and instead suggesting that the British Government purchase the ‘land of Ireland from the landlords at a fair rate’ before ‘distributing it... amongst the people... in the form of State Bonds’, Wilde’s politics here appear to prefigure the patrician socialism espoused by his character Lord Henry Wootton.¹⁷ In Milwaukee on March 5th, Wilde declared himself to be ‘strongly in sympathy’ with Parnell’s Home Rule Movement¹⁸ and later that month his earlier anxieties about the ‘no rent manifesto’ appeared to have dissipated as San Francisco saw him unequivocally

praise Michael Davitt's Land League as 'the most remarkable agitation that has ever taken place in Ireland, for it has, through the influence of America, created a republican feeling in Ireland for the first time'.¹⁹ A deepening of the republicanism signalled by this comment can also be evinced from the lecture that Wilde gave by special request on Ireland's cultural heritage on his return to San Francisco in which he now publicly expressed a growing commitment to the Irish nationalist cause. Wilde now declared England's presence in Ireland to be that of an 'occup[ying]' force that had 'robbed' the land of all its national art, bar poetry, and argued that only 'legislative independence' would restore it. To much applause, he continued his characterisation of Britain as an oppressive imperial presence in Ireland by pointedly declaring that Irish poetry was the one thing that 'no tyranny can kill and no penal laws can stifle'. Importantly forgoing the earlier patrician attitude expressed in St Louis, Wilde was now keen to acknowledge that "The poetry and music of Ireland have been not merely the luxury of the rich but the very bulwark of patriotism, the very seed and flower of liberty". The growing public perception of Wilde's republicanism is reflected in one of the numerous hostile and racist newspaper cartoons identified by Curtis Marez that accompanied Wilde's tour. Entitled 'National Aesthetics', this cartoon pointedly showed 'a simian-jawed "Paddy" ... proclaim[ing] "Begorra and I believe I am Oscar Himself"' and, thus, can be seen to facetiously align Wilde's aesthetic teachings with an equally disparaging jibe at the (apparently) *sans-culottes* character of popular Irish nationalism.²⁰

Wilde's public condemnation of the English presence in Ireland was soon to be tempered by events back in Dublin when the infamous Phoenix Park Murders of May that year saw him publicly denounce political violence on the part of both republicans and the British State. Although Wilde qualified his patent distaste for the

barbarity of the killings by observing that ‘we forget how much England is to blame. She is reaping the fruit of seven centuries of injustice’, his comments were received as equivocal by some militant nationalists.²¹ Continuing in this seemingly mediatory vein in the following month, Wilde now went on to express his sense of the benefits to political autonomy and progress in Ireland if it were to remain within the British Empire. In New Orleans in an interview for the *Daily Picayune*, he again appeared to attenuate his recent republican stance by stating that ‘I don’t wish to see the [British] empire dismembered, but only to see the Irish people free, and Ireland still as a willing and integral part of the British empire’.²² Nonetheless, it is clear that the vision of Home Rule presented here was only ever to be a prelude to full independence for Wilde as he now clearly stressed that ‘people must have freedom and autonomy before they are capable of their greatest result in the cause of progress.’²³

While the Fenian dynamite campaign that harried Britain between 1881 and 1885 has led Elizabeth Carolyn Miller to propose that the melodramatic representation of imperial Russia, ‘state oppression’ and ‘dynamite terror’ in Wilde’s play *Vera; or the Nihilists* (written 1880, revised and first performed in 1883) can be read as an ‘oblique representation of the Irish revolutionary context’, a more explicit engagement with the Irish question on Wilde’s part can be adduced later in the decade from the *avant-textes* (letters, reviews and essays) that immediately prefigure the Lippincott’s version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.²⁴ Allegations published in the (London) *Times* in 1887 that Parnell had privately supported the Phoenix Park murders saw Wilde attend the government commission that was set up to investigate them. Two months into proceedings, which saw the commission sit 128 times between September 1887 and November 1888, this perfidy on the part of the *Times*

galvanised Wilde into writing a vigorously damning, if unsigned, review for the *Pall Mall Gazette* of J. P. Mahaffy's *Greek Life and Thought: from the Age of Alexander to the Roman Conquest* in November 1887. In it, Wilde attacked his former tutor at Trinity College, Dublin, for producing a less than objective history of ancient Greece and for explicitly using it as a platform from which to fulminate against the Irish nationalist cause. Indeed for Mahaffy, the parallels between ancient Athenian democracy and Irish Home Rule were so marked that, as Wilde pointed out, the historian even went so far as to rebrand the Athenian desire for political autonomy from the Macedonian Empire as no less than "Tipperary writ large", a topical reference to Land League rent agitation in contemporary Ireland.²⁵ And even though his former mentor 'admitt[ed] that the noblest sculpture of the time was that which expressed the spirit of the first great *national* struggle', Wilde wryly noted that Mahaffy simultaneously derided this same 'national feeling' by declaring the Athenian desire for self-government to be 'provincial'.²⁶ Regrettably for him, it appeared that the historian had compromised his scholarly reputation by rewriting Greek history in order to whitewash the failings of the present administration in Ireland, headed up as it was by a Chief Secretary dubbed 'Bloody Balfour' by his adversaries (and yet, who, paradoxically, was a social acquaintance of Wilde's).²⁷ Even more worryingly, however, it seemed to Wilde that Mahaffy's presumption that 'the pangs of conscience which now so deeply affect a Gladstone and a Morley for the sins of their ancestors could hardly affect a Marcius or a Quinctius' effectively sought to undermine British support for Home Rule by recasting it as nothing more than the product of delicate moral scruples.²⁸ Problematically for Wilde, Mahaffy was only prepared to admit to the failings of the Protestant Ascendancy only as far as to regret that it had been unable to secure Ireland's position within the British Empire. With his

vision of relations between Ireland and Britain now distinctly less conciliatory and pragmatic than they had been in New Orleans, Wilde concluded the review by castigating Mahaffy's 'passion for imperialism' and resolutely rejected the 'vague panegyrics on cosmopolitan culture' that the historian seemed to believe that empire could nurture (*Artist as Critic*, 82). From his explicit assertion, five years earlier in San Francisco, that England's 'occupation' of Ireland had 'robbed' it of its national art and that only 'legislative independence' would restore it, to this later implicit cynicism about the kinds of culture that imperialism fostered, Wilde's sense of the continued failure of the British Empire to sustain Irish culture is palpable (Pepper, 27). Even more revealingly, his decision to write anonymously for the *PMG* attests to the potentially incendiary nature of such observations.

A more explicit engagement with the Irish question on Wilde's part that year can also be adduced from Thomas Wright's 2014 discovery of his membership of the Eighty Club, a Liberal Home Rule Association, for which his debut dinner took place in December 1887. Noting that Club members had to undertake political work to maintain their membership, Wright has speculated whether Wilde's *PMG* reviews can be read in this vein. Although, conversely, Anya Clayworth's argument that this and Wilde's other reviews for the *PMG* simply followed the newspaper's pro-Home Rule editorial policy and so problematizes 'Wilde's true feelings about the Irish question', both Wilde's frequent attendance of the Parnell Commission and his newly discovered and active membership of the Eighty Club clearly underlines his growing commitment to Irish nationalism. 1888 not only saw Wilde write to Gladstone twice (in June and November respectively) declaring his and his countrymen's indebtedness to the Opposition leader for his support for Home Rule but also closed with Wilde humorously assuring the editor of the *Scots Observer* that his identity as a 'most

recalcitrant patriot' made it impossible for him to write for his Unionist oriented journal.²⁹

The following year saw Wilde continue his association with the *PMG* by producing two further nationalist inflected reviews for it.³⁰ In the first review, 'Poetry and Prison: "In Vinculis"' by Wilfrid Blunt' which appeared in January 1889, Wilde noted that the poet, English landowner and anti-imperialist Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, who had recently been converted to Home Rule and had subsequently been imprisoned for political activities in Ireland, had in Galway prison acquired a new seriousness in his poetry. Finding these new poems to be, unlike their forebears, 'nobly conceived and nobly uttered', Wilde (here, adverting to the severe conditions enforced in Balfour's prisons) provocatively averred that 'though Mr Balfour may enforce "plain living" by his prison regulations, he cannot prevent "high thinking" or in any way limit or constrain the freedom of a man's soul.'³¹ Where in San Francisco five years earlier, Wilde had told audiences that 'The poetry and music of Ireland have been not merely the luxury of the rich but the very bulwark of patriotism, the very seed and flower of liberty', topically, actual events now appeared to offer in the figure of Blunt, a potent, if controversial, exemplar of how political insurgency in Ireland continued to engender 'noble' and 'serious' poetry.³² For Wilde, in line with his earlier cynicism about the 'cosmopolitan culture' that Empire promised and yet had expressly failed to nurture, Blunt's prison poetry revealed that the only kind of 'nobl[e]' art British imperialism could stimulate was that of an oppositional, politically dissident kind.³³ We can only speculate on the extent to which Wilde's acquaintance with Balfour was further strained by the fact that in February 1889, he offered, 'to help "form a committee of National Protest"', as uncovered by Thomas Wright, against 'the systematic injustice and inhumanity of Balfour's rule'".³⁴

Clayworth's anxieties that Wilde scholars look to sources other than his *PMG* reviews for 'evidence' of Wilde's 'political views' are further assuaged by Wright's recovery of Wilde's continued activities at the Eighty Club. While February 1889 saw Wilde attend a dinner organised by the Eighty Club celebrating Parnell's victory at which the 'Chief' was present, Wright also notes that on April 10th Wilde proposed the thanks for the speakers at an Eighty Club 'conversazione' in which the main speaker Liberal MP Henry Fowler both attacked 'Liberal Unionists and Tory Coercion' and outlined the 'principles on which Liberal Home Rule legislation ought to be based'. Three days later Wilde's next review for the *PMG* would see him lambast historian J. A. Froude's novel *The Two Chiefs of Dunboy* which appeared to Wilde to unwittingly attest to the 'incapacity of a Teutonic [people] to rule a Celtic people against their own wishes'.³⁵ Although this second *PMG* review was published six months after Parnell's exoneration, curiously, Wilde was more discreet in it in his references to the Home Rule leader than he had been on his American Lecture Tour. After censuring Froude's novel for advocating strong-arm tactics in Ireland, Wilde went on to praise expatriate Irish Americans for strengthening the cause of Irish freedom and, without directly naming him, adverted to Parnell's American heritage. Powerfully for Wilde, the merits of the Irish diaspora to America were that the emigrant 'Celtic' intellect had 'learn[t] the secret of its own strength and of England's weakness' and while at home it 'had but learned the pathetic weakness of nationality; in a strange land it realized what indomitable forces nationality possesses'. In hindsight, it would seem that Wilde's own transatlantic crossing had similarly initiated him into the 'secret' of an 'indomitable' Celtic intellect.³⁶

Although Parnell had been cleared of all charges by the Commission, events took a disastrous turn for him and his party when in 1890 his longstanding

relationship with the married Englishwoman Katherine O'Shea was publicly exposed, an event that led to the express collapse of Parnell's political career and contributed to his early death in October 1891.³⁷ In light of the public support for Parnell that Wilde had articulated in America, his attendance of the Eighty Club's dinner celebrating Parnell's vindication, his implicit reference in the *PMG* to Parnell's political success and to his recent treatment at the hands of journalists in 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' (February, 1891), the evidence militates against W.J. McCormack's contention 'that the name of Parnell is never to be heard in Wilde's journalism or in his available correspondence'.³⁸ Moreover, the fact that Wilde openly attended the Commission and subsequently purchased the multivolume publication of its proceedings further contests McCormack's supposition that 'we must surmise that what has occurred here is nothing less than a forceful repression'.³⁹ Nonetheless, McCormack also usefully draws our attention to the fact that the O'Shea divorce proceedings which came to trial in November 1890 occurred between the publication of the Lippincott's version of *Dorian Gray* in July 1890 and its book version in April 1891 and, even more compellingly, that Wilde was seen wearing mourning ten days after Parnell's shock death in October 1891.⁴⁰ Given Wilde's sense of the disastrous consequences of the British presence in Ireland, it is notable that, in line with genetic criticism's 'attempts to restore a temporal dimension to texts by looking for the influence of external social, economic, and cultural circumstance' on them, the domestic ramifications of British imperialism that drives the 1891 edition of *Dorian Gray* was developed and produced under the shadow of Parnell's public exposure and ensuing demise (Deppman et al., 5)

The Picture[s] of Dorian Gray, 1890?

That Deppman *et al.* argue that genetic criticism 'strives to reconstruct, from all available evidence, the chain of events in a writing process' further licenses the recovery of socio-historic factors that shaped the three extant versions of Wilde's novel from its conception.⁴¹ In this respect, it would appear that Parnell cast a shadow over Wilde's novel from the very outset, as intimated by the fact that one of the other guests present at the dinner in August 1889 hosted by J.M. Stoddart, editor of Lippincott's magazine, at which the novel was commissioned was T.P. Gill, the Irish parliamentarian and confidante of Parnell. It is also significant that letters from Wilde to Stoddart attest that the period between December 1889 and the following March saw him working towards the completion of the first version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, a period, which according to F.S.L. Lyons, was marked by the 'complex negotiations' taking place between the parties in the O'Shea divorce case and the anxiety of Parnell supporters such as Gill about the 'Chief's' innocence in the charge of adultery brought against him. Though we can only speculate about the extent to which Wilde was cognisant of the material details of the unfolding crisis, it is perhaps also worth noting that in January 1890, W.T. Stead (editor of the *PMG*), had according to Lyons, 'been talking to Katharine's cast-off solicitor, George Lewis', a friend of Wilde's, and, as a result, was 'exceedingly dubious about the outcome of the suit'.

As Wilde would soon rail against the way in which Parnell had fallen victim to English prurience, it is striking that the typescript of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that was sent to Stoddart in Philadelphia in March 1890 was similarly subjected to the censoring hand of Victorian decency by an editor who found in it 'a number of things which an innocent woman would make an exception to'. Frankel's

restoration in 2013 of the 500 words that Stoddart excised from the original typescript because of their (comparatively) explicit homoeroticism, Decadence and sexual impropriety has led him to represent this 'Uncensored' version (based on the holograph manuscript housed at the Morgan Library in New York City which bears the seal of Lippincott's London agent) 'as Wilde envisioned [the novel] in the spring of 1890, unaltered and uncensored by its first editor'.

Because Lippincott's *Dorian Gray*, as enshrined in Volume 3 of the *Oxford English Text's Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* edited by Joseph Bristow, is admittedly based on 'the manuscript [] held at the J. Pierpont Morgan Library... [which] *is a fair copy of earlier drafts*' (my italics), the material credentials of the 'Uncensored' version noted above appear to silently challenge the primacy accorded to the former.

However, on the other hand, Frankel's claims that his text was truthful to Wilde's original intentions were immediately disputed by Josephine Guy which saw her question whether excisions from the text were actually made by Stoddart or not and suggest that Wilde's silent acceptance of them for inclusion in the 1891 version of the novel undermined any Romantic notion of 'writerly integrity' pursued in the 'Uncensored' edition. As Frankel and Bristow's claims (explicit or not) for their respective versions' status as the 1890 ur-text of the novel are, as seen above, destabilised by the precise provenance from which their chosen manuscripts hail, the reading that follows highlights any substantive differences to be found on the subject of Wilde's national identity between the Lippincott's version of the novel and its 'Uncensored' homologue.

Julia M. Wright's observation that in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 'a complex network of orientalist affiliations link the metropole doubly to its own domestic abject, the impoverished East End, and its colonial object, the "East"' perceptively

links the social and imperial aspects of the text.⁴² And yet, after genetic criticism, new attention to the different political stresses that mark the various versions of the novel appear to offer a more nuanced insight into Wilde's evolving response to what seemed to him to be the imbricated questions of social inequality in England, British imperial predation and Irish affairs than that afforded by Wright's reading. Initially, the Lippincott's version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that appeared in July 1890 affords a comparatively optimistic vision of the British upper classes' response to Empire as one that takes place at the level of artistic engagement. The novel opens with a scene in which we see Henry Wotton seated in Basil Hallward's studio orientalise the English garden, the most potent symbol of Englishness, in his imagination. Here, Jarlath Killeen's observation that 'The English suburban garden was an elaborate codification of ideologies of subordination of both the power of nature and the power of the colonies' offers a compelling imperialist context for the ways in which Wilde's description of Hallward's garden is entirely contrived to suggest 'nature in the raw'.⁴³ However, by contrast, that Wotton actively chooses to filter this 'natural' English garden scene through his own Orientalist impressionism alternatively signals that aristocratic cultural cosmopolitanism has led to a productive engagement with artistic models from the East. Thus, from the vantage point of 'a divan of Persian saddle-bags', Wotton sees 'laburnum' and 'the fantastic shadows of birds in flight ... produc[e] a kind of momentary Japanese effect' which makes 'him think of those pallid, jade-faced painters of Tokyo who, through the medium of an art that is necessarily immobile, seek to convey the sense of swiftness and motion'.⁴⁴ Although Wotton's translation of the domestic garden into Oriental visual effects draws attention to the cosmopolitan acculturation of the aristocrat, it is striking that, conversely, he is later entirely dismissive of the transformative potential of canonical

English art to acculturate and ennoble an indigenous working class, as incarnated in Sibyl Vane's magnetic performances of Shakespeare.⁴⁵

Wotton is quick to refute Dorian's claim that the response of Sibyl's (proletarian) audience to her acting make him feel that they 'are of the same flesh and blood as one's self' by countering 'Oh, I hope not!'.⁴⁶ While Wotton is entirely amenable to deploying Japonisme to mentally transform his friend's English garden, ironically, his rejection of working-class acculturation on the grounds of an insurmountable difference between the two classes evokes a fear of racial mixing akin to the racialising of class difference in contemporary slum literature.⁴⁷ Wotton's response conjures the spectre of miscegenation not as one that threatens to cross racial lines but instead portends a promiscuous mixing of the classes in the city. Drawing on the powerful condensation of class and racial degeneration at the *fin de siècle* and its troping of London's East and West End in terms of an Oriental/Occidental binary, this emotive strain of contemporary social commentary reverberates even more powerfully in the extended version of the novel of 1891. Ironically, in this later version, the threat of deracination and, this time, reverse colonisation is propagated not by the London poor but rather, as we shall see, is expressly envisioned by Wilde as the direct result of aristocratic dissipation and an attendant imperial predation. Moreover, that not only the English garden but also Shakespeare's plays become the conflicted objects of acculturation, at the very least, signals a growing interrogation, on Wilde's part, of his own once unmediated relationship to English culture. From his 1877 declaration that he considered it 'a noble privilege to count oneself of the same race as Keats or Shakespeare' to his pointed assertion in December 1891 to Edmond de Goncourt that 'je suis Irlandais de race, et les Anglais m'ont condamné à parler le langage de Shakespeare' ('I am Irish by race but the English have condemned me to

speak the language of Shakespeare'), Wilde's later attitude signals his increasing estrangement from the canons of English art.⁴⁸

Sibyl's Christian name, evoking as it does the prophetic priestesses of the Ancient World, proves as resonant as Dorian's. For in the early chapters of the novel, her unaffected interpretations of Shakespeare heroines and her audience's responses to them initially appear to augur the cultural and political enfranchisement of the English working class before this is suppressed by aristocratic imperative. That it is after Sibyl's death that we see the earlier culturally productive model of Orientalism that Wotton engages in decline into a sinister form of imperial predation on the part of his protégé links the questions of domestic social inequality and imperial exploitation. As a collector, Dorian scavenges priceless imperial *objets* such as 'the mysterious *juruparis* of the Rio Negro Indians, that women are not allowed to look at' and 'flutes of human bones such as Alfonso de Ovalle heard in Chile' in his search for 'sensations that would be at once new and delightful'.⁴⁹ In the extended description of Dorian's accumulation of these prized imperial artefacts found in Chapter ix of the Lippincott's version, Wilde builds up a picture of the destructive acts of imperial exploitation that have allowed Dorian to amass a collection of moribund artefacts found 'either in the tombs of dead nations or among the few savage tribes that have survived contact with Western civilizations'.⁵⁰ As Wilde had earlier observed in San Francisco that the English 'occupation' of Ireland had effectively forestalled the continued development of all the Irish arts except for poetry and in his later implicit belief that empire could not sustain colonial culture, it is significant that Dorian's compulsive acts of collecting renders these once sacred objects into the *memento mori* of civilisations now extinguished by imperial invasion. This sense of imperial predation even colours Dorian's recreational reading for when satiated with caring for

his collection he instinctively turns to reading his favourite chapters of the 'poisonous' book given to him by Lord Henry which are expressly concerned with its hero emulating the decadent behaviour of the Roman emperors Tiberius, Caligula, Domitian and Elegabalus (Heliogabalus).⁵¹

The possible identity of the real-life book said to have poisoned Dorian has been the subject of much scholarly speculation with Wilde seeking to obfuscate this by initially giving it the modishly Decadent title 'Le Secret de Raoul' and author 'Catulle Sarrazin' in the 'Uncensored' version.⁵² Although Wilde would later admit that the source text of Dorian's 'dangerous' book was actually J. K. Huysmans's *A Rebours*, tellingly, that both Richard Ellmann and George Schoolfield have highlighted the degree of creative license that Wilde deployed in relation to it, indicates that the theme of imperial predation did not derive from Huysmans's novel but was entirely Wilde's own creation.⁵³ Here, Ellmann observes that Huysmans's aristocratic hero 'Des Esseintes shows no interest in imperial power' and Schoolfield also points out that Des Esseintes does not mimic the extreme behaviours of the aforementioned Emperors as the hero of the poisonous book in Wilde's novel does.⁵⁴ While Schoolfield considers this narrative invention on Wilde's part to be no more than his 'half-hearted' attempt at concealing the identity of Huysmans's *A Rebours* as Dorian's Decadent bible, equally, Dorian's compulsive fascination with his literary hero's mimicry of the excesses of Roman emperors can be seen to pathologize contemporary historical analogies forged between imperial Rome and its modern British counterpart.⁵⁵ As explored in Piers Brendon's *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire, 1791- 1997*, the apparent equivalence drawn between the two empires seems to have held the higher echelons of English society in its thrall since the publication of Edward Gibbon's magnum opus *The History of The Decline and Fall*

of the Roman Empire (1772 – 1789).⁵⁶ And more recently, this trope had been deployed by Wilde's adversary J. A. Froude in the opening to his 1879 biography of Julius Caesar where he stated that 'the English and the Romans essentially resemble one another'.⁵⁷ Yet, notwithstanding these rousing comparisons with Rome's imperial might, such triumphalism was necessarily offset for the English by disquieting narratives of Rome's subsequent decline into 'racial deterioration' and, as seen in Dorian's reading, the decadent excess of its more infamous rulers.⁵⁸ In this respect, both the powerful historical example of Roman excess that Dorian enjoys reading about and, more generally, the permissive behaviours of his own circle augur the imminent collapse of its British successor, a scenario that had earlier been imagined in the final stanza of 'Ave Imperatrix'. Moreover, that 'Bloody' Balfour had been recently compared to Heliogabalus and Caligula by Irish nationalists, as he, himself, had breezily observed at a Unionist dinner in 1888, gives a degree of political topicality to Dorian's recreational reading.⁵⁹ Certainly, Wilde's explicit conception on his American lecture tour that the presence of the British Empire in Ireland had decimated its art gives new symbolic significance to Dorian's actual and metaphorical murders of artists and their art (in turn, Sybil Vane, Basil Hallward and the portrait).

A Progressive Imperialism

With genetic criticism (in the words of Louis Hay), '[w]ishing to discover a plurality of virtual texts behind the surface of the constituted text', it is also worth noting that the same month (July 1890) that the Lippincott's version of the novel appeared, Wilde also published the first part of his two-part dialogue for the *Nineteenth Century*, 'The True Function & Value of Criticism'.⁶⁰ Significantly, this two-hander that features fictional London aesthetes Gilbert and Ernest proselytising about the importance of the speculative life envisions the act of criticism and disinterested thought as instrumental

in resolving all manner of national ills because, according to Gilbert, the prevalence of ‘emotional sympathy’ rather than disinterested critical thinking in England has prevented the ‘solving [of] any single social problem’⁶¹. Extraordinarily, that the dialogue concludes with a discussion of the ways in which imperialism *per se* might be reconfigured along more politically progressive lines offsets the parallel scenes of imperial predation in Wilde’s novel. Thus, to Gilbert the practice of disinterested critical thought appears to carry within itself the potential power to transform the ethical constituency of the British Empire, itself, as he declares that ‘England will never be civilised till she has added Utopia to her dominions’ and ‘there is more than one of her colonies that she might with advantage surrender for so fair a land’.⁶² For Gilbert, it is significant that criticism is both potentially the instrument of an anticolonial ethics and also has the power to transform global politics as he suggests that speculative thought will generate a new pacifistic and cosmopolitan world order. Notably, Gilbert avers:

Criticism will annihilate race-prejudices, by insisting upon the unity of and the human mind in the variety of its forms. If we are tempted to make war upon another nation, we shall remember that we are seeking to destroy an element of our own culture and possibly its most important element.⁶³

For Wilde’s aesthetes, speculative criticism promises to forestall the continuing negative effects of the martial and aggressively racist worldview that underpinned the Great Game of Empire. Ultimately, for Wilde the medium of the contemplative life promises not only to resolve England’s social problems but also to reconstruct British imperialism along ethical lines and, finally, to produce a spirit of pacifist internationalism in world politics. Reflecting on many of the same themes simultaneously evinced in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (aestheticism, social injustice

and imperialism), it is certainly revealing that in Wilde's revised version of the dialogue that appeared as 'The Critic as Artist' in *Intentions* (May 1891), a month after the final version of the novel, he adds his sense that the Celt, in future years, was to be at the forefront of the artistic innovations underway in Britain at present. In it, Gilbert proclaims that while 'the creative instinct is strong in the Celt, and it is the Celt who leads in art, there is no reason why in future years this strange Renaissance should not become almost as mighty in its way as was that new birth of Art that woke many centuries ago in the cities of Italy'.⁶⁴ Crucially in its final version, Wilde concludes the essay by envisioning a British empire remodelled on more progressive lines, under the auspices of the aesthetic movement. Strikingly, not only did this utopian vision of empire promise to rescue Celtic culture from the oppositional status that its colonial standing had hitherto condemned it but it also promised to accord it the global eminence that he felt it so richly deserved.

Ward, Lock & Co.'s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Joseph Bristow notes that a month before the thirteen-chapter version of the novel appeared in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, Wilde was already looking to secure a contract for the publication of an extended version of it in which, according to him, he was 'going to put in a chapter about Dorian Gray in the opium-dens of the East-End'.⁶⁵ That these new chapters are concerned with Dorian's journey to the liminal and impoverished space of the London docks indicate a deepening of Wilde's interest in the domestic ramifications of the British Empire that had earlier been signposted in the Lippincott's version of *Dorian Gray* and 'The True Function and Value of Criticism'. Moreover, in line with genetic criticism's emphasis on the impact of external factors on the production of 'the Text', it is also significant that the new

version of the novel issued by Lock, Ward & Company Press in April 1891 was written in the context of the O'Shea divorce case and the disarray into which it had subsequently thrown the Home Rule objectives of Parnell's Irish Parliamentary Party. While two months earlier in February 1891, in 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' Wilde had also adverted to Parnell's treatment at the hands of a prurient British press, elsewhere, Jarlath Killeen has further identified conceptual parallels between Parnell's politics and Wilde's essay.⁶⁶ Seeking to restore 'Wilde's role as a landholder [which] has been written out of traditional discussions about the influence of Ireland on his work', Killeen contends that 'The Soul of Man' can be aligned to Parnell's political writings because these texts are united by their shared sense that 'property ownership' impedes the achievement of 'national perfection'.⁶⁷ In light of on-going agrarian unrest in Ireland continuing to impact on the Wilde family income and Killeen's emphasis on the shared significance of property in both Parnell and Wilde's writing, the introduction of a new character, James Vane, who tracks Dorian to his country estate intent on exacting revenge for his sister's death is certainly suggestive. Significantly, this new revenge subplot not only extends the narrative of social inequality of the Lippincott's version into the squalid arena of the London docks but also subsequently develops into a potent allegory for Ireland's continued rural agitation.

In the extended version of the novel Dorian's desire after Sybil's death to evade his conscience, the portrait, takes him to the Gothic environs of the East End's opium dens, a hazardous contact zone between East and West and Britain and its empire, where he hopes that the act of smoking opium will destroy 'the memory of old sins [with] the madness of sins that were new'.⁶⁸ A more sinister version of Orientalism than that represented by Wotton's earlier filtering of Hallward's garden

through the lens of Japonisme, Dorian's own encounter with the East symbolically exchanges the restful English garden for the menacing space of the docks, a site of racial contagion. Moreover, in the figure of a working-class prostitute who accosts Dorian in one den, the novel now links the aristocratic taste for opium to the threat of deracination and reverse colonisation that the Victorian imperial encounter indubitably carried with it. On entering the den, in quick succession Dorian's vision of 'Malays ... crouching by a little charcoal stove, playing with bone counters' is superseded by another of 'a half-caste, in a ragged turban and a shabby ulster' who serves him at the bar and 'grin[s] a hideous greeting'. This act of reverse colonisation completes itself in the deracination of a prostitute who sidles up to Dorian wearing 'a crooked smile, like a Malay crease'. Doubly infected by the East through her physical proximity to the Malays and her own opium addiction (her 'dull and glazed' eyes mirror the 'lustreless' gaze of the den's addicts), it is significant that she later reveals to James Vane that her present degradation is the direct result of her seduction by Dorian eighteen years earlier.⁶⁹ That in the 1891 version, it is (Dorian's) aristocratic predation that ultimately engenders an unnerving hybridity in the imperial metropolis clearly envisions the upper classes as the ultimate agents of deracination. As the experience of this prostitute, 'the mad-cat', suggests, in the final instance it is the aristocrats' ability to access and avail themselves of the decorative and narcotic goods (opium) that Empire makes available to them that threatens to transform the populace into 'hideous' hybrids.⁷⁰ In this, the Orientalism trope achieves a larger significance in now allowing Wilde to link the repression of an indigenous working class to the wider global system of exploitation driving 'The Great Game' of Empire.

As seen above, it is James Vane's encounter with the 'mad-cat' that spurs him to execute his plan to avenge his sister's untimely death.⁷¹ Here, not only does his

attempt to seek vengeance actualise the threat to aristocratic hegemony earlier signalled in Wotton's rejection of any political parity with the working classes but also, poignantly, Vane's ultimate failure to enact his revenge indicates the collapse of working-class potential for political agitation *per se*. Significantly, Vane's bleak story of disenfranchisement can also be simultaneously read as a potent allegory for Ireland's Land Wars and the 'Plan of Campaign' that ran parallel to the publication of the novel(s) and indicates Wilde's extension of his vision of social injustice in England in the Lippincott's version to now include Ireland. Tellingly, the rent strikes that had riven the land from 1879 to the novel's publication and beyond appear to have impacted both upon Wilde's writing and his family's finances, a situation that would lead a near destitute Speranza to resettle in London. In a letter to a friend in 1880 Lady Wilde complained that 'Ireland is in a very unquiet state – I fear the people will now refuse to pay rents and whoever enforces payment will be assuredly shot – I despair of my beloved Irish at last'.⁷² Here, that the nationalist poet simultaneously 'despair[ed]' not only at rural unrest in Ireland but also at government intransigence and the loss of rental income in the run up to the Second Land Act of 1881 evinces a particularly complex example of the 'schizophrenia' that historian F.S.L. Lyons describes affecting Anglo-Irish landholders.⁷³ Certainly, Davis Coakley's proposition that Speranza would probably sympathise with Lady Bracknell's declaration in *The Importance of Earnest* that 'What between the duties expected of one during one's lifetime, and the duties exacted from one after one's death, land has ceased to be either a profit or a pleasure. It gives one position, and prevents one from keeping it up' appears apposite in light of Speranza's penurious existence in London⁷⁴.

Although Mary King's aside in a footnote that Dorian's country estate Selby Royal can be read 'as a displaced Ireland' is certainly suggestive, both the brevity necessitated by its format and the perfunctory manner in which this conclusion and others in the article were reached appear to have fallen prey to the 'hermeneutic hazards' that Haslam has warned attend the recovery of a Hibernicised *Dorian Gray*. By contrast, a degree of critical consensus regarding Wilde's displacement strategies has been achieved in relation to the rendering of Irish affairs through the optic of Tsarist Russia found in *Vera or The Nihilists*. In this respect, it is significant that Fintan O'Toole questions why Wilde was not prosecuted for sedition for writing *Vera or The Nihilists*, his 1880 melodrama about a proletariat heroine wishing to assassinate the Russian Czar, at a point when 'agitation among [Ireland's] tenant farmers for reduced rents and ownership of land' had reached a new high. Crucially, O'Toole and latterly, Miller, have read this early, if critically unsuccessful, work as a displaced political commentary on Irish affairs on Wilde's part. In *Vera*, a clear predecessor to the displacement strategy to be adduced from *Dorian Gray* can be found.⁷⁵ Moreover, J. Sheridan Le Fanu's earlier choice of England as his setting for rendering the Protestant Ascendancy's dark fixation with 'misalliance' and inheritance in his own Gothic novel *Uncle Silas* (1864) also presents itself as a forerunner for Wilde's decision in the extended version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* to displace Irish Gothic tropes onto an explicitly English setting.⁷⁶ These two generic tropes are evinced in Wootton's early discovery of the disastrously mismatched and curtailed marriage of Dorian's 'subaltern' father and aristocratic mother and Dorian's own reflections on the malign hereditary influences that might have shaped his life.

With regards to the genre of the Irish Gothic, that Jarlath Killeen has proposed elsewhere that ‘Gothic, in truth, may not belong to the dispossessed but to the paranoid possessors, the out-of-control controllers, the descending Ascendancy’ but also warns that ‘such a view is in danger of distorting the picture of Protestant power in Ireland which may have been on the wane through the nineteenth century, but whose demise was long in gestation and longer in arrival’ further underscores the political topicality of the James Vane’s subplot.⁷⁷ While Wotton’s rejection of the enfranchising potential of Shakespeare’s art might render him, in Killeen’s resonant terms, a ‘paranoid possessor’, the working-class avenger James Vane is used to articulate an aptly melodramatic vision of the Ascendancy’s *fear* of imminent dissolution and dispossession, rather than the actual reality of such an event. Significantly, as Wotton frames the class differences between the aristocracy and the working classes as a kind of racial difference, Vane similarly defines his hatred of Dorian, even before Sybil’s death, as ‘some curious race-instinct for which he could not account, and which for that reason was all the more dominant within him’.⁷⁸ It is notable that Vane’s accidental death at the hands of Dorian’s guest, Sir Geoffrey Clouston, does not actually frighten Dorian about death *per se* but rather it is, as he tells Wotton, the thought of his impending death that scares him. Thus, Dorian tells him that ‘I have no terror of death. It is the coming of death that terrifies me. Its monstrous wings seem to wheel in the leaden air around me’.⁷⁹ As an allegory for Ireland’s agrarian unrest, the feeling of impending doom that consumes Dorian at his country estate appears to evoke in an English rural setting the Ascendancy’s very real fears about violence and the actual collapse of relations between landlords and tenants that it was experiencing during the Land Wars.⁸⁰ And yet, Vane’s ultimate failure to exact revenge because he has been unwittingly executed by a bumptious aristocrat

underlines how in Wilde's novel, despite the fear of expropriation that dogs it, the ascendant class (after Killeen) continues to remain in its ascendance, however vulnerable this hegemonic position has been shown to be.⁸¹ Although, through the ultimate fate of James Vane the final version of Wilde's novel affords a pessimistic vision of Ireland's continued colonial status, it is pertinent to recall the vision of a progressive imperialism imagined in 'The Critic as Artist' a month later that placed the Celtic Renaissance in art at its forefront. Additionally, the unnerving scene of reverse colonisation that takes place in the contact zone of the East End's opium dens would also be similarly recast by Wilde as an attractive possibility for the 'colonised' imperial subject. Strikingly, in the final instance, it is telling that when discussing Home Rule with the poet Theodore Wratislaw, Wilde was later to envision an optimistic scene of reverse colonisation for Ireland when he pointedly observed to the poet that 'my own idea is that Ireland should rule England.'⁸²

NOTES

Balfour - Modernist Aesthetics and Consumer Culture in the Writings of Oscar Wilde

By Paul Fortunato 3-4. – on Balfour's acquaintance with Wilde

1. Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 34; McCormack, 'Introduction', *Wilde the Irishman*, 1; Small, *Recent Research*, 67.

² Small, *Recent Research*, 13

3. Sammells, 'The Line is Immaterial', 7.

4. O'Connor, 'Dorian Gray as national tale' 194

⁵ Wright, *Party Political Animal*, 13-15; Haslam, *Hermeneutic Hazards*, 37-8; Markey, *Irishman Reconsidered*, 443.

⁶ Haslam, *Hermeneutic Hazards*, 38 and 51

7. Deppman et al., *Genetic Criticism*, 2, 5.

8 Guy, 'Unexpurgated Version'

9 Frankel, 'Censor Sensibility'

10. See Joe Cleary's *Outrageous Fortune* (14-46), for a recent summation of the applicability of postcolonial theory to the Irish question.

11. Josephine Guy contends that Wilde 'probably did not begin work on 'The True Function and Value of Criticism' until the late spring of 1890 for up until that time he would have been preoccupied with *Dorian Gray*, Guy, *Criticism*, lxiv

12. Bristow, *Wilde Discoveries*, 3-4.

13. Deppman et al. note that geneticists use 'the term [avant texte] in somewhat different ways, some more precisely than others, but 'avant texte' always carries with it the assumption that the material of textual genetics is not a given but rather a critical construction elaborated in relation to a postulated terminal – so-called definitive- state of the work', Deppman, et al., 2, 8, 10.

14. Wilde, *Complete Letters*, 53. Emphasis in original.

15 Frankel suggests that the reference to this young 'republic' is actually a reference to America, Frankel, *Wilde's Decorated Books*, 35. Wilde, *Poems*, 10.

16. Bristow, *Wilde Writings, Contextual Conditions*, 11

¹⁷ Henry Wooton's patrician socialism

18. Pepper, *Irish Poets*, 18.

19. O'Toole 'The Wilde Irishman', 83; Pepper, *Irish Poets*, 17.

20 Marez, 'The Other Addict', 267.

21. McCormack, 'Wilde and Parnell', 84; Morris Jr, *Declaring His Genius*, 168

22. *Daily Picayune* (25 June 1882) rept in Mikhail, *Wilde, Interviews and Recollections*, 1. 92.

23. Ibid., 1.93.

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- 24 Miller, 'Reconsidering Wilde's *Vera*', 66.
25. Wilde, 'Mahaffy's New Book', 80.
26. Ibid., 82 (*italics in original*).
27. Brendon, *Decline and Fall*, 273.
28. Wilde, 'Mahaffy's New Book', 82.
- ²⁹ Wilde, *Letters of Oscar Wilde*, 218, 231.
30. Wilde, *Letters of Oscar Wilde*, 232.
31. Wilde, 'Poetry and Prison', 116
32. Pepper, *Irish Poets*, 28; Wilde, 'Poetry and Prison', 116, 118.
33. Ibid., 116.
- ³⁴ Fortunato notes that He invites him to the first night of *A Woman of No Importance* in 1893 (gives up Chief Ireland posn in 1891)
35. Wilde, 'Froude's Blue Book', 140
- 36 Ibid., 136
- ³⁷ (It is bitterly ironic that O'Shea consulted both Sir Frank Lockwood and Wilde's friend, Sir George Lewis, about her impending divorce case, given the central role that both men were to play in the Wilde trials five years later and the damage wreaked by the prosecution's citation of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in them.)
38. Wilde, 'Soul of Man', 277 and McCormack, 'Wilde and Parnell', 100.
39. See Wilde, *Letters of Oscar Wilde*, 348, 382, Coakley, *Importance of Being Irish*, 195 and McCormack, 'Wilde and Parnell', 100.
40. McCormack, 'Wilde and Parnell', 99, 100
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42. Wright, *Ireland, India, Nationalism*, 183.
43. Killeen, *The Faiths of Oscar Wilde*, 104
44. Wilde, *Picture of Dorian Gray* [1890], 3.
- ⁴⁵ The reason that Stoddart changed Wilde's naming the character Sybil's to Sibyl in the Lippincott's version is unclear
46. Ibid., 57.
47. See Booth's *In Darkest England*, 11–12
48. Wilde, *Letters of Oscar Wilde*, 304.

49. Wilde, *Picture of Dorian Gray* [1890], 112, 110

50. Ibid., 112

51. Ibid., 103, 123

⁵² meanings of assumed name and title

53. Ibid., 123; also see Wilde's comment about the relationship between his and

Huysmans's novel in his letter to E. W. Pratt on 15 April 1892 in which he writes that

'[t]he book in *Dorian Gray* is one of the many books I have never written, but it is

partly suggested by Huysmans's *A Rebours*, which you will get at any French

bookseller's. It is a fantastic variation on Huysmans's over-realistic study of the

artistic temperament in our inartistic age (Wilde, *Letters of Oscar Wilde*, 313).

54. Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde*, 299; Schoolfield, *Baedeker of Decadence*, 64.

55. Ibid., 64

56. Brendon, *Decline and Fall*, xv-xvi.

57. Qtd in Brendon, xvii

58. Ibid., xvi

59. See 'The National Union Banquet to Mr Balfour', *Birmingham Daily Post*,

Thursday, April 12, 1888, Issue 9296 and Alderson, *Arthur James Balfour*, 331.

60 Hay, 'Genetic Criticism: Origins', 22.

61. Wilde, 'The True Function of Criticism', 445.

62. Ibid.

63 Ibid., 457

64 Wilde, 'The Critic as Artist', 396.

65. Bristow, 'Introduction', xliii; Bristow 'Editorial Introduction', Li.

66. Wilde, 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism', 277.

67. Killeen, *The Faiths of Oscar Wilde*, 120-1.

68. Wilde, *Picture of Dorian Gray* [1891], 324.

69. Ibid., 326 -8, 332.

70. Ibid., 327-8.

71. Ibid., 327

72. McCormack, 'Wilde and Parnell', 88

73. Lyons in *Culture and Anarchy* writes of the Anglo-Irish: 'They had habitually called themselves simply 'Irish' and in their eighteenth-century heyday had even monopolized the term, to the exclusion of the native and Catholic Irish whose legal existence the penal laws had then scarcely acknowledged. On the other hand, conscious that they were a privileged minority, separated by race and religion from those whose land their ancestors had seized, they still looked to England as their ultimate protector and regarded themselves as members of an empire which they were proud to serve. This divided loyalty led them eventually into the characteristic dilemma of a colonial governing class, torn between their country of origin and their country of settlement', 18 – 19

74. Coakley, *Importance of Being Irish*, 163

75. O'Toole, 'The Wild Irishman', 84.

76. See Howes, 'Misalliance and Anglo-Irish Tradition', 164-186.

77. Killeen, 'Irish Gothic'

78 Wilde, *Picture of Dorian Gray* [1891], 226.

79 Ibid., 341.

80. L.P. Curtis notes that 'Far removed from Fenian-style skirmishing against the police, this land agitation resembled a tug of war between the mobilized tenantry with their superior numbers and the landlords with their wealth and the backing of the courts, coercion acts, the magistracy, the Royal Irish Constabulary, and the military.

In most respects it was a war of nerves as well as words. And yet there was enough violence and intimidation to prompt the former Irish attorney-general Edward Gibson, MP (later Baron Ashbourne), to tell Lord Beaconsfield in January 1881 that "Ireland is in a terrible way, half-anarchy, half-revolution." On the Irish gentry's fear, rather than the actuality, of violence during the Land Wars, he writes 'Although assaults on the employees of the Big House--whether the agent, steward, gamekeeper, or workman--were not exactly new, the number of such offenses soared after 1879. A remarkable feature of the land war, however, was the paucity of proprietors killed or wounded, despite all the threats to their lives. Arguably, the combination of the League's official opposition to violence and the ubiquity of police protection saved the lives of many gentry. Most shooting victims were in fact tenant farmers who had either paid their rent secretly, or aided a boycotted person, or--a much graver offense--taken an evicted holding' Curtis, 'Landlord responses', 40, 74.

81. Lyons also notes that 'The Anglo-Irish ruling class were from the Famine onwards, living on borrowed time. With the economic depression of the 1870s, the ensuing land agitation, and the steady conversion of British governments towards a policy of expropriation, their days were numbered', Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy*, 23
50. Wratislaw, *Oscar Wilde, a Memoir*, 13

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