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THE CLASSICAL GUISE

A formation of a homosexual identity, as influenced by the birth of the Women's Movement and its shadow 'masculine'counterpart as viewed from the aesthetes perspective.

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INTRODUCTION

The Victorian era was a period of prudishness and great social snobbery. Hypocracies abound. Nonetheless, it was a time of immense liberation. The Woman's Movement which appeared as a visible force in the 1850s resulted in widespread social change. It was a dynamic force which consequently came to effect every level of society. Inevitably, the male sex was to suffer. Coupled with an increased urbanised and industrialised society, the Victorian era was witness to radical transformations which have come to shape modern day perceptions.

The growth of the Middle Class and the consequent rejection of the ancien régime were early Nineteenth century occurrences. Definitions of masculinity transformed drastically as they would again later in the same century. The magnificence and elaboration of costume which had expressed the ideals of the ancien régime came to be abhorred by a changing society. New social order demanded something which would express the common humanity of all men. Commercial concepts conquered class after class. The plain and uniform costume associated with such ideals ousted the garments associated with the old order. In what has come to be termed 'The Great Masculine Renunciation', men gave up their right to all the brighter, more

elaborate forms of ornamentation. The male abandoned his claim to be considered beautiful and henceforth aimed at being only useful. Then again, during the later part of the Nineteenth century, the male abandoned yet another claim. This time, he withdrew completely from all 'feminine' characteristics. This sudden abhorrence of the 'feminine' did not however elapse without contest. The Aesthetic Movement began to question this second sudden renunciation. However, no challenge to the Victorian establishment, however demure, was well received.

This thesis shall explore the implications of woman's liberation, the aesthetes questioning of these changes, and the remodelling of sexualities which have remained common to Twentieth century attitudes.

CHAPTER ONE

The influence of the ancient world upon the Victorians was immense. The classical began to infiltrate the lives of the Victorians on every level, by way of entertainment, the arts, education and architecture. The Albert Memorial, a symbol of the Victorian age, swollen to gargantuan size, like the power of the British Empire itself, is an extraordinary tribute to the sway of Greece over the Victorian imagination. Dante and Shakespeare recline at the foot of the central throne, upon the throne itself sits Homer. So too, in architecture, buildings in the classical tradition were erected throughout the Nineteenth century. The basic vernacular of London itself is a kind of debased classicism.

Classical writings and classical history became the backbone of the Victorian educational system, a trend which was to remain deeply rooted until the end of the century. Dr. Thomas Arnold, headmaster at Rugby, although a reformist in other ways, was a deep classicist and opposed to the introduction of modern literature into the educational curriculum. Familiarity concerning the classics was part of the mental composition of every educated Victorian. Most importantly a sound classical education conveyed a sense of class distinction. Classical references and quotations were part of everyday

conversation and Greek words like 'nous', 'kudos' and 'hoi polloi' penetrated the vocabulary of the upper classes.

To appreciate the Victorians, it is necessary to understand their devotion for the Greeks, as already mentioned Homer occupied a more prominent role than William Shakespeare. In Homer they found nobility, heroism and truth. Undeniably there is much violence depicted in the works of Homer, however the Victorians feared violence much less than they feared decadence. They were quite prepared to raise their young on a diet of Homeric works which portrayed ideals of healthiness, manliness and wholesomeness. Thus every schoolboy submerged himself in the delights of the 'Iliad' and the 'Odyssey', suitably expurgated of course. Careful censorship ensured that the undesirable aspects of classical culture, particularly references to sexual behaviour be removed. The story of Ganymede was virtually rewritten, serving as a typical example of the abhorrence with which the theme of homosexuality was regarded. Charles Anthon excluded everything he found offensive from his 'Classical Dictionary' of 1842. Ganymede was now 'carried off to Olympus by an eagle to be cupbearer of Jove' (Cooper, 1994, p. 24). As the Nineteenth century academic study of ancient culture became even more detailed, the drift between other areas so extensively documented and that of sex, where even advanced scholars were

sometimes ignorant of the meanings of basic terms became even more glaring. Friedrich-Karl Forberg published 'Apophoreta' in defiance of the texts which had been either expurgated or tacitly left in obscurity. In short, the book compiled an exhaustive catalogue of sexual positions, constituting largely of quotations from all ancient authors who had anything to say about sexual intercourse. The French and English translations were in themselves luxury items each limited to one hundred copies for a small circle of acquaintances. Notable to the work is Forberg's omission of paederasty. Given the relative prominence of paederasty in both Greek and Roman literature of luxury, Forberg's neglect of it might seem surprising, perhaps even indicative of his own personal tastes. (Plato had made paederasty central to the 'Symposium' celebrating it under the title 'Heavenly Love'. The genius of Plato's analysis is that it eliminates passivity altogether).

Through censorship in the ancient texts and personal censorship, the Victorians succeeded in banishing sexuality from the lives of the Greeks. Though paederasty was an integral part of the fabric of Greek life, and to a lesser extent transvestism and male prostitution, the Nineteenth century succeeded in its desexualization and the Greek became pure and noble. In defence of Greek wholesomeness, Dr. John Mahaffy, Professor of Ancient History at Trinity College ventured

to touch upon the vexed question of Greek homosexuality. No previous scholar, writing in English for a general audience, had done as much. Mahaffy characterised it as an ideal attachment between a man and a handsome youth, and acknowledged that the Greeks regarded it as superior to the love of a man and woman. Mahaffy quickly realised that he had gone too far. When a second edition appeared in the following year 1875, he omitted the pages concerning homosexual love. Ruskin refused to allow homosexuality to be sanctioned because practised in Athens, arguing that "the partial corruption of feeling for "women and the excessive"admiration for male physical beauty' had conduced to the fall of Greek civilisation (Ellmann, 1988, p. 49). But Ruskin's own obsession with the child Rose La Touch made it difficult to take his pronouncements about normal sexual activity seriously.

The aforementioned Dr. Arnold was continually engrossed by questions of 'Sin' and 'Morality' but in all his recorded homilies there is only one reference to sexual offences. Silence concerning sexual matters was considered to be the ideal course of action. The exemplar model was that the male should remain entirely innocent and inexperienced in sexual matters until such time as he met his wife-to-be. Headmasters at Harrow, Eton, Rugby and other public schools made it increasingly more difficult for their students to gain access to

the opposite sex. This separation, rather than putting anxieties at rest, only raised other fears. The neurosis was contagious. Thomas Hughes in his book of 1857, 'Tom Brown's Schooldays' warns his young readers that "the most fatal results" can follow in years after from a practice which he does not name. "I could tell of souls hopelessly besmirched and befouled by this deadly habit. More I dare not say; this much I dare not suppress" (Chandos, 1984, p. 290).

The strain upon the uneasy moralists was considerably relaxed by the revelation that the proper person to instruct boys in the elementary facts of human sexuality were not men, but women. A good and virtuous women, it was believed, was unmoved and untempted by sexual desires. Suddenly it became immoral for a mother to keep silent. They were instructed in how to terrify boys into virtue with warnings of lethal consequences which included among other things exhaustion, convulsive spasms, epilepsy, blindness, paralysis and an early grave.

Within the public schools there was innocence and there was depravity. Greek romantic sacrificial friendships and rabid sensual lusts all manifested within these communities. Boys were prohibited by one stern code from revealing what they knew, men were deterred by another from unveiling what they remembered. The year of 1859

saw the purge at Westminster when five senior boys and athletes were expelled. Ten years previous there would have been no such treatment of transient paederasty, however in this new climate of moral intensity, masters felt compelled. A lesser disturbance had surface at Harrow shortly before, yet the accused were treated leniently.

John Addington Symonds entered Harrow in the Spring of 1854 at the age of fourteen. Later to become associated with the aesthetic sect of the later part of the century, the term homosexuality was not recognised in his youth, he himself helped to promote the concept in the field of psychopathological diagnosis. Previous to this period, sexual activity between men was regarded not as an abnormal alternative to the 'norm', but as a healthy supplement to the heterosexual relation. The French novelist Pierre Choderlos de Laclos in the Eighteenth century novel 'Les Liaisons Dangereuses' describes the sexual politics of the time. Sexual conquest enhanced one's sense of personal achievement, regardless of the sex of the conquered, so long as the conqueror himself remained the dominant partner and did not practise the role of passivity. Symonds excelled in classics under the tutorial guidance of the homosexual and Harrow's headmaster Charles Vaughan whom Symonds would later expose in a series of unpublicised events. Symonds describes in his unpublished auto-

biography "Every boy of good looks had a female name and was recognised either as a public prostitute or as some bigger fellow's bitch". 'Bitch' was a term indicating a boy who yielded himself to another. "One could not avoid seeing acts of onanism, mutual masturbation and the sport of naked boys in bed together. There was no refinement, no sentiment, no passion, nothing but animal lust in these occurrences" (Chandos, 1984, p. 307). Symonds himself did not partake of these acts though they were routine occurrence but conducted his own love life on what he considered to be an entirely different and ethereal plane, forming infatuations for remote and unattainable figures. One such character emerged in the form of the athlete Henry Dering, whom Symonds likened to a "handsome Greek brigand" (Chandos, 1984, p. 311). It was Dering's infamous activities which had occasioned the brief disturbance on the confident surface of Harrow in 1859. Dering had forwarded a note to a boy called O'Brien, who went by the name Leilia, summoning the docile boy to his bed. The note fell into the hands of Vaughan and the entire school were called to the Speech Room. Vaughan read the note aloud, condemned the use of female names for boys and pronounced sentence. Dering was to be flogged and O'Brien had lines set for him. Symonds was left puzzled by the lenity of the punishment.

Having exposed Vaughan out of malice Symonds conveyed his

feelings to William Johnson a professor at Eton in a letter requesting advice. The reply came in the form of an epistle upon paederasty in modern times, defending it and laying down the principle that affection between persons of the same sex is no less natural than the ordinary passionate relations. This letter underscores the nature of the mysterious indiscretion which later led to Johnson's sudden retirement from Eton in 1872. In the course of his subsequent career as a writer and sexologist, Symonds resided much in the Mediterranean countries, especially Italy, where he fraternised openly with Italian youths and became acquainted with the homosexual photographers Wilhelm Von GloEden and Guglielmo Plüschow.

The interior glimpse Symonds reveals was of Harrow, but the scene it seems might equally have been of Eton or Rugby or any of the other public schools. It is not known if the sudden and mysterious departure of William Johnson from Eton was due to the discovery of illicit acts, for conduct which would not have attracted critical attention had come in the latter part of the century to be considered with sinister regard. Concerning Vaughan, there were those who had their suspicions that all was not as it appeared. One was the Bishop of Oxford, Sam Wilberforce who on discovering the reality behind Vaughan's arrested career conveyed this knowledge to the Prime Minister. However the intelligence made little difference and the Prime

Minister persevered in his attempts to persuade Vaughan to accept high office and it seems apparent that effective pressure was employed on Wilberforce to curb his tongue. Suppression of knowledge of this kind can only point to the underlying fact that paederastic relationships were rampant among the Victorian ruling classes. With silence being of utmost importance, it can only emphasise the hypocrisies to be found within this society. When silence was not observed, as was the case concerning Oscar Wilde, the Victorians rose in damnation. Symonds, for his part, was reproached for his openness relating to his sexuality and his readiness to fraternise with peasants and artisans.

Another faction of society which began to undermine the patriarchy came under the guise of the Women's Movement which began to gain momentum in the fifties, resulting in widespread social change which many found threatening. It was not just men who felt anguish, many women were not ready to partake of these changes, some ventured while the majority angrily resisted. Humourists, essayists, artists and novelists contributed to the protest. Siding with men who believed that a woman's inherent capacity suited her only to be a mother, the essayist Eliza Lynn Linton, maintained "The raison d'être of a woman is maternity", further denouncing females who pursued careers as "dissatisfied , insurgent and likely to shock" (Gertner, 1990, p. 14).

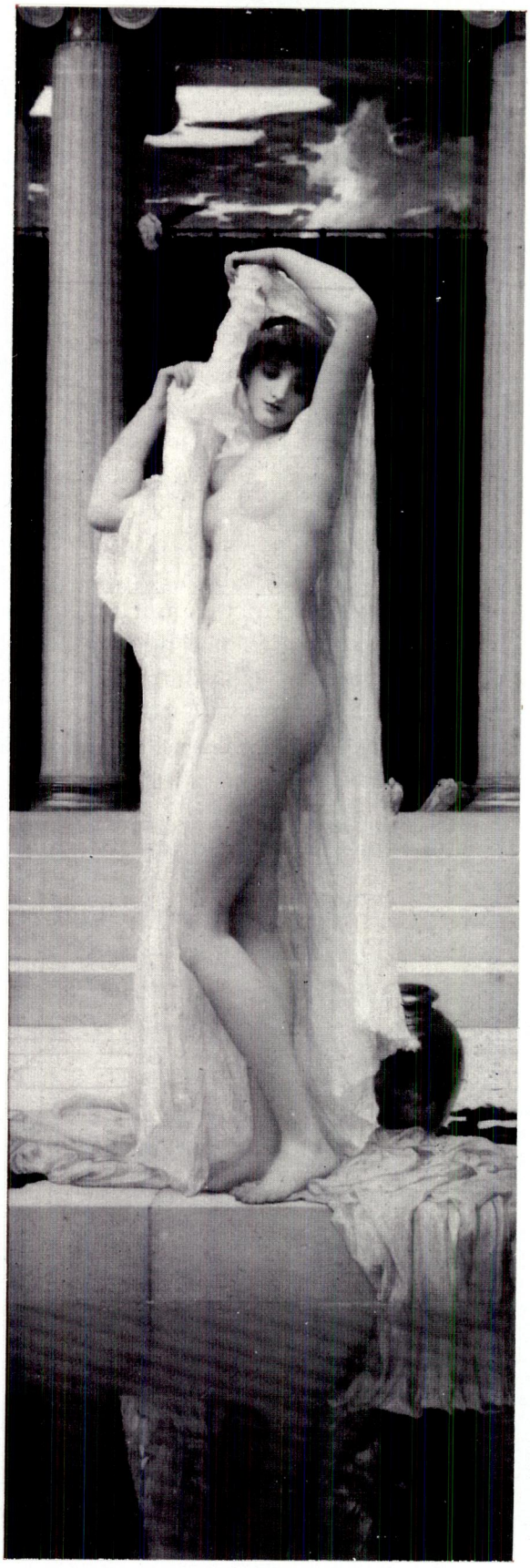
In defiance of this backlash of resentment, a small minority of women begun to retaliate, notably Constance Wilde, who under the guidance of her aesthete husband Oscar abandoned the constricting stays dictated by the Parisian fashions of the period. They began to eat in restaurants without male companions, no longer fearing attacks upon their reputations. For the first time, women were able to travel unaccompanied on bicycles and on public transport for in doing so they were no longer assumed to be prostitutes. Nonetheless, such activities were not regarded proper for the good and virtuous woman, Havelock Ellis in a scathing report condemned these new found freedoms claiming that women would have orgasms while riding bicycles or sitting improperly on trains. The magazine 'Punch' was unrelenting in its denunciation of the 'New Woman' in short she is "unsexed, factitious, foolish, coarse, inhuman" (Gertner, 1990, p. 15). It preached in the unwholesomeness of women travelling by train and by bicycle. Through its banter and sarcasm 'Punch' bared some of the anxieties many men must have felt. Rather than seeing themselves as sharing power with women 'Punch's' contributors and others who opposed women's claims tried to recapture the feeling of patriarchal superiority by denigrating women.

Women's growing sense of self sufficiency provoked direct opposition on another, equally primal level, that of male sexual fantasies.

Pornographic material grew in accordance with the expanding feminist movement. Up to that point the main current of indigenous English pornography had been the sexual tuition of young men, it now began to express a desire for the dominance through depictions of cruelty towards women. So too in painting the theme of women bound and chained became increasingly common. Andromeda chained to her rock and forlorn slaves stripped and displayed for sale were depicted in the paintings of Leighton, Poynter and Alma-Tadema. 'The Romance of Chastisement' of 1866, 'Colonel Spanker's Experimental Lover' 1879 and 'The Way of a Man with a Maid' 1885 to name the most offensive novels of each decade, all portray scenes in which women are physically restrained and beaten. Unlike earlier works where sadistic elements occur, books like these concern sadism as their main preoccupation. Subsequent to 1860 flogging began to be practised with increasing vehemence, men employing the whip making women submiss. Interestingly, prior to this date, flagellation as a regular feature of pornography was performed on men, offering one variant of physical stimulation, not as a form of enslavement. Such practices were not only confined to the pages of these books, whipping became increasingly common in women's prisons and was also freely administered within girls' schools. Moreso, with regard to the school system, a double standard became apparent concerning sexual activity. While it was acknowledged that 'animal desire is

stronger in the male than in the female' (Chandos, 1984, p. 290) and thus accepted, girls who were suspected of practising masturbation were referred to a London-based surgeon who administered clitoridectomy without anaesthetic as form of remedy.

Male supremist attitudes also figure in the comparatively few late-Victorian paintings of nudes. Take away the mythological titles and classical trimmings, we are left with a titillating pose, leaving the male in the privileged position of voyeur. As spectators, women were invited to share in a pleasure which was essentially male or invited into an opposing position, seeing in the nude, an image of female exploitation and degradation. Passive sexuality suffuses many paintings by the venerated artist Lord Frederich Leighton. Needless to say, reference to the naked male body was considered far more circumspect. Leighton was careful to maintain outward appearances, a practising paederast he acknowledged his emotions and feelings for the male body through drawings and paintings rather than the more formal exhibition pieces. Although these are few and far between they are given character and idealised masculine bodies, whereas his female nudes appear, stiff, proper and stern. Leighton was incredibly skilful in giving his public exactly what it required. Because Leighton perpetuated traditional notions of female submissiveness, thereby gratifying males who feared they could no longer control women, he was rewarded by popular acclaim.



1. Lord Frederich Leighton, The Bath of Psyche, c. 1890

The need to retaliate against the growth of suffragism came in the reply of the Clarendon Commission of 1861. With the undermining of patriarchy the commission injected new order into the public school system in an effort to save masculinity. There came about an increase in direct surveillance on recreational activities and pastimes and a notable decrease in expression of individuality. The schools, while retaining the name and appearance of continuity, had been transmogrified to correspond with the needs and standards of a much changed outer society. It was part of the new educational doctrine of total control, according to which freedom of choice was malign and undesirable. As the century progressed, schoolmasters and preachers became obsessed with concerns regarding impurity, so much so, that all school boy's pockets were sewn up. The cycles of suspicion were to reach a point of farcical hysteria when in the 1890s it was ordered that no master was permitted to have a boy alone in his room for more than ten minutes and no master should ever allow a boy to be alone in a room with him with the door shut. The aim of the system was to produce men of uniformity, playing the same games at the same time, wearing the same uniform, thinking the same thoughts, living by the same code. In this system of training, games became the supreme test of moral excellence. Ball games and rowing became central to this movement, for they were Greek in origin and would once again evoke images of the male as powerful and manly. Public

schools were divided, classified and clothed according to the proficiency of boys at games. The manly character emphasised at Rugby, Harrow and other public schools led to such statements as those claiming that the victories of the British Army began on the playing fields of Rugby - emphasising the new cult status of sports. The male ideal was characterised by controlled strength, deceiveness and dominance, together with hardness which was defined as the absence of bodily and intellectual fat. The concern for proving one's manliness came close to being an obsession. The variety which had formerly characterised life was now resented as deviation from the norm. Walks were looked on with ominous suspicion and botany had become unmentionable under a code of militant pseudo-masculinity supported by claims that "There is no room for this rotten effeminate stuff here!" (Chandos, 1984, p. 338).

With this new emphasis on bodily strength, new stereotypes concerning gender were beginning to take hold. The new man had to achieve his 'manhood'. Feminine traits came to be deplored and any male who displayed such effeminacy was publicly humiliated. One such loss was recorded by the plunging decline of the intellect of males in public schools beginning in the 1840s. It reached its nadir in the Eighties when the cult of the body was "not exclusive of but actively hostile to that of the intellect" (Chandos, 1984, p. 334).

Music, literature and all the 'finer' things were designated to the women's sphere. Independence of mind had become an abomination and would be treated as such.

BARBARIANS AT PLAY.

John Bull. "PLAY FOOTBALL, BY ALL MEANS, MY BOY—BUT DON'T LET IT BE THIS BRUTAL SORT OF THING!"

2. Linley Sambourne, John Bull, 'Punch' Barbarians at Play, 1888

CHAPTER TWO

"Grace was his and white purity of boyhood and beauty such as old Greek marbles kept for us. There was nothing that one could not do with him. He could be made a Titian or a toy" (Jenkyns, 1991, p. 142), so Oscar Wilde has Lord Henry Wotton reflect upon Dorian Gray. 'The Picture of Dorian Gray' published initially in 'Lippincott's Monthly Magazine' on 20 June 1890, as well as being about aestheticism was also one of the first attempts to introduce homosexuality into the English novel. Its appropriately covert presentation of this censored subject guaranteed the work notoriety and originality. Constance Wilde was to remark 'Since Oscar wrote Dorian Gray, no one will speak to us' (Ellmann, 1988, p. 302). His mother, the outrageous Speranza Francesca Wilde was rapturous, professing at having almost fainted while reading the last scene.

Similarly a book which had shaken the literary world in the Eighties, Joris-Karl Huysman's 'A Rebours', had too painted the scene of the aesthetic dandy living the life of self indulgent luxury with little regard to conventional standards. If English aestheticism had suffered in the Eighties from lack of example, 'Dorian Gray' filled that need. In writing the novel, Wilde had studied long lists of jewellery, textiles and flowers, all the 'finer things' which had come to be deplored by the

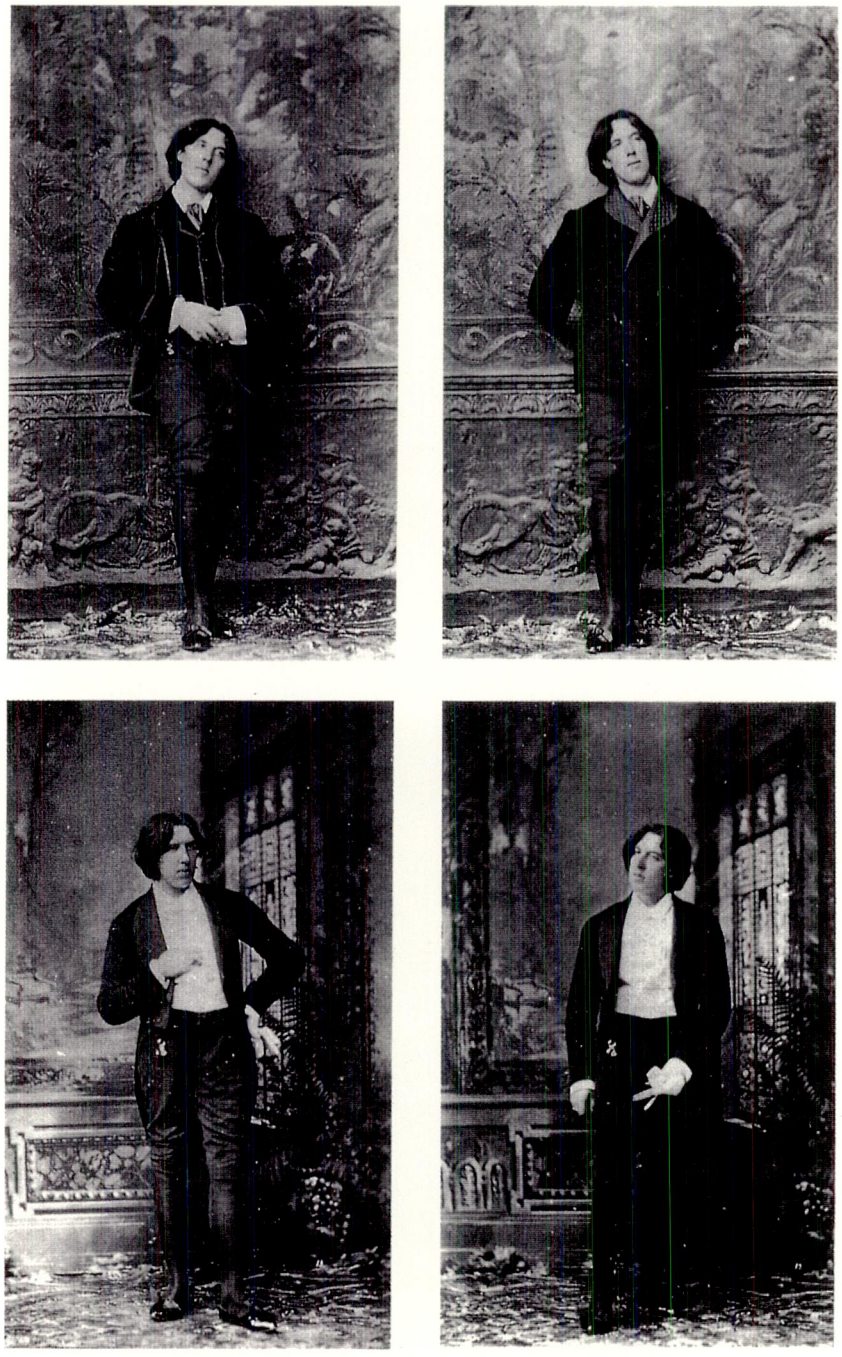
new cult of masculinity. The book became an instruction for the new movement in aetheticism. The effect of 'Dorian Gray' was prodigious, ultimately it repelled several of is reviewers and it was condemned as immoral and 'filthy'. Many young men and women learned of the existence of uncelebrated forms of love through suggestions in 'Dorian Gray'. No novel had commanded so much attention for years. Wilde's circle of young men, including the young poet and Wilde's lover John Gray, whom he had based the character on, swelled with his growing success.

The vigour and manliness of Victorian culture had endeavoured to wipe out aetheticism, to its great distress the Nineties became the years in which aestheticism took hold in its revised and perfected form. Aestheticism in its extreme manifestation became a euphemism for homosexuality and Wilde became the most notorious dandy of the period. Wilde's enthusiasm for flowers was abhorred as were the clean shaven faces of himself and his aesthete disciples. The movement which had previously been associated with the lily, "the most perfect model of design, the most naturally adapted for decorative art" (Ellmann, 1988, p. 158), adopted the green carnation. With a hint of decadence the painted flower blended art and nature. "The costume of the Nineteenth century is detestable", reflects Lord Henry Wotton in 'Dorian Gray'. "It is so sombre, so depressing"

3.Oscar Wilde in Greek Costume during a trip to Greece, April 1887

(Ellmann, 1988, p. 156). So too the new aesthetes share Dorian's delight in dressing up. At Trinity, Wilde had experimented with a beard, at Oxford he grew his hair long and had it waved, then in Paris he had it cut and curled in Greek style, then let it grow long again. His clothing also passed through transformations; dandical in London, it became 'outre' in America, and then elaborately decorous. "To become a work of art is the object of living" (Ellmann, 1988, p., 292), became central to his doctrine of aestheticism. Without surrendering the contempt for morality, or for nature, that had alarmed his critics, Wilde now allowed for a higher ethics in which artistic freedom and full expression of individuality were possible.

In 1882 Lady Wilde urged both her sons, Oscar and Willie, into improving their financial position through marriage. There was no doubt that marriage would silence the gossip. The 'Journal' of 1883 had referred to Wilde in an article as "au sexe douteux", Punch had recently labelled him a "Mary Ann" and the 'New York Times' had spoken of him as "epicence" (Ellmann, 1988, p. 220). While touring America, Wilde had lectured on the subject 'The Decorative Arts' and 'The House Beautiful' offering practical applications of aesthetic doctrine. He considered modern jewellery to be vulgar because the craftsman is ignored and modern wallpaper being so bad that a boy brought up under its influence could allege it as justification for turning



4. Oscar Wilde photographed in New York, by Napoleon Sarony, January 1882.

to a life of crime. Modern dress was ignoble, women should eschew furbelows and corsets, and emulate the drapery on Greek statuary. He regarded the kneebreeches which he wore to be more sensible than trousers and the only well dressed men he claimed to have seen were the Colorado miners with their wide hats and long cloaks. Before departing, he urged Harvard to display more sculpture. Needless to say, he had particularly liked the gymnasium and urged them to combine athletics and aesthetics by placing a Greek athlete in that building. However effeminate his doctrines were thought to be, they constituted the most determined and sustained attack upon materialistic vulgarity that America had seen.

With regard to marriage, the kisses of the American poet, Walt Whitman and those of the idolatrous Robert Harborough Sherard occasioned him to delay. Nonetheless a wife would save him from the moralists and a rich one from the money lenders. In true aesthetic fashion Wilde lived a life of decadent expenditure. Married, he might confront society without having to affront it. A possible candidate came in the form of Lillie Langtry. Wilde had attributed the new aesthetic and classical movement in English art to the beauty of her face, she was however still married at that time, besides she was as penniless as he. Constance Holland became central to his affections. They were married on 29 May 1884. It was a wedding in the high

aesthetic mode. The bride was decorously dressed in classical fashion, Wilde was said to have resembled George IV. The bridesmaids were equally overdressed with Wilde as couturier. As a couple, the Wildes were continuously being invited out, often by people who had looked at Oscar askance before. Respectability had been achieved overnight, though it had never been his ideal. A weekly magazine the 'Bat' lamented the aesthete's decline:

> At last he went and cut his hair
> The soil proved poor and arid
> And things are much as once they were.
> He's settled down and married.
> (Ellmann, 1988, p. 243)

Needless to say, Wilde was still outraging the world, settled down but by no means subdued. He played the role of the married man with a flair which suggested that for him it was an adventure rather than a quiescence.

Wilde relished this unfamiliar but new stage. His dandyism instead of being suppressed, continued to flourish. He was now able to impose his vision upon his spouse. Constance's natural shyness consorted ill with the boldness required of her. At his request she would bedeck herself, a half convinced martyr to his evangel of dress reform. Constance persisted, attended art college and succeeded in displaying considerable variety. Attending a meeting on 'Rational Dress' in

Westminster, when rising to propose a motion, she showed herself to be wearing cinnamon coloured trousers and a cape with the ends turned to form sleeves. The 'Bat' writing of the meeting on 30 March 1886, found her attire to be strictly irrational. She addressed an audience of women at the Somerville Club on the subject, 'Clothed and in our Right Minds'. For a while she edited the 'Rational Dress Gazette' and was a reporter for 'To-Day', the 'World' and the 'Ladies Pictorial'. Wilde too became involved in women's magazines for there was a growing interest in such publications as feminism took firmer hold. In 1887 he became editor of 'The Lady's World'. Considering it to be too feminine and not sufficiently womanly, his initial contribution was to retitle it 'The Woman's World'. He introduced articles on feminism and women's suffrage with women taking both sides of these arguments. The publishers, Cassell, regarded it to be ahead of their time and consorted to make it more practical. Wilde was the best dressed man at Cassells, he disliked their rule against smoking and the duration of his stay was governed by his ability to survive without a cigarette. Wilde terminated his editorialship in 1889.

In the Autumn of 1887, Wilde once again began lecturing. The subjects he offered were 'The Value of Art in Modern Life' and a new lecture on 'Dress'. In this he commended the recent revival of the

sense of beauty in England and only regretted that as of yet it had not extended to what people wore. He proposed that clothing should be hung from the shoulders rather than from the waist, the pivot of Victorian fashions. This would be healthier but better still Grecian. He emphasised the abandoning of bustles, corsets, stays and pointed finger nails, the female statues of Greece, he noticed have rather large feet, high heels were to be eschewed on these grounds. Constance became a model for his doctrine on dress reform and modelled several outfits at each of the lectures. Audience interest in dress and home decoration was unfortunately limited and in the face of shrinking attendance, the lectures eventually stopped altogether. Parisian fashions dictated the period. Women's fashions were designed to constrict the body and for a time knees were tied together with the resultant step being short and graceful. Nothing could contrast more radically to the Wildean view. Moreover, people simplified what Wilde suggested to the point of absurdity.

Artistic circles were not so disparaging and in 1885 the Royal Academy celebrated the vogue by holding a Greek Ball. Many artists supported the craze declared Greek dress to be "the most perfect form of known costume". (Wood, 1983, p. 30). Walter Crane published 'Echoes of Hellas' in 1887, an adaptation of Aeschylus' 'Oresteia'. Including translations of part of Homer's 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey' the

black and red print evoked the impression of Greek vase painting. So too a fashion for Greek productions developed during the Eighties and not merely for Greek plays. A work of the early Seventeenth century, Fletcher's 'Faithful Shepherdess' was produced in classical costume in 1885. Undoubtedly the most spectacular example of the vogue was Edward Godwin's 1886 production of 'Helena of Troas'. The play by John Todhunter, was a melangé of Greek tragedy. Todhunter's text was merely the latest in an uninspiring line of academic Grecian verse dramas which includes Matthew Arnold's 'Merope' and Swinburne's 'Atlanta in Calydon' and 'Erechtheus', but Godwin's staging was audacious. To recover the spirit of Greek drama, the play was staged not in a conventional theatre but at 'Hengler's Circus'. The chorus clad in chitons of unbleached calico, intended to evoke impressions of Hellenic marble were placed among the audience. In anticipation of Twentieth century techniques, Godwin introduced the burning of incense, effectively producing an ambience of semi-religious effect and pared down costume, scenery and movement to a bare simplicity. Constance performed as one of Helena's attendants robed in sea-green chiffon fringed with gold, her hair gathered in a knot and bound with a fillet. The cast, not only bedecked in appropriate Greek robes but also posed in attitudes taken from the Pantheon Frieze. The audience included the Prince of Wales and Oscar Wilde, representatives of two very different types of

raffishness. Indeed one of the fascinations of this Hellenic event was that it provided a common ground upon which aristocracy, middle class culture and the aesthetic 'avant-garde' could meet. Wilde proclaimed it to be "the most perfect exhibit of a Greek dramatic performance that has yet been seen in this country" (Wood, 1983, p. 30). Godwin's staging of 'Helena of Troas' began a craze which was to continue, often imitated to befit productions of great diversity.

One such faction which emulated the approach celebrated by Godwin were the notorious 'tableaux vivants' entertainments of London's West End. Staged at insalubrious nighthouses and dance halls, the tableaux vivant or pose plastique was a form of striptease - prostitution in the guise of art. A group of mixed sex performers would strike the pose of a famous work of art, 'The Judgement of Paris' or scenes from the Pantheon Frieze. Although the performers did not appear naked, the wearing of 'fleshings', a type of body stocking, created a tantalising illusion of living flesh.

Women began to cultivate the statuesque look and the small upper lip and rounded chin of Grecian sculpture came to be very much admired. At a lecture on Greek art by the archaeologist and historian Charles Newton, Lillie Langtry sat facing the audience as a living example of Attic beauty. Adding further fuel to the mania for all things Greek, a

colleague of Godwin, Isadora Duncan in simple toga and bare feet sought to revive the spirit of ancient Greek dance. The aesthetic doctrine had become the 'raison d'être' for the 'avant-garde' and had also begun to descend from the aesthetic heights to irrigate middle-class life. The Wildean view burned on energetically into the following century and in 1910 Lady Diana Cooper recalled that at dances "everything must be Greek" (Wood, 1983, p. 30). Women wore Greek costume, crescents in their hair and sandalled or bare feet and painted performers posed as Athenian Gods upon pedestals, Homeric readings were of course, de rigeur.

From the heights of the arts to the level of prostitution the aesthetic movement, a polar opposite to the new cult of masculinity had begun to weave its doctrine through the fabric of Victorian society. From the growing independence of women to the new Aesthetic Movement the patriarchy began to witness a combined infringement upon its inherent power. Having already compartmentalised the male and female, the incompatibility of the aesthetic faction became apparent, it too would have to be pigeonholed, suppressed and eliminated.

CHAPTER THREE

For many writers of the late Victorian period, including Wilde, Walter Pater and Frederich Rolfe, the Hellenic ideal became inextricably associated with the cult of beautiful young men and what Alfred Douglas had coined in the poem 'The Two Loves', "the love that dare not speak its name" (Ellmann, 1988, p. 364). Pater drew from his studies of Ancient Greece, the subversive message that one must continue, hand in male hand, his essays all tend to glorify the same subject, male friendship. 'The Picture of Dorian Gray' and his undying fascination for Huysman's 'A Rebours' summoned Wilde towards an underground life totally at variance with his above-board role as Constance's husband. André Raffalovich, a later lover of John Gray and sworn enemy of Oscar Wilde, claimed that Wilde had been fascinated by a part of a 'A Rebours' in which the hero Des Esseintes recalls a sexual exploit which, being homosexual, was different from all the others he had experienced and in memory dominated them. The pregnant Constance Wilde seemed not to have noticed that her husband had begun to feel a growing distaste for her swollen body. She was no longer the white, slim, beautiful girl whom he had likened to a lily. In a year or so, the flowerlike grace had all vanished, she became heavy, shapeless, deformed. Little by little, Wilde lost enthusiasm for playing husband. His disaffection from his wife seems

implicit in the eagerness of his return to the society of young men. He was well aware of the dangers of being homosexual though he had consorted freely with those who were. His delight in young male bodies and in intensive friendships with men was patent. Wilde met Robert Ross at Oxford in 1886, so young and yet so knowing, he was determined to seduce the writer. Ross introduced Wilde to the oral and intercrural intercourse which he was to practise later. They liked each other and for a time their friendship was passionate. It marked a transformation of Wilde's life. This was part of the concealment and disclosure which 'Dorian Gray' had popularised. It was to find expression in the paintings of the unfortunate Simeon Soloman, in the decadent literature of the Nineties and in such emphera as the photographs of naked Italian youths by the German photographers Baron von Gloeden and Guglielmo Plüschow.

The 1860s as previously mentioned hallmarked a period in which the redefining of sexualities began to manifest itself in various forms most notably in the new form of militant masculinity. So too in this decade sexologists began to publish on same-sex preferences, most notable of all was the German lawyer Karl Heinrich Ulrichs. His work was essential to the innovative theory of same-sex attraction and the emancipation of homosexuality which he termed 'Uranism'. Owing to these writings, Ulrich's formal of Uranism became world famous.

Himself a homosexual, his objective was to contribute not to sexual physiology but to legal reform. He did not however succeed and in 1871 'unnatural fornication' became a crime throughout Germany. Through his research, Ulrich's work demonstrated that the male displayed various degrees of femininity, his successor Magnus Hirshfeld believed this more firmly. However, they had good reason to hide their presumed female qualities for there was no institutional recognition of the third gender in Western Europe and effeminacy would cause infinite problems. The nineties saw the formation of a new group 'die Gemeinschaft der Elgenen', which promoted a theory of homosexuality opposed to that of Hirshfeld and Ulrich. It attacked the influence of medical authorities on the theory of homosexuality and their idea that homosexuals were always effeminate. Inspired by the Greek ideals of pederastic love and the Germany Romantic tradition of friendship, they stressed the masculinity of their followers and saw male homosexuals as masculine ideals for young men instead of pathological, pitiable cripples.

Many writers began to explore sexual perversions in line with Ulrich's theories, but few endorsed his plea for decriminalisation. Germany in the seventies, France in the eighties and soon after throughout much of Europe, sexual psychopathy became fashionable in psychiatric circles. Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds became the main

proponents of the new science in England. The debate on sexual variations, which had previously been considered unthinkable became public and political. The larger cities of Europe observed an increase in the prosecution of sexual crimes. Cases of sexual perversion were brought before doctors, whom henceforth played an increasingly important role in the criminal process. Initial cases of sexual aberration came to the attention of psychiatrists who were summoned by the police or by the courts to give expert opinions. Such was the atmosphere which saw in the British Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, which for the first time prohibited indecent relations between consenting adult males. When it was pointed out to Queen Victoria that women were not mentioned she is reported to have declared "No woman would do that!" (Ellmann, 1988, p. 386). When the hopelessness of curtailing sexual activity became apparent, sexualities were compartmentalised and those which had come to be adjudged as unnatural, were simply outlawed.

What had come to typify the work of the Aesthetic Movement in England was a sensuous, dreamy, Greek influenced luxury. The Victorian vision of antiquity was a deeply romantic one, looking back to the great civilisations of a golden age, far simpler, nobler and more inspiring than their own. Zealous hero-worshippers, it was the Greeks, not the Romans who became great objects of adoration.

Greece had the reputation for virtue, if something was Hellenic, it was bound to be pure. The experience of seeing the Elgin marbles and other authentic Greek statuary, were all Nineteenth century experiences. The invention of the camera and the expansion of the railway system throughout Europe resulted in greater numbers of people travelling to see the great masterpieces of the continent and resulted in more accurate reproductions appearing in the Victorian drawing room. Statues of classical antiquity were to be found in abundance markedly due to the introduction of Parian ware, in the 1860s, a ceramic designed to look like marble and evoke the prestige of ancient Greece. Such domestic nudity was the more readily accepted, because sculpture was associated with purity and innocence, other forms of art were more questionable. Nevertheless, marble fig leaves were as much a commonplace on male statues as discreet drapes were for female nudes lest the modesty of women folk to be offended. Time and again Victorian writers let their thoughts fondle the whiteness of statuary, often using it as an emblem of purity - the awkward but already well known fact that Greek marbles were commonly painted was blandly ignored. The art of the late Nineteenth century was an expression of a desire to escape from the ugliness, materialism and industrialism of their age. There appears a notable absence of overtly masculine imagery or great athletic feats, artists were resigned to paint scenes involving personal tragedy or

5. Greek Slave, parian ware, c. 1860

unhappiness. For the aesthete, the ideal male was young, graceful, androgenous, suggestive of the possibility of the existence and acceptance of a third sex. Similarly within the sphere of photography, the male nude was considered too blatantly sexual, though depictions of youths who were thought to be less sensually provocative, flooded the market. The production of photography was regulated by the English Obscene Publications Act of 1857, thus these images were imported into the country from both Italy and Paris under the guise artistic research.

The great expansion of the visual arts in the last two decades of the Nineteenth century included the publication of many new magazines, as well as the introduction of various magazines catering for the needs of the 'New Woman', artists too witnessed a growing emergence of publications dedicated to their sphere. Within these could be found articles and illustrations containing mildly homoerotic themes. Charles Edward Sayle through his periodical 'The Artist' presented an article entitled 'Subjects for Pictures' in effect a list of themes in Greek Mythology dealing with paederastic relationships. Articles suggested that by turning to Ancient Greece, in a new spirit of naturalism artists could "invoke the past anew, in bodily beauty and fleshly form" (Cooper, 1994, p. 65). In April 1893, the first issue of 'The Studio' lauded the work of Aubrey Beardsley and continued to do so. It also

contained photographs by von Gloeden and Frederich Rolfe of naked adolescent Sicilian youths posed in classical attitudes against a backdrop of classical surroundings, a ploy necessary to circumvent the censor. It was in this first issue that a drawing of Salome grasping the head of John the Baptist had seized the imagination of Oscar Wilde. He immediately engaged Beardsley to illustrate his new book Salome.

The success of 'Lady Windermere's Fan' in February 1892 succeeded in shooting Wilde into the limelight of the London social circuit. Among those regarding him with new eyes was the actress Sarah Bernhardt who agreed to play the title role in his new play 'Salome'. As with Lillie Langtry, Wilde traced Bernhardt to ancient Greece, he enlisted Langtry's aid in searching among the Greek coins in the British Museum for the actress's profile. Langtry put up with this rival with good grace, even when it was rumoured that the Prince of Wales had temporarily defected from her arms to those of Bernhardt. Wilde persuaded the artist Charles Ricketts into creating a stage befitting of the production. In place of an orchestra, braziers of perfume, a different one for each emotion was proposed. However, the concept was soon quenched when it was pointed out that the theatre could not be aired between each emotion. Unfortunately, the production was terminated when the licensers of plays Piggot banned the play

6. Oscar Wilde in costume as Salome, c. 1892

quoting an old law which forbade the depiction of Biblical themes on stage. Infuriated, Wilde claimed in an interview to the French magazine 'Le Galilois' "To me there are only two languages in the world : French and Greek, here people are essentially anti-artistic and narrowminded. Though I have English friends, I do not like the English in general. There is a great deal of hypocrisy in England which you in France very justly find fault with" (Ellmann, 1988, p. 352). Wilde had earlier threatened in the 'Pall Mall Budget' that if the censor refused 'Salome', he would leave England for France where he would take out letters of naturalisation. There was general merriment at the fact that Wilde, if he became a French citizen, would be subject to military service. 'Punch' surpassed itself with a caricature of Wilde uniformed as a 'poilu'. If 'Salome' could not be staged, it was defiantly published inclusive of Beardsley's illustrations in February 1893.

The basic fear of the male is that of castration, and more specifically that of the castrating female, such is the underlying theme in 'Salome'. In Wilde's play, Salome is a woman who clearly understands the reliance of male sexuality on female sexuality for its definition. Salome uses the only power she has in male society, her body, to bargain with Herod for John's head, he having refused her sexual advances. She negotiates by using her body, enacting male

sexual fantasies of female sexual availability and submission. The distance between the female reality and the male sexual fantasy is indicated by the 'infeminine' stance of Salome. Wilde has Herod order Salome's death in a calculated move to restore patriarchal order. Indicative of the times, the growing strength of suffragism and the recently revised masculinity, it is little wonder that the play was prevented from being staged. Beardsley's illustration of the 'Burial of Salome'(fig.7) presents the heroine as a far more graceful and 'feminine' figure, previous to this she had filled the space with her menacing form. In death she is once again made to conform to convention, a fact emphasized by the prevalence of her powder-box coffin. When Wilde's publisher John Lane, forced Beardsley to cover the genitals of the cosmetician in 'Enter Herodias', the artist's reaction went into a quatrain:

> Because one figure was undressed
> This little drawing was suppressed.
> It was unkind. But never mind,
> Perhaps it was all for the best.
>
> (Ellmann, 1988, p 355)

Beardsley followed Lane's instructions in a manner guaranteed to draw attention to this ridiculous addition - a figleaf tied like a G-string and topped by a bow. To many Victorians, Beardsley's depictions must

7. Aubrey Beardsley, The Burial of Salome, c. 1893

have been incarnations of the patriarchal nightmare - the exploited would rise and treat the exploiters with equally repressive force.

If 'Punch' was unrelenting in its condemnation of the 'New Woman' it was as equally disparaging in its definition of the 'New Man', the aesthete, describing him in one word "Woman" (Gertner, 1990, p.81) . If 'Punch' was attempting to intimidate the 'New Man' aesthetic publications were to the contrary one step ahead in applauding the movement. The French literary magazine 'Le Decadent' published an article in 1886 celebrating the fact then "Man becomes more delicate, feminine and divine" (Cooper, 1994. p 64) Joseph Peladan continued to encourage the depiction of androgynous figures of intermediate sex by writing in 1893 "Art has created a supernatural being, the Androgyne beside which Venus disappears." (Cooper 1994, p.64) A year later, the socialist and pro-feminist writer, Edward Carpenter wrote on the subject of men loving men in 'Homogenic Love' in that same year Charles Kains Jackson in an essay in 'The Artist' questioned male stereotyping. So too at this time the new movement of masculinity was being undermined from every angle, the growing independence of women on one side and on the other, it was being ridiculed and continually questioned by the Aesthetic Movement which was beginning to expand and flourish during this period.

In England, the artist who most expressed the ideals and hopes of the aesthetic school was Simeon Solomon. Living openly as a homosexual in the Sixties and Seventies, he befriended the dynamic and controversial poet and masochist Algernon Charles Swinburne, and it is thought that the two may have become lovers. Swinburne introduced Solomon to the writings of the Marquis de Sade, Walt Whitman and the philosophy that nothing can be unnatural. Socialising in the aesthetic circle Solomon became acquainted with the prominent homosexual writers Walter Pater and Oscar Browning. Browning who was at that time an Eton schoolmaster, was later to lose this position owing to a scandal which included excessive intimacy with a number of his pupils. What afternoon tea with Pater and Browning was like is recorded in the diary of Mark Pattison, Rector of Lincoln College, Browning "conversed in one corner with four feminine-looking youths part dawdling in our presence", "Presently Walter Pater who, I had been told was upstairs appeared, attended by two more youths of similar appearance". (Ellmann, 1988, p.81) Among the aesthetic set, Solomon's drawings were popular and were placed on the walls of more aware under graduates at Oxford. His drawing 'Love Talking To Boys' showing schoolboys affectionately hugging each other while being lectured by a winged angel, was proudly displayed on the walls of Oscar Wilde's rooms at Oxford. Solomon was only too well aware that his art was looked upon with

suspicion. He was denounced with some justification, by Robert Buchanan as belonging to one of the 'Fleshly School' and in the case of Solomon his warnings were justified.

He was arrested on a charge of indecent exposure in February 1873. Found guilty, Solomon received an eighteen month prison sentence. He became a complete social pariah, and many of his contemporaries, including Swinburne swiftly disassociated themselves from him fearing implication. Solomon continued to challenge concepts of conventional Victorian morality. The later paintings develop his original themes in describing androgynous epicence male figures, their vision being far more radical in their expression of sexual desires and concerns.

Following the peak of photography in qualitative and quantitative terms in Paris with the female nude presiding, production moved to Italy, from where it did not return to France till after the First World War. As time passed, the adoption of poses from the formal repertoire of antiquity became a mere pretext to circumvent the censors. What became significant above all else to the photographers and clients alike was the erotic, sexual content. Von Gloeden was at this time pursuing a dream of gay Greek love with the youths of Taormina on Sicily. Plüschow's photography displays a palpably stronger sexual charge , far more explicit and evocative than the more

romantic work of his cousin von Gloeden. For the homosexual clientele, the Mediterranean was a particularly erogenous zone. Young Italian males were thought to mature sexually, several years before their counterparts in northern Europe. More significantly, Italian society was tolerant of liaisons between youths and older men. The eminent English novelist Edmund Goose took great interest in the homoerotic photography of Plüschow. He introduced the gay activist Edward Carpenter, the paedophile poet Charles Kains Jackson, and Charles Edward Sayle, editor of 'The Artist' to Plüschow, as a supplier of studies from the nude and the models themselves. Plüschow's work was prized abroad, particularly in England where it was reproduced in vast quantities. This circumstance is referred to in a letter by John Addington Symonds, in which he writes that at the memorial service for Robert Browning, Goose took greater interest in a print of a Plüschow nude that he had slipped into his prayerbook than he did in the service itself. The English press of the period continually reported seizures of extensive quantities of 'indecent' materials, the numbers given were often in excess of 100,000. Persistent in his dealing with homoerotic images, Plüschow was arrested on a charge of procuring and of seducing minors in 1902. Following an eight month prison sentence, Plüschow made his exodus, returned to Germany and oblivion.

8.Guglielmo Plüschow, untitled, c. 1890

9. Guglielmo Plüschow, Youth on Tiger Skin. c. 1890

10.Guglielmo Plüschow, The Kiss, c. 1890

Contrary to the Italians, the English objected to what Wilde termed his 'Greek ideal' of love. Imputations of scandal concerning Wilde and his young lover Lord Alfred Douglas, were common knowledge amid London society. Wilde's predicament was grim for the Criminal Law Amendment Act had seen in the age of the blackmailer. Given Douglas' oblivious fraternisation with male prostitutes, his carelessness with letters received and recklessness in writing them, Wilde could never be free of harassment on this score. Wilde was to become the instrument of Douglas's age old battle with his father, the Marquess of Queensberry. The recent suicide of Queensberry's eldest son, Drumlanrig, resolved him to make sure a second did not die in similar circumstances. Drumlanrig in desperation of a reprisal of blackmail, concerning his relationship with the then Foreign Minister, Lord Rosebery, ended his life. Queensberry threatened that if Douglas did not cease in his acquaintance with Wilde, he would resolve to "make a public scandal in a way you little dream of" (Ellman, 1988, p 395). The relationship did not cease, Wilde's affair with Douglas reflected his intention to oblige a hypocritical age to take him as he was. Queensberry was nonetheless determined to make Wilde suffer from what he appeared to be doing. A member of the House of Lords, he would protect his son from similar charges by his influence over the authorities and his hold over Roseberry.

The warrant for Wilde's arrest was issued, charged with having committed 'indecent acts' he was escorted to Bow Street. When apprehended Wilde was reported to have been in possession of a yellow book. Assumed to have been 'The Yellow Book' neurosis ensued among Arthur Lane's contributors. Fearing implication many threatened to withdraw their work unless Beardsley be dismissed. Beardsley was removed as art director of 'The Yellow Book' - the magazine which he had helped found - for indecency. Robert Ross was named in newspapers as having been in Wilde's company at the time of the arrest. Understandably alarmed, he reluctantly made his exodus to the continent, as did John Gray, André Raffalovich and copious others. Henry Harland in a letter to Edmund Goose proclaimed, "six hundred gentlemen had crossed from Dover to Calais on a night when normally only sixty would have done so". (Ellmann, 1988, p 430) Wilde's name was removed from the hoardings where 'An ideal Husband' and 'The Importance of Being Earnest' were playing to full houses, and before long, with public feeling running high, the productions were discontinued. Not only did many of Wilde's acquaintances in England desert him, so too did most in France.

Wilde had hoped for bail, however, Sir John Bridge was repelled by the crime of sodomy. As French newspapers had commented with

some bewilderment, sodomy ranked only one step below murder in the English judicial system. Bridge insisted that the gravity of the charge made bail unthinkable. The trial commenced on 26 April 1895, never before in the Nineties had so much unsavoury evidence been given such a large degree of publicity. The case was conducted by the Treasury with considerable hypocrisy. Not only was homosexuality prevalent in the English public school system, which most of the legal personages present had attended, but furthermore Douglas' name would be kept out of the case to the greatest degree possible, in return for Queensberry's detailed evidence against Wilde. On account of the jury's failure to reach a verdict, a new trial was ordered. Wilde was found guilty of homosexuality on the second count. On proclaiming sentence, Mr. Justice Wills exclaimed "It is no use for me to address you. People who can do these things must be dead to all sense of shame and one cannot hope to produce any effect upon them. It is the worst case I have every tried". "That you, Wilde, have been the centre of a circle of extreme corruption of the most hideous kind among young men, it is impossible to doubt". (Ellmann, 1988, p.448,49). Wilde was sentenced to two years imprisonment, the severest sentence which the laws permitted. In the judgement of Wills, such a sentence appeared totally inadequate for the crime of homosexuality.

The Press universally praised the verdict of the jury. On 26 May, the 'News of the World', celebrated that "The aesthetic cult, in the nasty form is over". The 'Daily Telegraph' rejoiced when it wrote "Open the windows! let the fresh air in". (Ellmann, 1988 p. 450) The aesthetic revolt had been cut short while at the height of its onslaught. The establishment could breath once more.

CONCLUSION

Although feminine attributes had been an integral component in the make up of the male character, what hope would the newly established code of the 'masculine' have of sustaining an advance when reminded of the fickle nature of its constitution. Synchronical to the emergence of suffragism was the institutionalism of sexuality with its regimented orders. The Clarendon Commission had in 1861 instigated a move organised to revise male values. Since the 1850s women, albeit few in number, had begun to step beyond their designated sphere, although the establishment had retorted by condemning the 'New Women', it further responded by abruptly denouncing all inherent feminine qualities, thus decreasing the boundaries of the male sphere. In its targeting of the young, the physical culture movement succeeded in producing men of strength, uniformity and masculinity. The masculine triumphed to become a dominant force, physically that was, but not so concerning the intellect for women were beginning to surpass men in this regard. The Greek ideal of manliness came to be regarded as the supreme model of excellence upon which the new cult began to fashion its likeness. (Qualities possessed by the Greek male ideal included, "a robust chest, a clear complexion, broad shoulders, a short tongue, big buttocks and a small penis". (Halperin, 1990 p.56). Their neurotic English counterparts demanded that small buttocks and large penis, be crucial

attributes for the 19th century 'masculine' prototype). Although the Greeks had unashamedly worshipped the male body through the arts, particularly through sculpture, their Victorian counterparts were vehemently opposed to any such display. Inevitably, the female body was debased to the level of voyeuristic intent, to do similar with the male would only invite unnecessary scrutiny. No matter how forcibly the 'masculine' attempted to suppress debate, the questioning of its authenticity was imminent.

The Aesthetic Movement of the late Nineteenth century was one such faction. In its refusal to conform, the movement succeeded in disclosing the contrived nature of the 'masculine'. Siding with the emancipation of women, together they initiated a sustained attack upon patriarchal order. Exploiting an integral element of Victorian culture, its dependence on, and glorification of the classical, the movement drew from its fabric elements which they disclosed in an effort to emancipate themselves from the constraints placed upon them by this present society. As with most aesthetes Wilde's eye for Greek precedent did not extend to the sports of the 'palaestra', although a flawless male physique he professed was his single criterion for writing. In the essay 'London Models' Wilde mentions locations including the running grounds at Eton and Oxford and the Thames swimming baths where such masculine character could be

found. "Exercise" he claimed in an interview, "the only possible exercise is to talk not to walk". "I am afraid I play no outdoor games at all, except dominoes. I have sometimes played dominoes outside French cafés". (Ellman, 1988, p. 38). Holding aloft the unsavoury aspects of Greek culture, particularly the pre-eminent status of same-sex relations, the Aesthetic Movement succeeded in undermining the basis of the new 'Greek' masculine. In their refusal to conform, luxuriating in what had now come to be regarded as 'feminine' pleasures, they were destined to become a threatening and unsavoury faction within this new atmosphere of militant masculinity.

Although the Criminal Law Amendment Act had been implemented in 1885, prosecutions under the new act were seldom mentioned in the newspapers. Only the most sensational cases, involving members of the aristocracy or public figures were reported, and even then in no great detail. All this was to change in 1895. Wilde entered the Courts as a run-of-the-mill sodomite but exited as the first homosexual. Homosexuality, even at this date could only be received as relational, organised around the performance of a sexual act with a partner. As long as there was no evidence of actual sexual activity, as long as none of the partners could be produced, then it was unclear as to what Wilde was signifying. Wilde's dandical image had to this date been associated far more with class than sexuality. The leisured

gent was supposed to be effeminate, useless and immoral, and might engage in all kinds of sexual debauchery, he was not regarded as specifically homosexual. The effeminate mode of Wilde's leisure class characters seemed only appropriate and his own manners raised only vague disquiet. The trials asserted a new framework of interpretation: Wilde appeared suddenly and scandalously but very definitely as one who consorted with male prostitutes. The two figures coalesced and the model of the gay man that was to dominate Twentieth century perceptions came into view. The aesthetes had made the elements for this development increasingly visible, but the Wilde trials became the moment when the unspoken gained a name. The homosexual model came to be fashioned on the aesthete. The homosexual became effeminate, stylish, amusing, amoral, flamboyant, dandified, in brief - camp. The establishment had waited in anticipation of such an event, accordingly, the trials were widely reported to demonstrate Wilde's consummate wickedness and show where the path of such debauchery would lead. The homosexual was pushed out of the male world because of his supposed femininity.

In an orchestrated manoeuvre designed to re-establish patriarchal order, the 'feminine' came to be associated with homosexuality. The establishment had become only too well aware of the erratic sexual nature of the male and the differing dimensions of femininity inherent

to its nature. By constructing polar opposites within the male, the 'masculine' - the normal, and the 'feminine' -the abnormal, the homosexual was instantaneously condemned to the level of effeminate cripple. More and more, manliness was defined as nonhomosexual, and heterosexuality for men came to mean being masculine. The aesthete had sided with the emancipation of women, although the establishment had appeared hostile to women's claims, it also acknowledged it as a struggle to become more like men. The aesthete to the contrary, was stunning the 'masculine' and becoming more 'feminine'. By creating conflicting spheres within the one sex, and in its disregard of intermediate variety, other men drawn to their own sex had little choice but to see themselves as sick and abnormal, social pariahs and perverts of the Oscar Wilde 'type'. Public exposure as a homosexual would mean social ruin and a term in prison. Under the terms of the 1885 Act only those proved to have been involved in same-sex sexual encounters could be imprisoned. Subsequent to 1895 any man who displayed signs of femininity became susceptible. Consequently, males and the vast majority of gay and bisexual men, abandoned every trace of femininity and consorted to become more 'masculine'. Qualities which had been labelled 'feminine' were thereof lost to the male. Homosexuality came to be considered a great evil to society, an unmentionable horror.

For fear of knocking the world off its heterosexual,'masculine' axis, concepts of the heterosexual male as 'masculine' and the homosexual as the 'effeminate', the 'passive', the 'inserted', have remained. Although the legitimacy of these stereotypes have come under increasing scrutiny, this particular mindset, although culturally fabricated only a century ago, remains deeply rooted in our society, with the further bigoted conviction that such has always been the case.

THE WEAKER SEX.

She (*a stalwart damsel*). "YOU HAVEN'T JOINED OUR CLUB, MR. SLEAFORD?"

He (*7 st. 6 lb.*). "NO. FACT IS, I THINK MIXED HOCKEY FRIGHTFULLY DANGEROUS."

She. "INDEED!—DO YOU MEAN FOR THE MEN?"

11. Artist unknown, 'Punch', The Weaker Sex, 1901

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