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DRESSING OSCAR WILDE'S DANDIES: FASHION OR HOMO-EROTIC DESIRE

Ayça Ülker ERKAN*

Abstract
Wilde's marginalised personality showed up itself in all aspects of his life: his living style, his Irishness, his dress, his being homosexual, and continuous rebel against Victorian society. Wilde, dandy himself, opened the way to marginalised personalities like himself. The purpose of this essay is to analyse Wilde's views on dress, his implication of dress as a reaction to Victorian utility, and dandies who wore costumes as a representation of homosexuality. Wilde defended the cult of strange clothes as a manifestation of individualism and as a symbol of a certain philosophy of life, which consisted of rebellious individualism.

Key Words: *Oscar Wilde, Dressing Style, Dandy, Homo-Erotic Desire.*

OSCAR WILDE'IN ZÜPPELERİNİ GİYDİRMEK: MODA VEYA HOMOEROTİK ARZU

Özet
Wilde'ın marjinelleşmiş kişiliği onun hayatının bir çok yönünde kendini göstermiştir: yaşam stili, İrlandalı olması, kıyafetleri, homoseksüel olması ve Viktorya toplumuna karşı daimi olarak isyankar olması. Züppe olan Wilde, kendisi gibi marjinal kişiliklere öncü olmuştur. Bu makalenin amacı, Wilde'ın giyim hakkındaki fikirlerini, onun Viktorya kuruluşuna giyim tarzı şeklinde reaksiyon göstermesini ve homoseksüelliği temsil eden kostümler giyen züppeleri analiz etmektir. Wilde, tuhaf kıyafet modasını bireysel dışavurum olarak görmüş ve onun giyim stili isyankar bireyselliği içeren bir hayat felsefesini simgelemiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Oscar Wilde, Giyim Tarzı, Züppe, Homoerotik Arzu*

Oscar Wilde's statement that, "The future belongs to the dandy. It is the exquisites who are going to rule," (Wilde, 1966: 132) proved to be wrong, because today a dandy is not much recognized as a man of power. Wilde's marginalised personality showed up itself in all aspects of his life: his living style, his Irishness, his dress, his homosexuality, and continuous rebellion against Victorian society. Wilde, a dandy himself, opened the way to marginalised personalities like himself. As a homosexual he himself was a martyr; still the future did not 'belong to dandies', because the dandies were excluded from the dominant heterosexual culture finding no place for a homosexual identity. In this respect, Wilde may be considered as a forerunner martyr for the homosexual cause opening up the way for today's "dandies". There is frequently a symbolic martyr figure -- reflecting Wilde's personality--in most of his fairy-tales transfigured as Wilde who became a martyr in Victorian society. Garry Schmidgall (1994), John-Charles Duffy (2001), Christopher Nasaar (1974), Ed Cohen (1993), (1991) point out that the existence of such a figure exhibited Wilde's own homosexuality. I will try to analyse Wilde's views on dress, his implication of dress as a reaction to Victorian utility, and dandies who wear costumes as a representation of homosexuality. Clothes play a significant part in one's acts of self-presentation whether we like it or not. In fact, Wilde's dressing style also functioned as a protest and his aesthetic costume reflected his marginalised personality in Victorian convention.

There are not several studies on Oscar Wilde's dressing style and his lively costumes that go far beyond his era as a manifestation of his homosexual desire. Still, one can find several references to Wilde's plays, his position in the Victorian society, his subversion of convention, and his marginalised life style

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often being discussed. Many scholars point out that Wilde's homosexuality is represented in most of his works. For instance, Marcus (1966) characterized pornography as a reaction against the repression of sexuality in Victorian culture. He proposed a "pornotopia", which was a counter image to Victorian society, in which the entire life was sexualised. "Pornotopia" gave pleasure and pornotopia would render Victorianism meaningless, if it repressed sex or pornography. According to Herbert (Marcuse, 1955: 31-32), survival could be possible by lifting taboos against so-called perversion, notwithstanding perversion was seen as a threat to social and patriarchal domination. Then, what was the motive behind Wilde's dressing that created a kind of dress reform in the Victorian society? Was wearing colourful and striking clothes an outcome of his identity? Wilde's marginal personality and his preference of dress as if he were a fashion designer of that time inspired me to write this essay.

Wilde subverted the convention of Victorians not only with his life style but also with every level of his being. Actually, he turned upside down the seeming "virtues" and "ideals" of Victorian society, because he had been harshly excluded from this society. In fact, Wilde was an outsider in English society who portrayed himself as an Irish rebel against English authority. Thus, he revealed the question of "difference" by his unfamiliarity, and by the relationship between the orthodox and the deviant. In this perspective, Wilde needed the "other" onto whom he would project his image of himself. In his works, especially in the plays, dandies established a status as the social "outsiders"[1] who commented on and criticized a society from which they were alienated. The dandies in Wilde's plays aligned themselves on the basis of dramatic structures, and in each play "dandies play catalytic roles" (Behrendt, 1991: 121). They all destroyed domestic relationships by "affronting the conventional morality of the period" (Behrendt, 1991: 121). In other words, dandyism appeared as a criticism of convention with the aesthetic figure dandy. As Dollimore puts forward, "[d]eviant desire reacts against, disrupts, and displaces from within; rather than seeking to escape the repressive ordering of sexuality, Wilde reinscribes himself within and relentlessly inverts the binaries upon which the ordering depends" (Dollimore, 1988: 31). Dollimore emphasizes Wilde's campaign against the values of the bourgeois ideology by comparing Wilde's mode of sexual dissidence with his homosexual tendency. His tendency was not formed on the basis of a reaction against society. Relatively, his homo-erotic desire could not find any setting in the repressive bourgeois ideology, which displaced him on its periphery.

Wilde openly subverted the conventions of British society in several ways: as an Irishman in social contradistinction, as an artist in aesthetic revolt, and as a homosexual proposing the restoration of the Greek attitude to love. Thus, his writings contained a powerful element of criticism against the values of the upper classes. As George Woodcock states, "the English upper-classes represented in his plays are caricatured with clear hostility, and Wilde does not hesitate to pillory their corruption, their shallowness, their snobbery, their lack of genuine moral scruples" (Woodcock, 1989:161). Wilde inserted epigrams in his plays in order to show his disdain for the social frame of the English upper class, because he harshly criticized the social values of the Victorian society in which he lived. Inevitably, his hostile attitude in the dominant male Victorian hegemony placed him as 'the other' and in its periphery. He also criticised the materialism of British culture, which can be seen in his most fairy tales. While maintaining the illusion of living within the status quo, Wilde established himself as a disruptive element.

In establishing his self-identity, several people had great influence in Wilde's life. Wilde's homosexual tendencies appeared in his clothing style especially in his aesthetic costume. His dressing style, which he adopted in his early ages, inherited in its nature his protest against Victorian culture. His divergent dressing style started in his childhood and it most probably affected his future life and inclinations. Wilde's mother, Jane Francesca Elgee, was disappointed when her second son appeared, so she dressed Oscar Wilde as a girl until the clothes of male and female children were distinctive. His mother spoilt and exhibited him as a girl and as Pearson states, "this fashion gravely affected his sexual nature . . . . it is probable that the mother's wish for a girl before his birth had an effect on his nature" (Pearson, 1947: 17). In fact, Pearson draws our attention to Wilde's sexual preference,

[1] This term is also associated with Edward Said's use of the word 'the other'. See Said, Orientalism chapter 1.

which had been shaped in his early childhood. Still, we may not be exactly sure whether his homosexual tendencies sprung from his childhood, because Wilde hardly spoke of his youth.

In his youth, the Paterian ideal of aesthetic beauty inevitably prepared the way for Wilde's sympathy with homosexuality. Ruskin, Pater and Morris were influential figures in shaping Wilde's idea of aestheticism. As Calloway and Colvin state, "Pater was undoubtedly homosexually inclined" and "his private tendencies were repressed, and this self-imposed constraint made him morbidly shy and socially inept" (Calloway and Colvin, 1997: 19). Wilde showed the same tendency for Lord Alfred Douglas later in his life. As Calloway and Colvin indicate, "Pater had a lasting intellectual and aesthetic influence on Wilde's generation at Oxford" (Calloway and Colvin, 1997: 19). We can see the reflections of Pater's ideals in every aspect of his life. For example, the decoration of Oscar Wilde's rooms changed to be more avant-garde; an interest in oriental objects, which are common to most of the Aesthetes, began to increase and the rooms were bedecked with blue-and-white China, Japanese paintings and elegant fans. Consequently, Wilde's decorative schemes continued in Wilde's own house in Tite Street in the following years.

Wilde's life and dressing style took shape after Wilde completed his education. Wilde accepted D'Oyly Carte's proposal to lecture in the United States in October 1881 with his chronic want of money, as Stephan Calloway declares, in his article on "Wilde and the Dandyism of the Senses": "Wilde had gone to America as the apostle of an essentially very English Aestheticism; the intellectual, Oxford Aestheticism that was a hybrid of Ruskinian and Paterian ideals" (Calloway, 1997: 40). He arrived at New York on 2 January 1882 appearing in "aesthetic" costume: knee-breeches, black hose, low shoes, hair long and parted in the middle. He looked for picturesqueness of costumes among Indians and Black people during his tours.

When Wilde returned from his one- year- long journey in the States in December 1882, he left his "commercial aesthetic costume for the conservative dress of the gentleman" (Gagnier, 1986: 67).

He wore the symbolic green carnation[2] in his buttonhole. This time, Wilde's dressing style was described as follows:

> *In this transformation he had done no more than had Disraeli when he doffed his lace, velvet, and jewelry for the black suit more suitable for Queen Victoria and Parliament and no less than had Dickens, who, in reverse order, affected in middle age the sky-blue overcoat with red cuffs, as one contemporary called it, 'a gay costume – theatrical in style rather than literary.' With respect to the visible world for which the Victorians existed, Wilde made the respectable sartorial choice of non-working-class men: to appear as a gentleman, an image largely dominated by Victorian black, in a manner that had been perfected by a dandy. (Gagnier, 1986: 67)*

On 2 October 1894, Wilde wrote to the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* commenting on the green carnation in relation to art. There was a hidden meaning in Wilde's presentation of the flower which revealed the secret of his private life. Wearing a green carnation was a protest against the Victorian conventional dress and values:

> *I invented that magnificent flower. But with the middle-class and mediocre book that usurps its strangely beautiful name I have, I need hardly say, nothing whatsoever to do. The flower is a work of art. The book is not. – I remain, Sir, your obedient servant, Oscar Wilde. (Ross, 1993: 175)*

Wilde's taste of wearing flowers in his buttonhole also appears in his fictitious character Algernon in *The Importance of Being Earnest:* " . . . Might I have a buttonhole first? I have never any appetite unless I have a buttonhole first" (Wilde, 1986: 279). Algernon is a dandy character who pays attention to his outfit. He even criticises Jack, because "he has no taste in neckties at all" (Wilde, 1986: 279). A dandy character Lord Illingworth in *A Woman of No Importance* is obsessed with his outfit. He draws Gerald's attention to the importance of wearing a perfect outfit in the society: ". . . you should learn how to tie your tie better. Sentiment is all very well for the buttonhole. But the essential thing for a necktie is style. A well-tied tie is the first serious step in life". (Wilde, 1986: 115) Lord Illingworth teaches Gerald the secrets of being a dandy and how to be superficial in order to be accepted in the society. Still, the dressing style and the attitude of the dandies appear as a protest to the Victorian society.

Wilde's homosexual tendencies during his Oxford years had an impact on his dressing

[2] The significance of the green carnation was a hint of Decadence, and the painted flower blended art and nature. See Ellmann, 345 for more details. Homosexuals in Paris used to wear it since the green carnation symbolized homosexuality. Oscar Wilde wore it in his buttonhole as a symbol, because his active homosexual life was not generally known.

style. Robert Ross, the son of a Canadian Attorney-General, whom Wilde met when Ross was an undergraduate at Oxford in 1886, first introduced Wilde to homosexual practices. Ross was openly a homosexual and after seducing Wilde, he introduced Wilde to the London homosexual underworld. His new life-style inevitably reflected to his work of art. For Laver, *Dorian Gray* contained "the theme of homosexuality, while never expressed, is clearly implied" (Laver, 1968: 17). In the year when *Dorian Gray* was written Wilde met another youth, Lord Alfred Douglas, who was to lead him to catastrophe. Oscar Wilde's friendship with Lord Alfred Douglas began slowly, so he did not appear in any of Wilde's letters until June of 1892. Lord Alfred Douglas was a good-looking man, but he was arrogant and selfish at the same time. As the years passed, Wilde preferred to depict his homosexual identity, and as Philippe Julian declares, the reason was that Wilde was "bored by having to present to society a conventional façade, when he could have reigned unimpeded over the homosexual world," and he "started pederastic propaganda, which prejudiced so many against him and which justified some of the severity of his judges" (Jullian, 1969: 202).

Although Wilde was married, his lasting sympathy for homosexuality and extravagant costume continued with more passion. On 20 February 1892, the first night when *Lady Windermere's Fan* was performed, the auditorium was filled with fashionable society. The author who watched the play from a reserved box with his wife was highly elated. At the premiére Wilde wore a green carnation in his buttonhole — the flower (lilies and sunflowers), — which became a symbol for Oscar Wilde starting from that night until the trials. After the final curtain, the applause was long, accompanied by the cries of "Author!" Wilde came on the stage smoking a cigarette with his green carnation in his buttonhole to make a speech.

Wilde's dressing style was closely related to art, because Wilde took aestheticism as a reaction to the ideals of Victorian society. It is significant that Victorian society did not allow her citizens to lead a marginalized life because of the social restriction. There was always pressure on the individuals of the society imposing the dominant heterosexual values. For marginalised Wilde, the only way to escape the integrating power of Victorian society was through literature, which was identified with Aestheticism and Decadence. In fact, dandyism was an inseparable entity from aestheticism and the dandy appeared as a form of protest against the social deviation. It is important to note that Wilde's works were protests against strict morality and the conventions of the Victorian period. As a matter of fact, his detesting of conventional taste in dress and behaviour led him to create a new character, which was called the "dandy". Regenia Gagnier states that, "Aestheticism was a protest against Victorian utility, rationality, and realism, or the reduction of human relations to utility and the market and the representation of this in bourgeois literature" (Gagnier, 1991: 3). Gagnier pointed out that the dandy was, "the human equivalent of art under aestheticism" (Gagnier, 1991: 3). He was displaced from life that was "a living protest against vulgarity – creation of mass needs and desires – and means-end living" (Gagnier, 1991: 3). Dandy's function was providing a commentary on a society which he disliked.

Wilde proposed that a dandy was a rebel whose entire life was a long mockery; in other words, his life was a kind of criticism. Hence, an ideal dandy possessed the characteristics of "omniscient intelligence", "great power", "cynicism", and "extreme emotion and marginality". Wearing masks, the dandy "accepts for its own benefit and others' amusement, the materialism of affluent society, while he mocks its superficiality" (Gagnier, 1991: 3), and Gagnier comments on dandies as; "knowing the price of everything and the value of nothing"(Gagnier, 1991: 4). According to James Winchell, "the decadent dandy is also a victim of the literary schizophrenia of modernity itself: erotic love of desire and ascetic hatred of desire" (Winchell, 1991: 237). The aesthetic transgressor, like the dandy, declared him in a reunification of desire, but then slipped toward his own objectification. Wilde handled this conflict as a main theme in his plays. The philosophy of a dandy was simple: "doing nothing and discussing everything" which suited the aristocratic class and the ideas brought on by modernity. Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Earnest* considers Algernon as an eligible young candidate for Gwendolen: "he has nothing, but looks everything. What more can one desire?" (Wilde, 1986: 306)

Dandies who acted as mere critics of the Victorian values were at the same time Wilde's spokesmen. He inverted the social values in order to attack and reveal the social hypocrisy through dandies. Moreover, dandyism

set itself apart from all of the social strata within society especially in terms of taste, humour, manner and dressing. The style and the personality of dandies were formed, as Gagnier proposes, in public schools during the 1880s and at the universities especially Oxford, which was a breeding place for such cultivated people (Gagnier, 1991: 3). The dandy, as Jerusha McCormack points out, "is merely a man of fashion, albeit one who made an almost heroic commitment to style" (McCormack, 1994: 269) on the pursuit of the dandy's style "is not a mere act of homage to fashion but, in fact, a passionate revolt against convention itself" (McCormack, 1994: 269). Gagnier draws our attention to another point that, "Wilde's egomania is apparent in his eccentric dress, in his 'hatred' of nature, in his ideal of inactivity, and in his admiration of crime and 'sin'" (Gagnier, 1986: 151). In fact, Wilde as a dandy abandoned the dress of his time, since the usual attire did not appeal to his sense of the beautiful. Wimsatt and Brooks describe the main feature of dress style of dandyism as follows:

> *A conspicuous feature of the movement is a kind of aesthetic dandyism, an exquisiteness of dress and carriage no less than of the inner life-men in velvet jackets and knee breeches, with a flower in the hand, women in lovely, flowing Pre-Raphaelite gowns. These pursue the vocation of adoring beauty. (Wimsatt and Brooks, 1970: 485)*

Both the convention of dress and the convention of living were combined with an artistic and intellectual rebel. As George Woodcock asserted in the article "The Aesthetic Clown and the Creative Critic", the motive behind Wilde's aesthetic activities were "the result of calculation, and used self-consciously to publicise his talents" (Woodcock, 1989: 109). We should also remember that Wilde had love of flamboyant dress and action, which "led him to continue and ostentation of dress and behaviour that frequently aroused hostility" (Woodcock, 1989: 109).

Wilde's dressing style was also different from the rest of the Victorian society, as he existed as a marginalised body in that society. He wore aesthetic, bohemian, and "rational" clothes in the eighteen-eighties. He defined the fashion and the compulsory garments of the English upper class as "a form of ugliness so unbearable that we are compelled to alter it every six months" (Ellmann, 1987: 246). In turn, he managed to subvert the conventional dressing style of society.

Wilde's comments on the subject dress mostly appeared in *Pall Mall Gazette* as he wrote in response to the critics. For instance, he expressed his different taste of woman's dress at *Pall Mall Gazette* on 14 October 1884 as a response to the "girl graduate". He pointed out that a corset is useless since the body needs respiration and motion. He criticized the so-called "dress improver": high heels of shoes and boots were necessary if long gowns are to be worn. This threw the body forward and shortened steps and produces grace. As for the clogs, Wilde advised the use of some adaptation of the trousers of Turkish women, "which is loose round the limb and tight at the ankle" (Ross, 1993: 47-48). Wilde proposed that dress should be parallel to art: ". . . I am not proposing any antiquarian revival of an ancient costume, but trying merely to point out the right laws of dress, laws which are dictated by art and not by archaeology, by science and not by fashion . . ." (Ross, 1993: 50). Wilde commented on the work of art in those days as a combination of classical grace of Greek beauty with German principles of health that he assumed would be the costume of the future.

For men's dress, Wilde preferred the "broad-brimmed hat of 1640", because it protected people both from the rain of winter and the sun of summer. He usually preferred healthier clothing, as well as the warmth, the comfort, and the beauty of the seventeenth-century dress:

> *A wide turned- down collar is a healthier thing than a strangling stock, and a short cloak much more comfortable than a strangling stock, and a short cloak much more comfortable than a sleeved over-coat, even though the latter may have had 'three capes'; a cloak is easier to put on and off, lies lightly on the shoulder in summer, and wrapped round one in winter keeps one perfectly warm. A doublet, again, is simpler than a coat and waist-coat; and instead of two garments one has one; by not being open also it protects the chest better. (Ross, 1993: 50)*

While Wilde was asserting radical ideas upon dress reform, he addressed 'wise' and "charming" people, who "have at heart the principles of health, freedom, and beauty in costume" (Ross, 1993: 52). Wilde informed that he himself worn that late eighteenth-century dress several times both in public and in private, which gave him great comfort and suitability. Wilde drew attention to having certain "elegance and grace", but considering the laws of dress, he changed his idea as follows:

> *A doublet is a far simpler and easier garment than a coat and waistcoat, and, if buttoned from the shoulder, far warmer also, and that tails have no place in costume, except on some Darwinian theory of heredity; from absolute experience in the matter I found that the excessive tightness of knee-breeches is not really comfortable if one wears them constantly; and, in fact, I satisfied myself that the dress is not one founded on any real principles. The broad-brimmed hat and loose cloak, which, as my object was not, of course, historical accuracy but modern ease, I had always worn with the costume in question, I have still retained, and find them most comfortable. (Ross, 1993: 56).*

Wilde acknowledged that there was no principle in dress, and comfort was important for him. He stated that knee-breeches were too tight and not comfortable. He appreciated the substitution of the jacket for the coat and waistcoat of the period, because they were too tight over the hips that caused discomfort. He backed up the idea of the principles of dress as a means of freedom and "adaptability to circumstances". He pointed out that a dress, to a certain extent, could serve as a brilliant guide and model. He did not agree with the idea of absolute imitation, but he preferred, "a revival of a dead costume, but a realisation of living laws" (Ross, 1993: 57). The situation was exemplified by a gentleman who could adapt his costume to the circumstances when he could turn his hat brim down if it rained and wore his loose trousers and boots if he was tired. Thus, Wilde proposed perfect freedom and comfort with a perfect outlook. He summarised his ideas on dress reforms[3] as follows:

> *. . . the costume of the future in England, if it is founded on the true laws of freedom, comfort, and adaptability to circumstances, cannot fail to be most beautiful also, because beauty is the sign always of the rightness of principles, the mystical seal that is set upon what is perfect only. (Ross, 1993: 56-57)*

Wilde criticised people who wore a dress because it was in fashion and he related his ideas of dress to art. Once again, Wilde's ideas go beyond the society in which he lived and he also reacted against the Victorian society as in forms of dress:

> *I hardly think that pretty and delightful people will continue to wear a style of dress as ugly as it is useless and as meaningless as it is monstrous . . .*
>
> *For all costumes are caricatures. The basis of Art is not the Fancy Ball. Where there is loveliness of dress, there is no dressing up. And so, were our national attire delightful in colour, and in construction simple and sincere; were dress the expression of the loveliness that it shields and of the swiftness and motion that it does not impede; . . . (Ross, 1993: 69-70)*

Wilde's ideas on dress and his dressing style were different from Victorian society. This difference could clearly be viewed as in the forms of dandy characters in most of his works. Thus, he not only protested the society but also created a marginalised self depicting his homo-erotic tendencies as in the shape of dandy characters. The characters that Wilde created in his works spoke the unspeakable both in dress style and manners. As Joel Kaplan and Sheila Stowell state, "operating almost entirely through ties, waistcoats, and those all-important buttonholes, Wilde's dandies would taunt his sober gentlemen with 'frivolous' options to late Victorian earnestness" (Kaplan and Stowell, 1994: 12). According to them, the obsession with buttonholes, like Lord Goring in *An Ideal Husband* who changed his buttonhole many times a day, was an explicit embodiment of the attempts to substitute it. The other dandies in Wilde's plays were identified by the name Lord Darlington in *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), Lord Illingworth in *A Woman of No Importance* (1893) and Jack and Algernon in *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1899). They were almost the same both in dressing style and manners, because they were representatives who mirrored Wilde's ideas and lifestyle on dressing. As a matter of fact, homosexual Eros characterized the dandies, as Donald Low puts forward:

> *Leaving aside the dandies' total lack of commitment to any generous social ideal, Brummel was noticeably cold toward women. This produced among the dandies a faintly ridiculous anti-romantic pose, which coupled with their extreme fastidiousness over dress, caused many people to link the word 'dandy' with homosexuality. (Low, 1977: 81)*

The dandy that was associated with homosexuality was clearly identified in the form of dressing style. In his fairy tale *Happy Prince* the statue Prince, who was identified with Wilde, stood isolated on the periphery of "high above the city" (Wilde, 1980: 171). Like Wilde, the statue was cast away, but it was only appreciated as a "beautiful" piece of art made of gold and precious stones. The Prince was "gilded all over with thin leaves of fine gold: for eyes he had two bright sapphires, and a large red ruby glowed on his sword-hilt" (Wilde, 1980: 171). Beyond this dandy-like appearance of the Prince lied the homo-

[3] See details of Wilde's ideas upon dress reform that he wrote on Pall Mall Gazette on 11 November 1884 in Robert Ross (ed) The article is entitled "More Radical Ideas upon Dress Reform" ss. 52-62.

erotic desire for "the little swallow" (Wilde, 1980: 171). The relationship between the statue and the male bird explicitly depicted a homosexual relationship in the story. Once the Prince gave away the decorated piece of body to help poor people, he was taken out of his place, since he was no longer "beautiful". The image of dandy Oscar Wilde also appeared in Osborne's statue[4], as Paula Murphy describes:

> *. . . languishing on a large white quartz rock, clutching a green carnation to his breast, exotically attired. His garments are carved in coloured stones: the trousers in the blue pearl granite, the jacket in nephrite jade with pink thulite lapels and cuffs, the socks and shoes in black granite. Small details, such as the carnation, the button cords and the shoelaces are cast in bronze with a green patination. The polychrome echoes the rich and precious materials, and their exotic, heady colours, described in Wilde's fairy stories. (Murphy, 1998: 128)*

As a result, Wilde was successful in creating "the stage dandy, a character whose behaviour in real life they might recognize – but rarely acknowledge openly – as homosexual" (Behrendt, 1991: 172). The ignorant laughter of the audience revealed Wilde's intellectual superiority of the cult of the green carnation. Wilde presented his homo-erotic desire through dandy characters, who reflected the dandy within himself. Hence, dandyism in Wilde's plays functioned as a mask to hide his secret life. As a matter of fact, the dandy was more than a man of fashion, because he was an outsider to the Victorian hegemony. As McCormack declares, "despising the society into which he seeks initiation, the dandy takes his revenge by creating himself in its image, miming its clothes, its manners and mannerisms". (Mc Cormack, 1998: 89) Wilde depicted him as a protest figure. Wilde's claim that, he "lived in fear of not being misunderstood" (Wilde, *The Complete Works,* 1966: 1016), which summarized his attitude towards life and art may not be possible to understand if he had not created the dandy image. But presumably, Wilde lived in terror of being understood since every single line he wrote in his works revealed the inner secret of his soul. Consequently, Wilde's dressing style appeared as a symbol of a certain philosophy of life, which consisted of rebellious individualism. He spoke the unspoken by adopting such clothing style. Wilde defended the cult of strange clothes both as a manifestation of his reaction to the Victorian society and symbolically depicting his unacceptable life style of his time.

[4] See the details of the Osborne's statue in the essay "A Statue of Oscar Wilde" by Paula Murphy. (Murphy, "A Statue of Oscar Wilde," 127- 45).

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